

# Cheap Skiing Guide™

Special Adventure Edition

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January 7-10, 2007

**S**poiled Brats! That's how Carolyn Daniels, Director of Group Sales, endearingly referred to herself and others who frequent Powder Mountain Resort in Eden, Utah. "We're used to the best of the best," she said. Cheap Skiing Guide photographer, Rob Vaughan, and I found it hard (at first) to sympathize with overheard laments about their snow being too dry, too wet, sun drenched, or wind slabbed. It was hard to fathom that three days after their most recent snowfall, we were cutting fresh tracks on every run. In fact, we were still deflowering virgin snow on our forth and final day there—six days since their last storm.

Apparently, it takes a lot of skiers to track up 5500 acres (2800 lift-served), at least a lot more than this resort typically sees. "On a busy day, the skier to terrain ratio is one skier per two acres," Daniels said. We were there on a busy day—according to Daniels—but, by eastern standards, it was impossible to tell. Not only were lift lines nominal (what lines), but also it was rare to see another skier or rider on the trails we chose. Speaking of trails—what trails? From the top of the lift, the terrain looks more like wilderness than a ski area. The natural lay of the land was daunting at first. We were afraid, once left to our own devices, we'd become hopelessly lost and sustenance for wolves or bears. But we quickly learned, that almost every

route one could possibly choose, funneled back to a lift. And choices were nearly infinite. There appears to be a little over one hundred trails on Powder Mountain's trail map, but once off the lift, it becomes evident there's no limit to the number of

adventures one can experience. If corduroy is your cup of tea, Powder Mountain has miles of groomed tracks, but they leave a portion of every trail un-groomed for the powder-philes. In our quest for powder—a thirst sated on every run—we tried as many off piste laps as we could find, and I'm certain we didn't see them all—we couldn't have.

Curiously, there were no moguls anywhere. According to Marc Paulsen, Director of Marketing, there are too few skiers and there's too much snow for moguls to form. In the unlikely event they're made, the next snowfall erases them; the average annual snowfall at Powder Mountain is 500 inches (that's almost 42 feet).

When we arrived, Sunday morning (January 7<sup>th</sup>), Peter Turner, a part time powder guide/mountain host

and full time ski equipment engineer, greeted us and pointed out, on the lodge's enlarged trail map, some of the areas we'd be exploring. The briefing didn't adequately prepare us for the snow-filled terrain we were about to experience. Powder

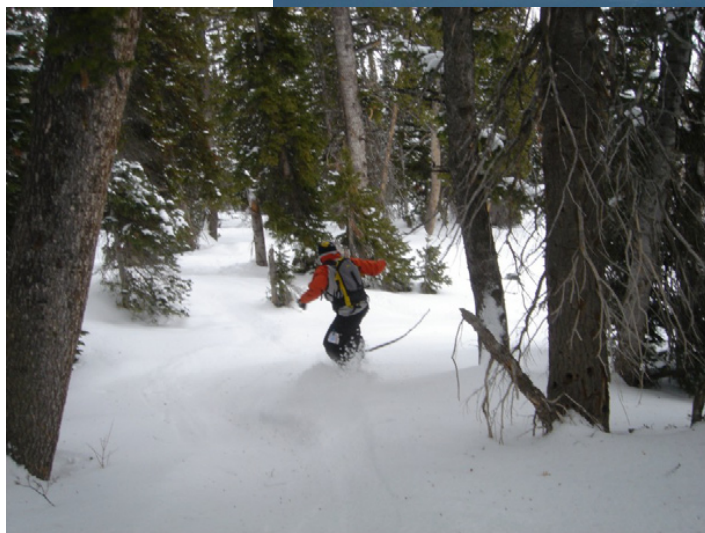
tours are a unique and extremely popular service Powder Mountain provides. For \$80 per half day, \$125 per full day, a guide will take a group of up to six skiers and riders on a powder tour, exploring hidden caches of untracked snow one might never find on his or her own. He led us into a section of the mountain called Powder Country (typically, filled with fresh snow), off the back side of the Hidden Valley lift, that ends at the resort's access road, where a bus shuttles skiers and riders back up to the Sundown lift. From there we gained access to Lightning Ridge via an \$8 snow cat ride. Compared with cat skiing elsewhere, it's likely the most value anyone could get for a five and three ones.



*First day, first run*



*First tracks*



*Treasure in the trees*



*Powder, powder, everywhere*

“Ski Magazine’s October 2006 Reader Survey rated Powder Mountain number one in snow quality and in value,” Daniels told us. And, it’s obvious, they’re right. The \$50 lift ticket (\$45 if multi-day tickets are purchased—and these do not have to be used on consecutive days) is well below average cost for an area this size.

Given the value, the terrain, and—holy snowflake Batman—the powder, it’s no small wonder why Powder Mountain is not more renowned. Apparently, there’s been a conflict between secrecy and promotion for some time. Powder Mountain is one of only a few ski resorts in the nation that has been continuously owned and operated by the same family since opening in 1972. Locals have enjoyed this hidden treasure for 35-years and, understandably, are not anxious to see hordes of outsiders tracking up their powder.

Turner confided that when he mentioned our visit to some locals and that he was going to show us around, they suggested he abandon us where we would never be found. After experiencing what they’re trying to protect, we weren’t certain if they were kidding. Another possible reason for Powder Mountain’s obscurity may be that there are precious few on-mountain accommodations. More are planned but, in the meantime, visitors are relegated to the nearby village of Eden (seven miles from the main lodge) from where Powder Mountain provides shuttle service. They’ve also begun shuttling guests from Ogden (about a half hour away) where accommodations (some extremely inexpensive) are even more abundant. There are about 2000 beds in Eden and most of the accommodations are relatively new, built within the last five years. We stayed at the Red Moose Lodge ([www.theredmooselodge.com](http://www.theredmooselodge.com)), a modern inn built in a rustic motif with spacious rooms, spa with hot tub, and complimentary WI-FI Internet service. From there, Powder Mountain is a ten-minute drive.

Even though shuttles would take us to and from the resort, we rented a car. We needed to explore more than just the mountain. One of our discoveries was Alpine Sports in Ogden ([www.alpinesportsutah.com](http://www.alpinesportsutah.com)). They provided us with top-of-the-line equipment—fat powder skies for me and a big floating board for Rob (yes, he’s a knuckle dragger, but he takes great pictures). The friendly experts at Alpine Sports were extremely accommodating.

Speaking of friendly, Rob and I frequently commented to each other about the warm, gregarious nature of everyone, especially the hosts at Powder Mountain. One only needs to stand in front of the lodge and look confused; someone will ask if you need help.

If you’re looking for adventure, Powder Mountain should be at the top of your things-to-do-before-I-die list. You won’t find luxury slope side accommodations, five-star restaurants, nightclubs, nor will you find restrictions as to where you can and cannot ski at Powder Mountain, but if you’re looking for great terrain, great value, and—oh my GOD—great powder, Powder Mountain is a can’t-miss.

As we began our journey home Thursday morning, we whined about our timing. A predicted 1-2 feet of snow began falling during our drive to the airport. We too had become spoiled brats.

More information about Powder Mountain Ski Resort is available online at [www.powdermountain.com](http://www.powdermountain.com) or you can call them at 801.745.3772 and the Ogden/Weber Convention & Visitors Bureau ([www.ogden.travel](http://www.ogden.travel)) and Ogden Valley Business Association’s web sites ([www.ovba.org](http://www.ovba.org)) are good information pages for lodging and dining, but shhhhhhhh; let’s keep this our little secret.

Please enjoy our [picture gallery](#) and our [video collage](#).



*Sunset over Hidden Valley lift*

— Paul Sachs