

Cheap Skiing Guide™

Special Adventure Edition

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Sometimes the best fruit is found farthest out on the limb. If the same holds true for ski areas, Saddleback, in Rangeley, Maine, fits the analogy. There doesn't appear to be an easy way to get there—at least not from the direction we came—but it is, in every respect, a hidden treasure

Saddleback has been a ski area since 1960, and over the years, without much fanfare, it has developed (and is still developing) into a must-ski destination. Fifty years ago, it might have been too far to travel for a T-bar ride up this remote mountain, but the lifts all have chairs now, and skiable terrain has more than doubled to 220 acres. In fact, the resort owns over 8000 acres, only a fraction of which has been developed. And they're just getting warmed up. In 2004 a beautiful new post and beam lodge was constructed along with a new quad serving the beginner area. Last summer a new summit quad was constructed and another quad (to replace their mid-mountain double) is planned for next summer—not to mention a new, ski-in, ski-out hotel sometime within the next two years.

Is this ruggedly beautiful wilderness is being despoiled by rampant development? Not a chance. In fact, the Berry family, who purchased the property in 2003, are dedicated to preserving the region's natural resources. The water they use for snowmak-



The traverse to Casablanca Glades.

ing is pumped from Saddleback Lake and returns to its source when it melts. The Appalachian Trail traverses Saddleback Mountain's summit.

But enough about development, if you're more an aficionado of terrain than apre-ski, you'll appreciate what Saddleback has to offer: 4,120 ft. peak with summit snowfields, 2000 ft. of vertical, 85 percent snowmaking coverage with unlimited water, 66 trails



Tri-Color, a trail from the summit.

and glades, and new this season, Casablanca Glade; a 44 acre expanse (the largest in the east) of natural woods that offers a true back-country experience... without any fear of getting lost. The traverse from the summit lift out into Casablanca Glade is just challenging enough to make the less-than-enthusiastic skiers and riders reconsider, leaving more snow and



Saddleback's new post and beam lodge.



The new summit quad unloading.



Inside Casablana Glade.

fresh tracks for the hard-core. Make no mistake, there are plenty of challenges for everyone. The head walls of Tightline, Warren's Worry, Frostbite, and Black Beauty are as steep as any other groomed trails we've experienced. Saddleback's winch-cats are able to push snow up the steeps and, that skiers and riders can easily sink an edge into these walls—even on the last run of the day—is testimony to their grooming abilities.

Saddleback Mountain has something for everyone—from the first-time skier to the back country adventurer. 25 of its trails (38%) are for beginners, 19 (29%) for intermediate, and 22 (33%) of its trails are marked either black or double black diamond. And their double D trails are as challenging as any lift served terrain...anywhere! Their longest trail is 3.1 miles from summit to base. In addition, Saddleback has two terrain parks.

Does all this sound expensive? Check this out: an all-day adult lift ticket is only \$49. If you're 18

or under, or between 65 and 69, it's \$39. Under 6, it's free, and 70+, it's \$5. Compare that with where you're skiing now. If you're interested in seeing it for yourself, go to www.saddlebackmaine.com or email info@saddlebackmaine.com. Luddites can call 866-918-2225 for information.



Snow sculptures in the sun.



Spectacular glades.



Clouds beneath the summit.