

TRAVEL

Think Ski!

Time to book your reservations: Here are seven regional resorts that have upped the ante for the new season

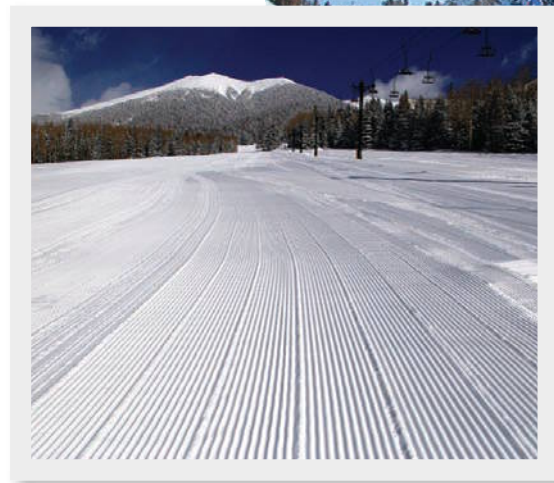
By Carla Ferreira

Hard to believe, with triple-digit temperatures still a fresh memory, but the ski season is just around the corner. Most hills open around Thanksgiving weekend and have already received some serious snow. In preparation, many resorts spent the summer getting face-lifts and adding amenities such as snowmaking machines, spiffy chairlifts and trick parks. Here's a sampling of what's new out West:

Bald Mountain in Sun Valley, Idaho. Known as “Hollywood in the Mountains” and the first ski resort in North America, Sun Valley's Bald Mountain infuses 2010 technology with 1930s class. The hill still has some old-time chairlifts, but now there's also a new gondola-style lift, the Roundhouse Express, which opened last year and takes skiers/pedestrians up 2,000 feet in eight minutes to a 1930s sit-down French restaurant, the Roundhouse. The gondola also brings skiers/boarders a third of the way up the hill, where they can ski down the River Run side or hop on an adjoining chair and go to the top. Bald Mountain also has a superpipe, on the Warm Springs side, with 18-foot walls, plus a terrain park with 24 new rails, boxes and jibs, and the bunny hill, Dollar Mountain. *Scheduled opening: Thanksgiving. SunValley.com, 208-622-4111.*

Las Vegas Ski & Snowboard Resort. To help get you up the mountain this season, the resort will launch a Ski Vegas Ski Bus route. The schedule includes daily stops at Town Square and Santa Fe Station hotel-casino, as well as an additional stop at UNLV on Fridays. Roundtrip fare is \$20, with priority given to travelers with reservations (645-6053). The resort also enlarged its snowmaking pond from 1.6 million gallons of water to 7.5 million, allowing more snow early and a better base for skiers and snowboarders to enjoy throughout the season. *Scheduled opening: Nov. 23. SkiLasVegas.com, 645-2754.*

Bear Mountain in Big Bear Lake, Calif. This season Bear Mountain



introduces Skill Builder Park, designed for novice terrain park skiers/boarders. The new park has snow features, rails, boxes and transitions, and the pros at Bear have installed signs with tips for getting started, polishing skills and proper ski/board etiquette. Bear Mountain and Snow Summit also spent more than \$500,000 on new snowmaking equipment. On your cell phone, text the word SNOW to 52406 to receive on-demand powder alerts and updates from Big Bear Mountain Resorts. *Scheduled opening: Thanksgiving. BearMountain.com, 909-866-5766.*

Mountain High in Wrightwood, Calif. This SoCal ski haven built a new terrain park at its East Resort with 1.6 miles of continuously flowing terrain that blends big and small elements, including banks, hips, jibs and jumps, and a learn-to ride zone, which will also have a variety of banks and rollers. The west side of the resort got some touch-ups as well, such as a new stair feature in the Playground, and a “pipe” jib designed and sponsored by Skullcandy. The new pipe has built-in speakers and a removable DJ booth, so riders can hit the feature and be entertained at the same time. Skullcandy DJs will make regular appearances at the resort,



From left: Fresh grooming at the Arizona Snowbowl thanks to new snowcats; Mammoth's new terrain park; and Sun Valley's new Roundhouse Express.

providing audible excitement for competitions as well as the general public. *Scheduled opening: mid-November. MtHigh.com, 888-754-7878.*

Arizona Snowbowl in Flagstaff. With the new Hoover Dam bypass, Flagstaff is now only about a three-hour drive. Check out Snowbowl's Sunset Terrain Park, which offers fun boxes, rails, hits, spines and more. The style of the park will evolve throughout the season, with bigger and better features as the inches accumulate. A 150-foot-long conveyor has been installed to help children learn to ski/board, and two new snowcats will help ensure that runs will be groomed to perfection. *Scheduled opening: mid-December. ArizonaSnowBowl.com, 928-779-1951.*

Eagle Point in Southern Utah. This secluded hill makes its debut this season. The lodges and lifts have been renovated and upgraded (the site, east of Beaver, formerly was Elk Meadows), and the hill has 40 runs designed to accommodate a variety of skill levels, plus designated back-country slopes. There will also be an 18-foot half-pipe, freestyle terrain and a tubing park. Check out the Outpost Grill après ski for comfort foods, a cozy fireplace, private lounge and a dance



floor. *Scheduled opening: mid-December. SkiEaglePoint.com, 435-554-8887.*

Mammoth in Mammoth Lakes, Calif. With the recent popularity of food trucks in Los Angeles, Mammoth is introducing two snowcat food trucks—the Roving Mammoths—this winter. Traveling around the resort, bringing food and beverages to remote locations, the snowcats will feature grab-and-go food items such as burritos, stuffed churros, calzones and tamales. A new private terrain park, the Stomping Grounds, will be opening this season, featuring jumps, rails/jibs and AcroBags. The park is designed to help users learn at their own pace. *Scheduled opening: Nov. 11. MammothMountain.com, 760-934-2571.* ■