



Does anyone else out there wonder what madness has overtaken the ski resorts?

It used to be an all day lift ticket would cost one price. OK, maybe it would be a few dollars higher on weekends and holidays.

But the price was a constant. Something you could depend on day in and day out.

Then resorts decided that maybe if they offered lower prices on slower days it would draw more skiers and snowboarders to the slopes.

But wait...lots of skiers come up during the big holiday period...so some resorts thought it wise to really increase ticket prices on those days.

OK, so now we have one price for weekends, a huge increase for holidays, one price for Tuesdays, and one price for the rest of the days of the week. Need I go on? You get the idea.

It was already getting so you needed a scorecard to track all the ticket prices, but as I was going around the web trying to update my "Guide to the Sierra Ski Resorts," my jaw dropped in disbelief when I happened

across Heavenly's pricing structure for the 2005-06 season.

I hate to pick on one of my favorite ski resorts, but Heavenly has six layers of pricing scattered over the season, including: Early Season, Pre-Christmas, Christmas, Mid Season, Peak Season and Late Season. And under those they have a bunch of different options for multiple day tickets through their PEAKS program and even more for 7-Day Advanced purchase.

Heavenly's highest ticket will be \$73 over the Christmas period of Dec. 17 - Jan. 1. Their lowest will be \$55 for Early Season (Opening - Nov. 22).

Squaw Valley, the other Tahoe giant, did not have its 2005-06 prices up as of press time, but Squaw's high ticket last season was only \$62 and included night skiing up until 9 p.m. - and they didn't have the nonsensical multi-tiered pricing structure.

When and where will it all end? Probably when skiers and boarders get so confused and priced off the slopes that they are forced to take up other wintertime sports.

I know my disposable income hasn't gone up significantly over the last 10 years or so, but lift tickets - with few exceptions - rise every year.

Perhaps resorts will even take to charging different

prices for good snow days - with perfect weather, as opposed to bad snow days with inclement weather.

The thought of it sure gets discouraging sometimes.

How can skiers and boarders combat the ever rising cost of tickets (not to mention the price of gas to get up the hill)?

Outrageous discounts can be found if you look, such as SnowBomb.com's "Tahoe Card," or even a season pass at your favorite ski resort.

Restricted season passes (i.e. - no holidays) can be had at Heavenly for \$319. If you made 10 trips to Heavenly during the season, you'd pretty much be paying only 50% of what you'd pay if you bought individual tickets.

A similar season pass at Kirkwood can also be had for \$319, and Sierra-at-Tahoe and Northstar-at-Tahoe offer the "Double Whammy Pass" - good at both resorts - for only \$309.

If you're willing to stick to one or two resorts, skiing and boarding can stay fairly economical, but the days of resort hopping may be gone forever.

Perhaps one day resorts will decide more skiers at a lower price are better than fewer skiers at a higher price.

It's unfortunate that a sport we all love is rapidly becoming too expensive to enjoy. A family ski day can run well over \$200. How many times a season can Joe Skier afford that?

### What's new at Sierra-at-Tahoe

There will be lots of new stuff at Sierra-at-Tahoe this season. Here's a look at what skiers and boarders can expect.

#### Family Adventure Zones

Sierra-at-Tahoe blends fun and learning in its new on-mountain adventure zones, which were designed with kids in mind. Terrain features such as rollers, mini jumps and banked turns keep children entertained, while signage and animated figures educate them on local history and animal species. Each adventure zone

focuses on one of the following themes: Bear Caves, Pony Express, Maidu Meadows and the Gold Rush.

The interactive displays allow children to climb in and out of treehouses, caves and secret hideaways. Sound effects and smoke machines enhance the experience. A kid's trail map makes it easy for kids and parents to navigate through the zones.

The trail map is distributed at the resort and can be found online at [www.Sierra-AtTahoe.com](http://www.Sierra-AtTahoe.com).

#### Park Stops

Sierra-at-Tahoe's award-winning terrain parks will offer a taste of the urban life this winter with the resort's version of city bus stops, appropriately titled "Park Stops."

The Park Stops will feature a covered bench with tools for adjusting bindings, mini trail maps highlighting Sierra-at-Tahoe's park "circuit," a sticker wall, and ski and snowboard magazines.

Riders can rest and recharge for their next run in comfort and style.

#### Sierra Goes Green with Healthy Food Options

The guests spoke and Sierra listened. After receiving customer feedback requesting healthy food choices along with traditional ski resort fare, Sierra-at-Tahoe decided to convert its Mountain Munchies Mexican food outlet to a healthy snack shack. The new eatery, appropriately named "The Happy Hippie" will feature rice bowls, wraps, granola and yogurt, soups and salads, organic juices and other wholesome snacks to keep skiers charged on the slopes for hours.

#### Expanded Food and Beverage Outlets

Because a day of tubing works up an appetite, Sierra-at-Tahoe will add a snack shack to its tubing hill, located on Broadway. The outlet will offer grab-and-go snacks such as chips, candy bars, yogurt, Clif Bars, cookies, muffins, sodas and drinks. In addition, guests can also purchase lift and tubing tickets from this outlet, which is located adjacent to Sierra's parking lots. With its convenient on-slope location, families can easily quell their hunger without missing a minute of fun.

#### Behind the Scenes

Sierra-at-Tahoe's West Bowl gets a behind-the-scenes makeover this season with a new state-of-the-art cooking and food service facility that will allow the restaurant to bring more of its cooking indoors. Previously confronted with limited space for food preparation and an outdoor

grill, weather could pose a challenge. By almost doubling the size of this facility, West Bowl can now offer consistent food quality and faster service to complement the restaurant's expanded dining room and bar.

#### Bike Taxis

Those who drive their personal vehicles to the resort will find a welcome convenience at Sierra-at-Tahoe upon arrival. A fleet of Bike Taxis will patrol the parking lots, with eager drivers ready to transport guests and their gear from the outer reaches of the parking lots. The bike taxi  
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### DP tickets at Costco stores

INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. - Diamond Peak Ski Resort and Costco have teamed to offer discount lift tickets for the 2005-06 season.

The tickets are available in two-packs for \$63.99, that is less than \$32 per day versus the regular rate of \$46.

That is more than 30% off. Diamond Peak two-packs are available at participating Costco stores in the Bay Area and Sacramento.

Below are the locations of participating stores:

#### Danville

3150 Fostoria Way

#### Folsom

1800 Cavitt Court

#### Foster City

1001 Metro Center Blvd.

#### Fremont

40580 Albrae St.

#### Livermore

2800 Independence Dr.

#### Modesto

3801 Pelandale Ave.

#### Mountain View

1000 N. Rengstorff

#### Novato

300 Vintage Way

#### Redwood City

2300 Middlefield Rd.

#### Richmond

4801 Central Ave.

#### Roseville

6750 Stanford Ranch Rd.

#### Sacramento

1600 Expo Parkway

#### San Francisco

450 10th St.

#### San Jose

5301 Almaden Expressway

#### Santa Clara

1601 Coleman Ave.

#### Santa Cruz

220 Sylvania Ave.

#### Stockton

1616 E. Hammer Ln.

#### Sunnyvale

150 Lawrence Stn. Rd.

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