

# Sierra

(Continued from Page 2) including the Beastie Boys, the Foo Fighters, Blink 182 and Linkin Park.

\* Sierra-at-Tahoe is home to the longest beginner run in Lake Tahoe. Sugar n' Spice is a 2.5 mile beginner meander that extends from the summit to the base of the mountain, so even beginners can ski the mountain top-to-bottom.

\* There are many hidden caves located on Sierra's mountain. They can be found on Lower Main, the Backside and the most popular is on Preacher's Passion.

## Freeheeling at Alpine Meadows

Profess freeheel skiing as the new hot winter sport to any loyal three-pinner, and he or she will squint at you for a moment before quietly responding, "Yeah. Thanks. It's only the oldest, most historic method of snow transportation on the cold sides of the planet. It's like you've been living under a snowboard or something."

Then, after chastising you for considering anything BUT freeheeling (telemarking) as a "purists" winter sport, he or she will probably be able to recall certain prominent historic figures in the sport, when it arrived in the United States, when it lost popularity, and, with a surly bias, declare that the rest of the population has merely just begun to catch the gist of its coolness over the past few seasons.

So what the heck is freeheel skiing, and where did it come from?

Freeheel skiing is downhill skiing with a binding that attaches the skier's foot to the ski by just the toes. It resembles the mechanics of the Nordic ski and binding arrangement, but with downhill-sized skis. In fact, the word "ski" is the Old Norse word for "skid", which is a plank of wood used to slide cargo, people, etc.

There are even Norwegian stone carvings of people using skis over 4,000 years old. It wasn't until the early 1700s that skis were used as a common mode of functional transportation - not a sport - through the snowy terrain of Norway; and it wasn't until the mid 1800s in Telemark,

Norway, that one of the best skiers of the time, Sondre Norheim, would improve current skis by adding the binding that adheres the toe to the ski.

Sondre Norheim is commonly known as the father of modern skiing (both Telemark and regular) and even snowboarding, to an extent.

The "new school" of freeheel flocks to Alpine Meadows. The low-key subculture surfaces daily at the Summit Six lift line and on any and every given powder day, equipped with what the mainstream has dubbed "extreme" skis, crash helmets, stiff plastic boots, film cameras, and enough anticipated speed to make anyone on a snowboard or a pair of, ahem, unenlightened, fixed-heel sticks seem slow and outdated.

Today's telemark skiers take to half pipes and terrain parks just as much as snowboarders, sporting twin-tipped skis to perform back and front flips, inverted aerials requiring backward landings, and every other new-school trick thought to be left to the snowboarding and fixed-heel skiing crowd.

Why is Alpine Meadows such a nationally recognized destination for freeheelers?

"I love skiing at Alpine Meadows and conducting my camps there for both the local support of our event as well as the staff at Alpine," said Heather Paul, world-class telemark skier and founder of Ultimate Grooves women's telemark camps.

"It provides all levels of terrain, so we can keep beginners on easy terrain and we can also offer the experts so many options to challenge themselves. The community of skiers at Alpine is supportive and enthusiastic of our event. We've gotten to know them and feel like locals when we're there."

With so much off-the-beaten-corduroy terrain and hike-to locale, it is the fastest hiker who reaps the reward of first tracks. Telemark skis are an excellent and efficient way to traverse Alpine's famous ridgetops. Telemark skiing is also regarded by many as the most elegant ways to descend a run of cold, deep powder. As one of the country's premiere backcountry-focused resorts, Alpine Meadows offers visitors the opportunity to

experience hike-to bowls and off-piste steeps, making telemark skis the transportation of choice.

Why don't more people freeheel ski?

It's hard. Yes, the learning curve is slightly steeper than snowboarding or fixed-heel skiing; but once a student learns the basics, the sky is the limit.

Much like golfers, many telemark skiers finish a day on the slopes with an ear-to-ear grin, while other days they leave puzzled, robbed of an ego, and gifted with a fresh dose of humility.

The only way you'll ever know is if you give it a try.

## New lights at Boreal open up superpipe

DONNER SUMMIT, Calif. - New for winter 2006-07, Boreal has added six additional night lights along the east side of the superpipe, allowing for day and night use.

The Boreal park crew will groom the pipe twice each day: once at 3 p.m. and once at 10 p.m. Specializing in providing a meticulously groomed, perfectly maintained superpipe, Boreal provides one of Olympic-caliber.

Excavated into the side of Boreal's north-facing Racecourse Run during the summer months, the superpipe walls, shape, and length are measured and constructed with precision. With additional snowmaking capabilities

devoted to the superpipe this winter, Boreal aims to once again set a standard of perfection.

Debuting Northern Calif-

ornia's first all-mountain terrain park last year, Boreal has gained a reputation for providing some of the area's

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