



Special to the Democrat-Gazette/STEVE HAGGERTY

This skiing father has his hands full with three skiing children.

A ski instructor and his students are ready to hit the slopes.



Special to the Democrat-Gazette/STEVE HAGGERTY

Which way to go? Skiers take a break to read a trail sign.



Special to the Democrat-Gazette/STEVE HAGGERTY

# Family friendly

## Special package for kids at Colorado's Snowmass could pique parents' interest

ANNE Z. COOKE  
AND STEVE HAGGERTY  
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

**S**NOWMASS VILLAGE, Colo. — As winter slips into the Roaring Fork Valley and snow is falling on the mountains, it's blue skies ahead for skiers heading to Snowmass Resort in the central Rockies.

For years we've been saying that ski resorts better get busy and make sure that today's kids become tomorrow's lift ticket buyers. Seems as if they've finally heard us. For the second year in a row, Snowmass Resort, down the valley from its three sister Aspen Skiing Co. resorts — Aspen, Highlands and Buttermilk — is advertising a "Kids Stay and Ski Free" package, a blue-ribbon offer that will save parents and families a bundle of money.

And they've kept it simple. For every adult who books a four-night/four-day lift-ticket and lodging package, one child, age 7-12, gets the identical package free. If you rent skis/snowboard and boots, the child's rental skis and boots are also free. Same thing with a ski lesson; pay for one and get two.

Now here's what's sweet. You have more than a month (until Feb. 18) to make your reservations and you can ski any days or weeks in March, no blackouts, no exceptions. Your only competition will be other

See **FAMILY**, Page 5E

## Family

Continued from Page 4E  
skiers, families like us who prefer March's warmer sun and longer days.

There's an extra wrinkle this year, too, because Easter comes so late in April, on Sunday the 24th. Snowmass plans to stay open until that date to take advantage of spring vacations and school holidays. You have until March 18 to book April's "Kids Ski Free" package, and can use it any time April 1-24. (Go to [stayaspensnowmass.com](http://stayaspensnowmass.com) for details.)

We'll be skiing at Snowmass, too, joining family hailing from both coasts and Chicago. With 3,132 skiable acres spread over four connected peaks and up to the resort summit, at 12,510 feet, there's space to spare for all of us, from the first-grader to senior citizens. Though Snowmass is famously friendly to intermediate and advanced skiers, there's plenty of terrain at both ends of the curve: easy bunny

slopes and double-black-rated "widow-makers."

"Snowmass is a family kind of place, with lots of repeat guests," says resort spokesman Jeff Hanle. "The same kids who learn to ski here in our ski school come back later as college kids, then as young marrieds, and eventually they bring their own children."

If you haven't seen Snowmass recently, check out the new Village Express "six-pack" chairlift which loads at the new base village, now at the bottom of the newly extended Fanny Hill slope. An additional new chairlift, "Sheer Bliss," in the Big Burn area, climbs 2,212 vertical feet to reach 700 skiable acres signed for experts (black diamonds) and intermediates (blue squares). For boarders and freestyle skiers there's an advanced-level terrain park below Velvet Falls.

The kids ski school and child care are now housed here in a multistory rustic chalet with playrooms, a nursery, an indoor climbing wall and a ski shop.

Close by is Snowmass' newest bright star, the fabulous Viceroy Hotel. Sleekly contemporary, eco-friendly and five-star ready, it boasts a temple-like spa, a celebrity-magnet bar and some of Colorado's finest cuisine.

For a couple of generations, Snowmass families have enrolled their children in the ski school, and for good reason. Toddlers in Snow Cubs get to clump around in funny ski boots and make snowmen. Three- and 4-year-olds ride the Magic Carpet in Big Burn Bears, and by ages 5 and 6, move to Grizzlies where they ride the chairlifts. Kids 7-12 go into pre-teen classes and teen clinics for a mix of fun and skiing.

The ski school ends at 3 p.m. leaving time for a couple of family downhill runs. The family fave last year was Sneaky's, an intermediate trail off the Big Burn Summit, with Banzai and Coney Glade competing for second place. Ride the free ski shuttle over to Buttermilk and Aspen to ski,

and send your skis ahead, too, on the company's convenient overnight transfer service.

We save a night for a family dinner, now a tradition, at the restored Lynn Britt log cabin, tucked into the pines on the snow. The prix fixe dinner is served family style, and includes wine and toe-tapping bluegrass tunes. Reserve in advance and meet your "sleigh" at the base area, for a snow-cat-assisted ride uphill. Frosty stars light the return journey.

When does it snow? Now. January is the coldest month. February and March are peak season. In April you can ski in shorts.

*Fly to Pitkin County Airport, 10 minutes from Snowmass; or to Eagle, 90 minutes by shuttle bus; or into Denver. Rental cars and shuttle buses operate out of all airports. Book "Kids Ski Free" with Stay Aspen/Snowmass, at (888) 649-5985, or go to [stayaspensnowmass.com](http://stayaspensnowmass.com). Snowmass is at (800) 525-6200, and at [aspensnowmass.com](http://aspensnowmass.com). For shorter ski trips, get discounts on lift tickets by buying them in advance, online.*