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COLORADO'S MOST WANTED: EIGHT FABULOUS SKI RESORTS

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By Anne Z. Cooke & Steve Haggerty MCT News Service

12:01 a.m., Nov. 25, 2012
Updated 3:10 p.m., Nov. 23, 2012

FRASER, Colo. — The trees are bare, the snow is falling, it's time to ski. But where?

Colorado, naturally, world famous for sunny days and intermittent dumps of deep dry powder.

Which one of the following eight great Colorado ski areas works for you? Read on:

1. Steamboat Resort, Steamboat Springs; www.steamboat.com. (877) 237-2628,

How about a ski-free family vacation at Steamboat Resort? You're not eligible, but your kids might be. For every adult who buys a multiday lift pass, one child under 13 gets the same pass free. And they can stay free, too, as long as they're bunking with you. Steamboat's offer is a tremendous deal, one that means a family of four can ski for the price of two.

Invite another adult — dad or your brother — and three kids can ski for free. It's a one-to-one offer good for every run on Steamboat's 2,965 acres. Then spend the money you've saved on lessons at the resort's top-rated Kids' Ski School. While the kids learn to carve turns, you can be skiing that trademarked "champagne powder" snow yourself.

2. Winter Park Resort, Winter Park; www.skiwinterpark.com. (800) 979-0322.

In a hurry? If you ski just once a year, or mostly on long weekends, make the most of every precious hour at Winter Park Resort, only 67 miles west of Denver. You'll be on Winter Park's 3,060 skiable acres by noon and hucking Parsenn Bowl's fresh powder by 2 o'clock. Here's how: Reserve your rental skis in advance, book a dawn flight to Denver International Airport, board the shuttle bus at baggage claim (departing every hour), and you'll be there in 90 minutes, door to door.

3. Snowmass Resort, near Aspen; www.aspensnowmass.com. (877) 682-7736.

Does ski-in-ski-out lodging make your day? It should. It's oh-so-luxe to step out your door, click into your bindings and glide away to the nearest lift line. At Snowmass Resort, you'll be "livin' large" when you stay in one of the resort's 2,400 rental units (with beds for 8,750 skiers) clustered around the two main base villages.

Hotels, inns, condominiums, townhomes, Snowmass has them all. Two on a budget can find a double room in a hotel; families and friends should check the two-, three- or four-bedroom condos and the four-to-five-bedroom luxury homes.

Sure, you could stay two miles away, carry your skis to the shuttle bus stop, ride to the resort and lug the skis uphill to the nearest chair lift. But why? Stay on the snow and be there to carve "first tracks" on Snowmass's four big mountains.

4. Arapahoe Basin, near Dillon. www.arapahoebasin.com. (888) 272-7246.

If you go

Most Colorado ski resorts start to make snow as soon as nighttime temperatures drop below freezing. The resorts open by mid-to-late November. Prices for single-day tickets are set when the resort opens. Multiday lift ticket prices are listed by September.

Lodging packages and discounts are priced lower if purchased before the resort opens. It pays to call early.



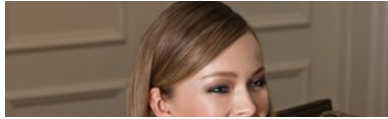
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Looking for wild and woolly slopes, those deep powder glades and 55-degree steeps? Go for it at Arapahoe Basin, six miles from Keystone Resort. Sporting North America's highest marked ski trails (the summit is at 13,050 feet) 63-year-old A-Basin belongs to the locals, powder hounds who'll tell you that skiing isn't a sport; it's all about being out there, getting spiritual in the elements, pushing your limits.

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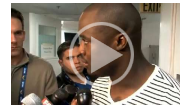
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