

Cowboy powder

While most of us couldn't travel to Jackson Hole this northern winter, Aussie **BRIAN THACKER** was able to fly over from his home in Minnesota. Here's why you should plan to visit Jackson Hole when borders reopen.

I'll tell you a secret: **Jackson Hole** is known as the 'skier's mountain', with over half the ski runs classified as black or double-black. It is also the perfect destination for a family ski vacation. While the gung-ho carvers and shredders are throwing themselves down all those famous chutes, bowls, bumps and gullies, you'll have the long, cruisy intermediate runs all to yourself. Add a completely self-contained ski school complex, an easy-to-get-around village and some Wild West fun and critters, and you can see why Jackson Hole is the ideal place to introduce kids to skiing in the American West.

Looooong runs

Jackson Hole is actually made up of two mountains: Rendezvous provides the bulk of that scary steep stuff, while Après Vous mostly caters to intermediates with a good spread of very long blue runs – like thigh-burning, you-need-to-stop-to-get-your-breath-back long.

On my first day out, I skied for six hours and only did 17 runs, but still managed to clock up 10,000 vertical metres. I knew this because I had the JH INSIDER app, offering snow and weather reports, up-to-the-minute lift line wait times (very handy for dodging the crowds) and personalised stats. There is even a leaderboard (I came in 14th for most vertical on my first day). The tracking function is also helpful if you have older kids or teens that are skiing by themselves. You'll always know where they are – you can actually see their little dots moving around the mountain on the app's trail map, and they'll love trying to ski or ride more vertical than you.



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A learner's paradise

At Jackson Hole, it's easy to put your kids in ski school. Take the free Sweetwater Gondola to the mid-station and hop off at the recently opened Solitude Station where you'll find everything you need. Inside the lobby, Mountain Sports School staff help you book lessons, organise ski and snowboard hire and lift passes. There are also two dining rooms (one for kids and one for adults) where you can watch the little ones outside on the covered magic carpet, or you can snag a patio chair by the fire pit out front.

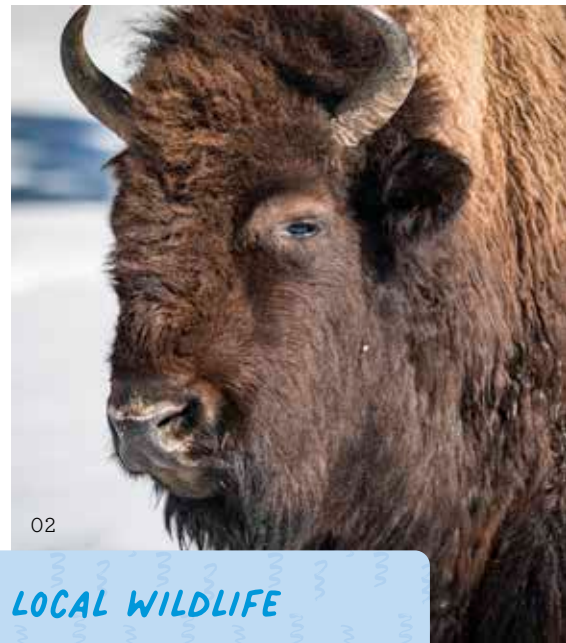
What's for dinner?

Teton Village is a tiny village (compared to other big mountain resorts), but you're spoiled for choice when it comes to dinner. On my first night, I walked about three minutes from my accommodation to **Il Villaggio Osteria**. There are the usual cheese pizzas and butter pasta for fussy kids, but I dug into a delicious homemade buffalo ravioli. The next night, I wandered downstairs to the **Continuum Bar & Grill** for some mountain elk chilli. I continued my degustation of local wildlife a few nights

later at the **Roadhouse Brewing Company** in the town of Jackson, with a bison steak accompanied by a beer flight of the in-house brewed beers. If you're staying in Teton Village, it's worth a trip into Jackson – it's a true Wild West, yee-haw town. You can dress up in cowboy garb for a portrait at **Jackson Hole's Old Time Photos**.

Skiing with a legend

On my last day in Jackson Hole, I joined US double Olympic medallist and skiing legend, Tommy Moe, for a full-day guiding adventure. We started the morning skiing some perfect 'Cowboy Powder' (aka when overnight snow has caked the groomed runs), and had the runs all to ourselves. Our first ride was in the famous Jackson Hole tram, a spectacular trip up the 3,185-metre summit of Rendezvous Mountain. Though a tram announcement cautions that the skiing is for expert skiers only, there is no need to panic, as the tram descends the mountain again after 10 minutes. But it's worth a stay for the view and the waffles at Corbet's Cabin (the kids will love the Nutella waffle). If you do decide to ski down



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LOCAL WILDLIFE

Winter is also a great time to spot some critters, big and small. **Jackson Hole Wildlife Safaris** leads tours to spot elk, foxes, buffalo, wolves and moose in Grand Teton and nearby Yellowstone National Parks. Or you can take the kids to **National Elk Refuge Sleigh Rides** (near the airport), where a wagon-driving guide takes you up close to thousands of elk. jacksonholewildlifesafaris.com nersleighrides.com



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01 Kids tend to progress swiftly at Jackson Hole
02 Spotting bison 03 The Tram carries up to 100 people to the top of Rendezvous
04 Jackson Hole has a real Wild West vibe.
All images © Jackson Hole Mountain Resort

from the top to the bottom, it's the longest run in the US, at 11.6 kilometres. If your kids can ski well and love an adventure, book a guide like Tommy through Mountain Sports School, as it will be an amazing experience for them, too. It was lucky that skiing with Tommy was on my last day because I seriously could barely walk when I got out of bed the next morning. Next time, and there *will* be a next time, I'll add some rest days in for the family to explore this amazing part of Wyoming. ●

Jackson Hole Report Card

Info jacksonhole.com

Getting there Delta, American and United all fly directly into Jackson Hole from LA. It's 30 minutes by taxi to Teton Village and only 15 minutes to Jackson.

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roadhousebrewery.com

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