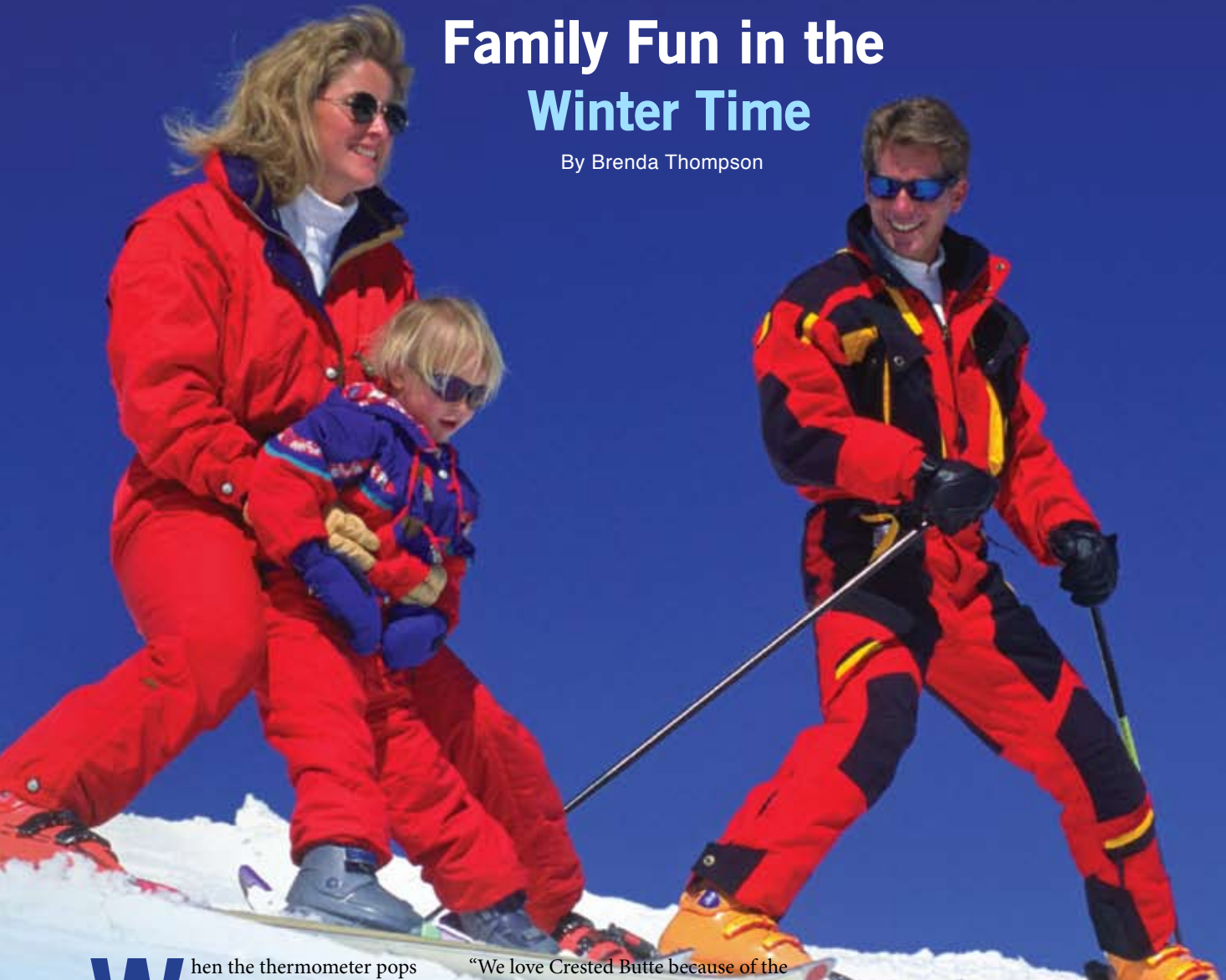


Where Sugar Land Skis

Family Fun in the Winter Time

By Brenda Thompson



When the thermometer pops back up to 70 degrees outside and it's only February in Sugar Land, you may start dreaming of snow, skiing, and hot chocolate. Many Sugar Land families love to head to the mountains. With so many choices, how do you choose? Check out these recommendations from some local families.

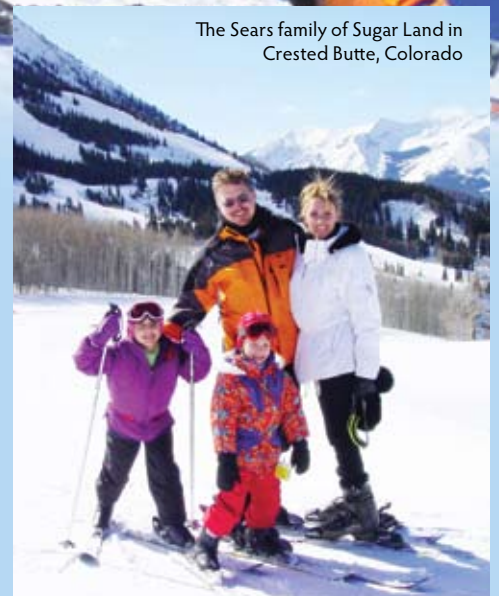
Crested Butte, Colorado *Get Away From It All*

Rated #1 resort in Skiing Magazine and centrally located, the resort is about a four hour drive from either Denver or Colorado Springs with direct flights also available. Ross and Vickie Sears and their children, ages 11 and 8, try to go skiing a couple of times a year.

"We love Crested Butte because of the small town friendly atmosphere," says Vickie.

The Sears family recommends renting a large, ski-in, ski-out condo so a few families can share expenses. "Crested Butte has a shuttle that brings you from the airport to the condo for a small fee. After that, you ski in and out or you take the condo's free shuttle. With the town's free bus system, there's no reason to rent a car," says Vickie. Condos equipped with kitchens can also help you save on meals and provide some needed downtime at the end of a long day. "We find that we prefer many times to eat at the condo at the end of the day of skiing because we are too tired to go out to eat," she says. The Sears family recommends looking

The Sears family of Sugar Land in Crested Butte, Colorado



for a resort that has a lot of beginner runs and young energetic ski instructors who will make the experience fun for kids. Ski school may seem like an expensive extra up front cost. But for kids, being in a class with others at their own level along with experienced instructors can help lessen any fears and increase their level of enjoyment. "Here the instructors are young and fun. They serve awesome kid friendly food, the kids make friends, and at the end of the day I am shocked at how much improvement they have made in their skiing," says Vickie.

For more fun in the snow there's playing, snowmobiling, and more. Vickie says, "In Crested Butte they have sledding, outdoor ice skating, sleigh rides, and nighttime tubing where they light up the mountain trail."

Steamboat, Colorado

Ski Town, USA!

Rated #7 resort in Skiing Magazine, Steamboat is Colorado's most accessible resort with daily non-stop flights into Steamboat.

Ed & Sharon Buckle have been going to Steamboat for more than 15 years and the last six with their children: Joseph, 11, Grace and Ann Marie, 7, and Erin, 3. "It just has the perfect combination of kids stuff, parent stuff and a real small town atmosphere. We have noticed that we see the same instructors year after year in the ski school, and I think that says a lot about the mountain and the local management," says Ed.



Sugar Land's Ward family ventured to Deer Valley Resort in Park City, Utah



Grace is dressed and ready to hit the slopes

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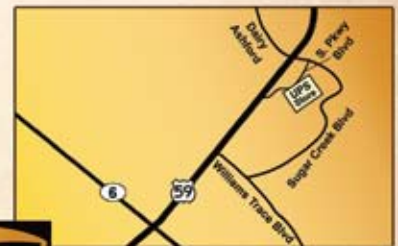
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Crested Butte, Colorado

Get Away From It All
skicb.com

Steamboat, Colorado

Ski Town, USA!
steamboat.com

Taos, New Mexico

Laid Back Adventure
skitaos.org

Deer Valley Resort, Park City, Utah

A Different State of Mind
deervalley.com

Catering to kids is tops at Steamboat, whether they ski or not. There are five kids-only lifts and two special beginner teaching areas. "The kids have always raved about how much fun ski school is. Grace always makes new friends and loves the treasure hunts and downhill racing. Joseph has loved the ski jumping and tree skiing," she says. More advanced kids can enjoy the frontier-style fort or kids-only terrain park.

When it's time for a ski break there's snow shoeing, horseback riding, Gondola rides up the mountain, ice fishing, sleigh ride dinners, dog sled rides to the natural hot springs park and more. "In downtown, you can watch ski jumping at Howelson Hill. The kids love this," says Sharon.

Taos, New Mexico

Laid Back Adventure

For laid back ski adventures, Taos Ski Valley may be just the place. About two hours north of Albuquerque, it remains one of the few family owned and operated ski resorts in North America.

Ben & Maria Martinez and their children, Jacob, 7, and Catie Rose, 5, have been skiing together in New Mexico for the last three years. "For us, Taos is a low key place without the bells and whistles of a more popular ski resort," says Maria. Fewer crowds also make it attractive. "We go during peak season and we never wait in long lines at the lifts. That's really important to us because of the kids' limited school breaks," she says.

The mountain is very accommodating to all ski levels with runs for beginners to the most experienced skier. "Taos also has one of the best ski schools in the country and I feel better knowing that the kids are with someone very experienced who can teach them better than Mom and Dad," she says.

The Martinez family getting ready to hit the slopes in Taos, New Mexico



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The Buckle family takes time out for a mountain top photo

“Ski vacations can be somewhat expensive because of the equipment rentals, lift tickets and ski school. Taos is not one of the most expensive. I think because it is more of a “purest” ski place,” says Maria. Off the slopes, Taos is full of activities like ice skating, tubing, snowmobiling, exploring new cultures or even hot air ballooning!

Park City, Utah

Invigorating Family Fun

Visiting Deer Valley Resort in Park City, Utah transports you to a different state of mind. One that’s wonderfully relaxed and invigorating all at the same time. Consistently rated #1 resort in SKI Magazine, it is a short drive from Salt Lake City.

Alan and Amanda Ward and children, Rebecca, 10, Matthew, 8, and Griffin, 4, loved Deer Valley for the fun both on and off the slopes. The kids went to ski school and loved to show off their new skills after lessons. “That was a very important part of every afternoon. We would pick the children up at the bottom of the slope after school and still have some daylight left to do a few runs as a family,” says Amanda.

When it’s time for a break, there’s snowmobiling, sledding, tubing, strolling through town and more. “Our day of play was one of the highlights of the trip,” says Amanda.

Lodges welcome guests with an elegant mountain atmosphere. “I personally loved the restaurant’s deck at the bottom of the mountain. I had a perfect view of the chair lifts and could sit and enjoy my latte and wonderful food while watching my children progress,” she says.

So, with all the choices, the next question you should be asking yourself is how soon can you get there? **SLM**

BRENDA THOMPSON lives with her family in Sugar Land and was previously the marketing Director for a Houston bank.

TIPS for your TRIP

Planning Your Ski Trip

Some resorts book up early but many offer last minute specials. Many also offer packages that allow you to take advantage of the many amenities available such as package ski lift tickets, free shuttle services, and more.

Something for Everyone

Most ski resorts now offer activities for families with children of all ages from infants on up. While the grown-ups and older kids can hit the slopes, little ones can enjoy age-appropriate activities including some fun outside snow games.

Family and Friends

Traveling with family and friends can be a great way to share expenses and make wonderful memories.

Getting There

Some resorts are easy to get to by car but can often mean driving on snowy or icy roads. Flying in can also save time meaning more time on the slopes and less time on the road.

Transportation

Check with the resort for details on free shuttle services. You may not need a rental car if getting around town is taken care of for you.

What to Wear

It’s not always as cold as you might think. Dress in layers to maximize comfort. Boots to slosh in the snow are a must for keeping toes dry and warm. Ask friends if you can borrow clothes or equipment.

Ski Equipment Musts

Renting equipment at the resort or shops nearby is easiest for most skiers. Their experienced staff will help find what’s just right for you. Also, once you’ve got it all together, ski valets are a nice option that let’s someone else deal with the logistics of equipment storage and retrieval when you’re not on the slopes.



Taos, New Mexico is a new hot spot for Sugar Land skiers