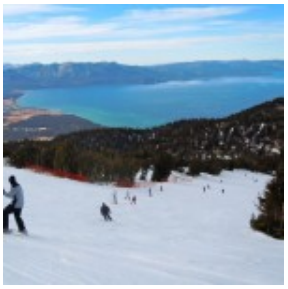
Families create holiday memories on the ski slopes

By Kathryn Reed

For those dreaming of a white Christmas, they had to leave the lake behind. But only for a short time and even then Lake Tahoe could still be in full view.

“The lack of natural snow has not put any damper on our fun,” Joe Hilliard of Corpus Christi, Texas, said.



Skiers and snowboarders schuss down the slopes of Heavenly on Christmas Day. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Three generations of Hilliards are on the South Shore for the Christmas holiday. With Joe Hilliard’s parents enjoying gambling, and his wife and kids wanting to ski, Lake Tahoe was the perfect vacation spot.

Six-year-old Savannah said the best part about skiing at Heavenly was going fast. She and 4-year-old brother Hunter spent two days in the kids’ ski camp at Heavenly Mountain Resort learning the sport. This was the first time both kids

had been on skis.

Based on the apparel in line for the gondola as well as at Tamarack Lodge on Christmas Day, it was obvious this was not an ordinary ski day. The number of ski or snowboard boots seemed to equal that of those clearly not participating in either sport.

Fun hats, and bright colored jackets and pants filled the lodge and slopes. Pink, at least this day, was one of the dominate colors.

Steve from Sacramento came dressed in a Santa outfit. He had no trouble negotiating the runs off Dipper despite the crowded slopes.

Twenty-seven-year-old Brenton could be enjoying a much warmer holiday if he were home in Australia. Instead, he'd rather travel with his snowboard. This year Tahoe, last year Japan.

While his Aussie accent was easy to discern, plenty of foreign languages and accents could be overheard in the lodge. The lodge felt like it was more full of out-of-towners than locals on this holiday.

Jayashre Tanbon brought her 3½-year-old daughter Aishwerya to enjoy the snow. The duo from San Jose comes to Tahoe about once year.

The little one likes to make snowballs, while mom said it's the weather and scenery that captivate her.

A family of six from Oahu wanted to go tubing, but it was sold out for the day. Still, the mom, dad, daughter, son, cousin and niece all took the ride up the gondola to check things out.

"It's beautiful," Antonio Manrique, 14, said of the resort and Tahoe in general. "We like the cold."

Coming from a much warmer climate meant some long-sleeve articles of clothing were under the tree.

Rhonda Kadokawa, the cousin in the group, said it had been about 30 years since she was last in Tahoe. She remembers snowmobiling then. While ski resorts can accommodate riders with manmade snow, the same cannot be said of businesses that operate the gas-powered sleds.

A family from Monterey was in line early enough to buy tubing tickets. This was the first time for any of them to visit Tahoe. While they said it was fun, it tired the kids out so they were all getting a bite to eat at the year-old lodge.

Chanel Sims, 12, said she liked how fast the tubes go on the snow; while Javionce Proctor, 13, said he was ready to up again.

Bags of ice sat on the table next to Linda Doller of Los Altos. On the first run of the day she tweaked her knee. With an elevated leg, she waited for her husband and two college-age daughters to get off the slopes. It had been 10 years since she last skied. She’s hoping whatever she did to her knee won’t keep her off the slopes for long.

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