Skiing doesn’t have to break the bank

By Frederick Reimers, Outside

The ticket-window price at major ski resorts this season will be well north of $100, especially during peak times like Christmas and Presidents Day weekend. That’s not to mention the $7 pints of beer, $12 burgers and that $10 can of peanuts you can’t resist grabbing from the minibar at 1am after bar hopping through quaint, snowy streets. But it is possible to cut some costs.

The best deals are always going to be season passes or multi-resort pass deals like the Mountain Collective and the Epic Pass. But if you can’t commit to that much resort riding, you should still buy your day-tickets now.



The Fairmont at Whistler is on the slopes of the ski resort. Photo/LTN file

“Buying your tickets in advance is just as important to cost savings as is skiing at off-peak times,” says Evan Reece, CEO of Liftopia, an online broker of lift tickets similar to airline ticket aggregators like Kayak.com and Skyscanner.com. “The earlier you purchase, the cheaper it will be.”

While you can buy slightly discounted advance tickets on the websites of major resorts like Vail and Jackson Hole, it’s a good idea to check out Liftopia first. They sell tickets for as much as 85 percent off face value for days when demand is projected to be low (think the Tuesday after Presidents Day weekend) at 250 resorts worldwide.

The problem with advanced tickets, however, is weather. Say its 20 below, or there’s freezing rain glazing the chairlifts, and you rightly decide to stay in the hot tub all day instead of skiing. You’ll have to eat the cost of the ticket. Or at least you would have in previous years. This season, however, Liftopia is adding flexibility to their model with two new tiers of pricing that allow purchasers to change their lift ticket to a different day without an additional fee. The “Value Plus” ticket will cost a bit more and allow a single date change. The “Flexible” option allows unlimited changes, though in both cases the buyer is responsible for the difference in cost if there is one.

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