

Plenty of snow on mountaintop as Heavenly opens



Winter has definitely arrived at Heavenly as evidenced Nov. 17 by the snow at the top of Tamarack chair looking down. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Opening day at Heavenly Mountain Resort was delayed a few hours, but that didn't seem to bother the hundreds of people who were making tracks Friday for the first time this season.

It did make for a bit of a long day for those who arrived at 6:30am to ensure they'd be first in line.

Roy Lambert of Gardnerville, Michael Brown of Stateline and Kouri Penn of South Lake Tahoe had the lock on the front row. There's about 15 in their posse. They consider themselves the first chair club. They've been at it for more than a dozen years.

It's the rush, being with friends and beating the crowds that has them wanting that first gondola carriage of the season.



Roy Lambert, from left, Michael Brown and Kouri Penn are ready for the first gondola car of the season at Heavenly on Nov. 17. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The day started late because Tamarack chair needed to be deiced. It was the only lift running, which is normal for the start of the season.

The snow, though, was awesome. As one man from Carson City said, it was like January snow.

On the mountain it's like a frosty winter wonderland where the trees are wrapped in a thick layer of snow.

Snow is being made as well, which will speed up the process for more terrain to be opened. Expect Dipper to be the next lift to spin.

For Art Bonfert of Auburn, he's been to opening day the last four years – a treat since retiring.

"The skiing is never good, but it's just the fact you can be here," Bonfert told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is his 49th year to ski Heavenly. Last year he got in 75 days, this year he's hoping for 100.



It was hard to smell the fresh mountain air in the Tamarack line on Nov. 17. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Jesse Sopoaga of Monterey has been hearing his buddy's stories about snowboarding and knew it was time to share in the fun. He rented equipment at home, pulled the appropriate clothing together, stayed over Thursday and was ready hours before the gondola was open. He paid \$109 for the experience.

His friend Jeff Oda of Pinole has an Epic Tahoe pass. Tahoe is his place to unwind from the stresses of the Bay Area. This, though, was his first opening day.

It seemed to be a bit of a party atmosphere in the Tamarack lift line with all the smoking – cigarettes, pot, vaping – and the alcohol being consumed. Even though the resort has signs not to partake in those activities in line, staff wasn't doing anything about it. It was hard to miss the smell and not see the big puffs of smoke.

Perhaps once more terrain opens it won't be such a nuisance to those not consuming.

Northstar was supposed to open Nov. 17 as well, but the storm brought more rain than snow to the Truckee resort. It is now slated to open Nov. 23.

Squaw Valley opened Nov. 17, Mount Rose is open, Mammoth is open, Kirkwood is set to open Nov. 22, and other resorts are waiting on Mother Nature to help cover the slopes with white stuff. Another storm system is expected to reach Tahoe starting Sunday night. It is best to check the website of each ski resort to see if it is open as well as how much terrain is skiable.