Vail Resorts revenue tops $1 billion

By Denver Business Journal

Vail Resorts Inc., parent company of Heavenly Mountain Resort and Northstar-at-Tahoe, posted a 30.4 percent increase in revenue for its fiscal year, which ended July 31, bringing the number up to $1.17 billion.

The Broomfield, Colo.-based ski resort operator posted revenue of $894.8 million in its prior fiscal year.

Net income increased to $34.5 million from $30.4 million during the same period.

Vail Resorts properties attracted 6 million skier visits during the year, a 16.3 percent increase. The company's Colorado resorts drew 5.1 million skiers, a 4 percent increase.

Read the whole story

The Standards at MontBleu

Tahoe Arts Project kicks off its 25th season with the a cappella quintet The Standards on Oct. 7 at 7pm at MontBleu Theater in Stateline.

The human voice, that's how it all started for five brothers who shared a passion for music. Singing together at an early age, they began the makings of this one of a kind vocal group, forging a relationship beyond brotherhood.

Hailed as one of the most sought after harmony vocal groups of today, The Standards have enjoyed success worldwide for their unique approach to vocal entertainment. Their shows offer more than just a typical music concert..

The quintet is made up of Morgan Williams, Nathan Williams, Jordon Williams, Nicholas Williams and Quinn.

The Standards will be performing their “Music with a Message” program for South Lake Tahoe students the week of Oct. 3-7 as part of Tahoe Arts Project’s in school performing arts series.

A key element to what makes them appealing to many different age groups is that they primarily sing songs that are known as “Standards.” You know and have heard them. Mix that with a new generation sound and unique style, you have an electrifying combination.

Tickets are $20 for adults, $10 for youth and $15 for seniors and can be purchased in advance at the California and Nevada Visitors Centers in South Lake Tahoe. To charge tickets by phone or for more information, call Tahoe Arts Project at (530) 542.3632 or go online.

‘Women’s Journey Through History’

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe and the South Lake Tahoe branch of the American Association for University Women are partnering with Aston Lakeland Village to bring an original play about women’s contribution to U.S. history to the South Tahoe High School theater on Oct. 12 at 7pm.

“We Did It For You! – Women’s Journey Through History” written by Thea Iberall, poet, playwright and neuroscientist, is a musical tour through the journey that women have taken to get rights in the United States, starting with the struggle women had in the 17th century Puritan Revolution through to 21st century empowered women politicians.

The play focuses on the stories of a few bold women throughout history who believe they deserve more than being treated as minors and extensions of men. It features characters who not only struggled to obtain their rights, but made contributions that were overlooked in many history books.

Iberall brings a Southern California-based performing troupe of nine women to South Lake Tahoe for three performances; two assembly performances for South Tahoe High School students during the day Oct. 11 and one public performance the night of Oct. 12. Fifty tickets to the evening performance have been offered to Whittell High School students.

In addition, Iberall will speak to a joint meeting of SISLT and AAUW members and their guests about her experiences writing and producing the work at a lunch presentation at noon on Oct. 12 at Harrah’s.

Tickets for the public performance $10 and are available online or through Soroptimist and AAUW group members. Proceeds from the performance will benefit S Club, a student community service club sponsored by SISLT.

Tourism focus groups know

little about Nevada

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Sun

State tourism leaders trying to figure out the best way to brand Nevada to attract visitors may have a bigger challenge on their hands than they thought.

In six focus groups in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, participants demonstrated little knowledge of the Silver State and its tourism attractions.

David Bratton, founder of San Francisco-based Destination Analysts Inc., which conducted the focus groups, updated the Nevada Tourism Commission on the results Wednesday. Destination Analysts is gathering research for Seattle-based GreenRubino, which has been contracted to develop a brand identity for the state.



Tahoe is one area of Nevada people know about.
Photo/LTN file

Bratton told commissioners members of the focus groups listed “explore Nevada parks,” “have an adventure” and “sense of exploration” as the top three experiences travelers could have in Nevada.

They also listed “gambling,” “enjoy nightlife” and “visit Reno

as well as other state attractions” as the bottom three experiences.

In a map exercise in which group members were asked to give their impressions of the state by drawing on an outline of a map, one respondent drew “Vegas” in the middle of the state and labeled the rest of it as “empty desert.” Another placed Las Vegas in the southern end of the state and Lake Tahoe, surrounded by images of mountains and then a circle around the rest of the state labeled “not a whole lot.”

Another map-maker located “Vegas,” “Beautiful Tahoe,” Winnemucca, Wendover and Area 51 in approximately the right locations, labeling the rest of the state as “nothing.”

Yet another may have a future as a meteorologist, labeling eastern Nevada as “windy and hot,” the center of the state as “hot and dry” and Southern Nevada as “hell-like,” with the area around Las Vegas as “more hell-like.”

An attractions analysis indicated Great Basin National Park, Lehman Caves, Lake Tahoe, ghost towns around the state, Las Vegas and the Ruby Mountains near Elko as the state’s most interesting attractions.

Read the whole story

Dugard files complaint against federal government

By Sam Cohen, FOX40 News

A girl held captive for 18 years, enduring horrific abuse and neglect, filed a complaint against the U.S. government.

The complaint filed on behalf of Jaycee Lee Dugard does not seek a specific amount for the circumstances she endured, but rather asks a judge to make a settlement decision after a case is presented.

Dugard was kidnapped in 1991 from her South Lake Tahoe street when she was 11 years old. She was then held captive and repeatedly abused at the Antioch home of Phillip and Nancy Garrido. Dugard had two daughters during her 18-year captivity, fathered by Garrido.

According to a release from attorneys representing Dugard, she has tried to set up private mediation with Government officials in this matter, but those requests were denied. They filed the lawsuit with the Federal Government because they ultimately had parole supervision responsibility over Phillip Garrido when he was released from jail in 1988 until the State of California assumed responsibility in 1999. It was during this time that Dugard was kidnapped.

Read the whole story

Taylor Creek spill almost completely cleaned up

By Kathryn Reed

Used oil is what was dumped into Taylor Creek, according to water samples taken from the South Shore tributary that leads to Lake Tahoe.

The contamination has been isolated and almost fully contained.

The booms that were put in place by Lake Valley firefighters will remain until Friday. This is in case when the U.S. Forest removes the contaminated vegetation today any oil that may be dislodged will be caught.



Booms in Taylor Creek are scheduled to be removed Sept. 23. Photo/LTN

Dave Johnston, hazmat supervisor with El Dorado County Environmental Services, told *Lake Tahoe News* once the booms are removed, that would be the extent of the cleanup required. His agency is the lead on the cleanup.

The Forest Service is trying to find the person or people who dumped the nearly 2 gallons of oil into the pristine water.

Cheva Heck, spokeswoman for the USFS, said no can or other container has been found that might provide clues as to who is responsible for dumping the contaminant.

The spill was first noticed Sept. 17 by a Forest Service employee who works at the Taylor Creek Visitors Center on the South Shore off Highway 89.

Officials have said the minor spill should have no impact on the kokanee salmon that this week began their migration up the creek to spawn.

Ties that bind Nevada-China continue to grow stronger

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

In the early 1860s, in the newly named territory of Nevada, settlers had a problem. Gold and silver had just been discovered in the mountains, but there was no easy way to transport it out, or to get workers from the California-based mining industry in. The solution would come from China.

Chinese immigrants made up 90 percent of the workforce that built the Central-Pacific Railroad, which lifted early Nevada from intermountain oblivion by connecting it to the rest of the country. In the 20 years after construction commenced, the state's population grew tenfold.

Now, 150 years later, Nevada is once again turning to China again to pull its economy out of a protracted recession, which economists predict, absent some prodding, could hobble the state for the next two decades.

This time, it's going to take more than a railroad (though high-speed rail is one piece of the hoped-for fix). Nevada's economic situation will require a long-term solution encompassing mines, casinos, a fledgling export market and energy.

Nevada, we keep hearing from lawmakers and lobbyists, has a lot of potential in all those areas. But China has the one thing neither Nevada nor the US government has to develop that potential: Cash.

After years of growth in America's appetite for Chinese

imports, China holds the biggest share of US government debt among foreign entities, about $1.2 trillion. In recent months, the tide has been shifting. Although China still sends out more than it brings in, its demand for imports is surging—as much as 30 percent in one month this summer—and some US states are seeing opportunities in China's new willingness to spend.

For Nevada, China's growing consumer culture is helping keep the state afloat in the short term by sustaining gaming and tourism. In the long term, state officials are counting on China's emerging entrepreneurship to provide investment for Nevada to modernize and diversify its economy.

But just as it was a century and a half ago, the road to a prosperous partnership is paved with potential political pitfalls.

Chinese immigrants who came to Nevada in the 1860s were lured by the promise of steady employment and a territorial charter that was relatively friendly to foreigners, allowing them to own land and mining claims. But they endured discriminatory pay and fierce racism.

Once the railroad-building boom was over, many left. Chinese made up almost nine percent of Nevada's population in 1880, but by 1950 their numbers dwindled to 241. And although the local Chinese community is enjoying another surge these days, it still less than one percent of the population.

Today, anti-China sentiment is driven more by economic realities than racism, but the attitude still stems from a perceived threat: That cooperation with the Chinese will lead to the economic undoing of the United States. Outsourcing—causing the American economy to hemorrhage more jobs—is the chief fear, and one that politicians of all stripes have stoked.

There are other barriers too. China has not been responsive to American demands to improve its record on human rights,

especially in Tibet. Piracy is a huge problem in parts of China, especially for high-tech businesses that rely on patents and respect for intellectual property. China also exploits its trade advantage through currency manipulation to keep Chinese products cheap. Democrats are now advocating tariffs, and Republicans are calling for China to be eliminated from global free trade zones.

It creates a dilemma for the Silver State and its economy: Should we back off until the political dust clears, or grasp a fleeting economic opportunity in an effort to get on the leading edge of Chinese investment. In reality, the state may not have many other options. Nevada's critical casinos-and-tourism sector has lagged the country in recovering from the Great Recession. Meanwhile, a fiscal crisis in Washington means federal funding for new economic ventures, especially in renewable energy, could dry up in a matter of weeks. That's incentive to cross the political picket line: The faster Nevada gets ahead of the curve in building an alliance with China, the better the state's prospects of attracting investment. Nevada, after all, has the advantage of a long-established relationship with China, born in betting rooms more than a decade ago.

Read the whole story

Small group owns 40% of Incline's lakefront property

By Yun Long, Reno Gazette-Journal

Of the 105 Incline Village lots that border Lake Tahoe, 40, or nearly 40 percent of available property, are controlled by

just 15 owners.

Billionaires and millionaires have flocked to Lake Tahoe to build estates for decades. But the recession has presented additional opportunities for those who long to build a private, mega-compound at the lake.

“If you find the location that you love and that you are really drawn to, you might or might not have the opportunity to expand on that land,” said Kerry Donovan, a Chase International broker. “Many want to expand their privacy, and more people want more acreage – not less.”

Most Lake Tahoe parcels already have buildings on them. Some luxury homebuyers tear down existing structures and build an estate that suits their taste.

“It’s a lot easier to start from scratch sometimes,” Donovan said.

Those with the means have long been acquiring Lake Tahoe property to build compounds and dream homes. In 1987, businessman Warren Trepp bought seven homes and then proceeded to razed them to build a 8,000-square foot residence. Junk-bond king Michael Milken, casino mogul Steven Wynn and many from Silicon Valley such as PeopleSoft Inc. chief David Duffield and Oracle CEO Larry Ellison followed.

Even with the housing market going bust in Nevada, Incline-Crystal Bay’s 89451 zip code still made Forbes’ 2010 list of the most expensive ZIP codes in the U.S. At No. 389, it was the only Nevada entry on the list.

Donovan said the high-net worth individuals are drawn to Nevada for its tax advantages, the potential to move or headquarter a company here and because they want to own an enjoyable asset.

“This is where they want to be,” she said.

Incline Village's lakefront properties now are listed from $2.9 million to $49.9 million and a half-acre can be valued from $7.5 million to $9 million, depending on market conditions, according to Chase. Having private piers and buoys adds to the value.

Read the whole story

CTC acquires land it wants to eventually swap with S. Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A long dormant piece of land between Fantasy Inn and IHOP in South Lake Tahoe may have a chance of being developed even though the California Tahoe Conservancy now owns it.

This is one of three parcels the CTC board agreed to purchase for a total of $437,500. The other lots are in Tahoe City and Kings Beach and come under the environmentally sensitive lands designation. The South Tahoe parcel, which is a half-acre, was purchased under the land coverage program.

That parcel alone cost $375,000.



CTC bought this property

next to IHOP with the intention of the city of South Lake Tahoe trading for it. Photo/LTN

CTC Deputy Director Ray Lacey told the board at the meeting last week that the value of the marketable rights exceeds the value of the land. The property comes with 22,450-square-feet of coverage and 1,158-square-feet of commercial floor area.

The owners of the Fantasy Inn lost the dirt lot this summer. A private individual trust acquired it in foreclosure. There was a time when it was valued at $1 million.

While the CTC owns it, the city of South Lake Tahoe is likely to eventually own it in a trade with the state agency.

Lacey said that is why the Conservancy bought what would normally be deemed an unusual parcel for its inventory. The worry was someone else could have purchased the land and sold off the development rights, leaving this parcel vacant and forever a dust bowl.

With it being in the commercial corridor of Highway 50, the thinking is this is where development should go. At one time a Unocal gas station was on the property. The tanks were taken out in 1994.

The CTC staff report says, “The purchase of this property presents an opportunity to further the city’s redevelopment plans through the exchange of the subject property for approximately 8.2 acres owned by the city on Glenwood Way.”

That city property is where the old drive-in was.

Any exchange of property would need to be approved by the CTC board and City Council.

Youth mountain bike races at Northstar

The Sierra Nevada High School Racing Series comes to Northstar-at-Tahoe for three events this fall starting Saturday.

Originally formed in the foothills around Folsom Lake, the Northstar-at-Tahoe venue is being added to make it easier for youth in the Tahoe-Reno area to participate.

The first race at Northstar is the Tara Llanes Classic cross country event Sept. 24. The series returns to Northstar on Oct. 8-9 for a weekend of racing. That weekend will have a spectator friendly short-track race on Saturday and the longer cross-country event on Sunday.

The series has age and ability categories for riders age 18 or younger. Although it is geared toward high school and middle school students, there are also categories for those 12 and younger. Riders may form a team from their school to accumulate team points in the series or race independently.

The Northstar events are presented by the Reno Wheelmen and sanctioned by USA Cycling. Online registration is open. For more information, email mtb11@renowheelmen.org.