Plenty of tickets available for Sochi Games

By Mason Levinson, Bloomberg

Sochi may attract the fewest American visitors to a Winter Olympics in 20 years amid terrorism concerns, a lack of luxury hotel rooms and difficulties procuring visas, according to U.S. tour operators.

Russia's plan to spend $50 billion on hotels and other infrastructure to convert a small city on the Black Sea into a year-round resort hasn't resulted in enough high-end hotels, and the existing facilities have raised prices by 121 percent for the event, according to trivago.co.uk, a U.K. website.

Russia's Olympic organizing committee said that 30 percent of tickets remained unsold three weeks before the Feb. 7 opening ceremony. The Vancouver Games in 2010 wound up selling 97 percent of its seats. With few international flights directly into the Sochi airport, and most Westerners requiring visas, a last-minute rush is unlikely, tour operators say.

Sochi has planned to sell 1.1 million tickets, according to an International Olympic Committee marketing document, meaning about 330,000 remained available as of the latest update from the organizing committee.

Read the whole story

South Lake Tahoe parolee back behind bars

A South Lake Tahoe resident who was just released from prison could be headed back there.

Dismas Womack, 47, was arrested early Wednesday morning in the Al Tahoe neighborhood of South Lake Tahoe.

The SWAT team arrived in its souped up mine resistant ambush prevention vehicle, which is used in high risk-situations.

“We found firearms and ammunition in his residence,” police Lt. Brian Williams told *Lake Tahoe News*. This is a violation of his parole.

Womack had been in court this week regarding a restraining order that his ex-girlfriend has against him. Williams said Womack violated the court order and a warrant was issued for his arrest and to search his residence.

Womack was being held without bail at the El Dorado County Jail.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Squaw offering tours of former Olympic sites

Squaw Valley is offering skiers and riders a glimpse into the past with 1960 Winter Games heritage tours.

These are three-hour private excursions of Squaw Valley’s on-

mountain Olympic venues and highlight historic moments of the 1960 Winter Games.

The tours are led by professional guides who will lead participants down the same trails that were used as Olympic venues during the 1960 Winter Games. The private tours are available for individuals or groups of up to five people and cost $200 ($40 per person for a group of five).

As part of the tours, guides will also share insider-details on Squaw's heritage and the story of the 1960 Winter Olympics.

Tours may be booked by calling 800.403.0206 or emailing lesson@squaw.com. It is suggested that participants have intermediate to advanced skiing or snowboarding skills for the tours.

Calif. police reluctant to set pot rules

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

In 2010, as Colorado lawmakers were creating America's first state-licensed and regulated medical marijuana industry, fellow police officers at a Colorado Drug Investigators Association conference jeered a state law enforcement official assigned to draft the legislation.

Some of the sharpest barbs came from visiting narcotics officers from California. While Colorado moved forward with pot industry oversight, the narcotics officers who berated Cook were right – at least about California, where trying to regulate America's largest marijuana economy has become a

perennial political loser. A key factor has been intense law enforcement opposition itself.

In California, police have forcefully opposed any legislation seen as legitimizing a marijuana industry. Their opposition reflects a belief by many police officers that medical marijuana businesses are profiteering shams that were never authorized by California voters.

Training seminars offered for police by the California Narcotic Officers' Association suggest there is no such thing as medical marijuana and that state voters were hoodwinked into approving its use so people could legally get stoned.

Read the whole story

Low water levels a boon for gold prospectors

By Richard Chang, Sacramento Bee

A small gold rush is taking hold in the foothills of Placer County, where prospectors young and old are taking advantage of record-low water levels to search for precious metal.

The Gold Rush of 1849 it isn't. But the real possibility of finding new gold – even a few flakes – has people giddy. Prospectors say unusually low rivers are opening up areas that haven't been touched by man in decades, if not over a century.

"Stuff that's normally submerged in water is now available. It opens up the possibility for nuggets," said James Hutchings, Sacramento chapter president of the Gold Prospectors Association of America.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Mushroom lasagna perfect for guests

By Kathryn Reed

My sister, Pam, just rolled her eyes when I told her she was going to be helping me with a new recipe. She’s rather used to being put to work in the kitchen when she visits as well as a guinea pig of sorts. And it didn’t matter that we were spending the weekend celebrating her birthday.



The recipe below, from the October 2013 issue of *Sunset* magazine, is a definite keeper. It is hearty enough that the three meat eaters at the table didn’t leave anything on their plate and two of them had seconds. It also stands up to having a full-bodied red wine as a complement.

There were several moving parts, so it was nice to have another pair of hands in the kitchen. But much of it can also be made ahead of time, so if you were to make this for a group or for people who aren’t into helping, that would be a way to take away some potential stress.

We put in more garlic than it calls for. Pam and I believe garlic is a food group. And we only used one leek because that’s all I bought. I’m not sure another would have made much of a difference.

All of the flavors come together without one being too

dominant. It is a definite recipe for the mushroom lovers at your table.

Mushroom and Fresh Herb Lasagna

12 no-boil lasagna noodles (½ pound)

1 quart milk

½ C unsalted butter

½ C flour

About 1½ tsp kosher salt

About ½ tsp pepper

½ tsp nutmeg

3 garlic cloves, minced

3 T chopped parsley, divided

1 T chopped fresh thyme leaves, divided

About 3 T olive oil, divided

2 medium leeks, sliced into thin rings

1½ pounds portabella mushrooms, sliced

½ pound shiitake mushrooms, stemmed and sliced

1 C finely shredded Parmesan cheese

1 C plus 2 T coarsely shredded Asiago cheese

Soften noodles in a pan of very hot water while you prep the other ingredients.

Make béchamel (white sauce): Bring milk to a simmer in a saucepan and remove from heat. Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add flour and cook, stirring, until slightly

darkened, 2 minutes. Whisk milk into flour mixture all at once and whisk until smooth. Add 1½ tsp. salt, ½ tsp. pepper, and the nutmeg. Sauce should be thick enough to coat a spoon; if it isn't, cook over medium-low heat, stirring, until thickened, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in garlic, 2 T parsley, and ½ T thyme. Keep covered.

Preheat oven to 375 degree. Heat a deep, wide pot over medium-high heat 2 minutes. Swirl in 1 tbsp. oil and add leeks. Cook until tender but not browned, 3 to 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Scoop leeks into a bowl and set aside.

Swirl 2 T oil into pot. Add mushrooms, season lightly with salt and pepper, and cook over medium heat, covered, until mushrooms are tender and beginning to release juices, about 5 minutes. Uncover and cook until edges start to brown. Stir in leeks and remaining ½ T thyme. Remove from heat.

Mix Parmesan with Asiago.

Assemble lasagna: Oil a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Spread a few spoonfuls of béchamel over bottom. Arrange 3 noodles crosswise in dish, then spoon on about ½ C béchamel, followed by a third of the mushrooms and 1/3 C cheeses. Repeat layers twice more. Top with a final layer of noodles and béchamel, and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Bake lasagna until browned and bubbling, about 45 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining 1 T parsley and let sit at least 15 minutes before slicing.

Make ahead: Through step 6, 1 day, chilled, or up to 3 months, frozen. Let chilled lasagna sit at room temperature 1 hour before baking. Frozen lasagna can either be thawed in the refrigerator overnight and then baked, or baked straight from the freezer for 1¾ hours (cover for first hour).

Class to focus on care giving skills

Elder Options is sponsoring an educational forum Feb. 25 from 9am-1pm called Introduction to Care Giving Skills. Taught by Roberta Rimbault, this class will focus on what caregivers need to know either at the beginning of care or to develop the knowledge and skill to develop these skills as a new profession.

Introduction to Care Giving Skills is the key to opening the door to older adulthood, to understanding the issues around getting older, how to be safe, physically active, maintain good health and dietary habits as well as recognizing the independent spirit within or with others you're working with. It is geared toward the older individual, adults who are helping to provide the care, and individuals wanting to learn more about the growing field of older adults.

All classes are open and available to the community at-large. The class will be at the Cameron Park CSD. Cost is $35.

Call (530) 350.4655 to register. Class is limited to 20 participants.

House of the Year – on the

shore of Lake Tahoe

By Stefanos Chen, Wall Street Journal

You could say that Zari Mansouri's Lake Tahoe home has views to die for.

"The colors from the West Shore are just so spectacular," she says about the vistas from her roughly 4,100-square-foot Lake Tahoe condo – the same golden hues in Fredo Corleone's fatal scene in "The Godfather: Part II."



Zari Mansouri outside her Homewood are house. Photo/Jason Henry/Wall Street Journal

That scene, in which Fredo, played by the late John Cazale, takes a one-way fishing trip after betraying the family, was filmed in what is now known as Fleur du Lac Estates, a 22-unit condominium development near Homewood. Originally built in the 1930s by industrialist Henry Kaiser, who was instrumental in the creation of the Hoover Dam, the 15-acre compound was converted in the early 1980s into this gated luxury development.

The property won over WSJ.com readers: Mansouri's home received the most votes, 88,957, out of the 897,478 votes cast in the 2013 U.S. House of the Year contest. Mansouri's home is

on the market for $6.499 million; the other homes in the poll were also on the market at one point during 2013.

Read the whole story

January in Tahoe more suited for tanning

By Kathryn Reed

The storm forecast to roll into the Lake Tahoe Basin today is not going to quench the land's thirst, but it might alter the record books.

Going into the week, this has been the second driest January on record for South Lake Tahoe with 0.17 inches of precipitation. However, those records only date to 2000. The driest was in 2003 when 0.03 inches fell. No. 3 was 2001 with 0.40 inches.

In Tahoe City, where records have been kept for more than a century, this too is the second driest January with 0.35 inches. It is tied with 1985. The driest was in 1991 with 0.08 inches.



It was so warm at the Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe on Jan. 25 that people were lathering on sunscreen and taking off clothes. Photo/LTN

Rain is what is forecast for lake level starting today, with a winter storm watch in effect for the basin for a 24-hour period starting Thursday at 4am. One to 2 feet of snow is possible above 8,000 feet, according to the National Weather Service in Reno, 1 foot above 7,000 feet, and 6 inches at the lake.

A “quick punch” is how Jessica Kielhorn with the Weather Service described the storm. A lingering shower may persist into Friday.

The drought of 1976-77 is often compared to what is going on now in California and Northern Nevada. One reason is because now, like then, a high pressure sat over the states that diverted storms elsewhere. The current ridge is 4 miles high and 2,000 miles long.

A silver lining compared to the 1970s is the advent of snowmaking. The overnight temperatures have allowed snowmaking operations to continue most nights through the dry spell. Heavenly Mountain Resort this week opened more terrain on the California side.

Plus, resorts will bring snow from other parts of the mountain to fill in bare spots that have been skied off. And the groomers are also earning their checks this season by ensuring runs are not slabs of frozen hardpack.

But daytime temperatures this month have been balmy. The mean maximum temperature so far for January in South Lake Tahoe has been 51.7 degrees – a record. In 2012 the mean maximum temp

for January was 48.8 degrees, 47.3 degrees in 1986 and 47.2 degrees in 2003.

The highest temp for a January was recorded at 61 degrees in 2011. So far South Tahoe has hit 58 degrees as a high this month.

In Tahoe City the mean maximum temp is also at a record this month at 46.9 degrees. The previous record of 46.8 degrees was set in 1961, with 1986 being 46.6 degrees.

The record high for a Tahoe City January was set in 1927 at 60 degrees. This month it's gotten up to 55 degrees.

While the water content for the Sierra was at 20 percent of normal when it was measured earlier this month, it will be less than that when the next readings are taken Jan. 30.

Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed 2014-15 budget calls for $618.7 million for water efficiency projects, wetland and watershed restoration, groundwater programs, conservation, flood control, and integrated water management.

"As we work on emergency actions to manage through one of the driest winters on record, we are also taking proactive, long-term steps to prepare California for future droughts and flood," Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird said in a statement. "Each decade brings improvements, but also significantly highlights what we can do better. The California Water Action Plan gives us clear focus and vision for the next five years."

The governor's budget also would allow Department of Water Resources to better monitor the groundwater resources that provide more than one-third of California's supplies in dry years, and supports the development of a state backstop for sustainable groundwater management practices by the State Water Resources Control Board, should local efforts to do so not materialize.

Former Raley’s exec going to prison

David John Magana, a former advertising director for Raley’s, was sentenced Jan. 28 to three years and 11 months in prison and ordered to pay more than $2.9 million in restitution for defrauding the grocery store chain out of more than $3 million.

The 47-year-old Newcastle resident pleaded guilty in February 2013 to the charges. Two other defendants pleaded guilty and were sentenced in December. Jason Allen Smith, 47, of Foresthill was sentenced to three years and one month in prison and ordered to pay $1.6 million in restitution. Martin Stewart Cullenward, 60, of Cool, was sentenced to three years and five months in prison and ordered to pay $1.4 million in restitution.

According to court documents, from at least May 14, 2007, until Sept. 28, 2010, the three devised several schemes to defraud Raley’s. In one scheme, Magana demanded that a printing company and a paper company pay Cullenward unnecessary commissions in order to keep doing business with Raley’s. The unnecessary commissions were disguised as additional charges within their regular invoices to Raley’s. Magana approved for payment all of the inflated invoices, and Cullenward paid Magana a kickback after he received the “commissions.”

Magana and Cullenward sold significant quantities of Raley’s paper inventory to third parties at a discounted rate. They falsely reported to Raley’s that the paper had been used in the normal course of business.

“Mr. Magana, along with his co-conspirators carefully crafted a scheme to take control of millions of dollars of company money for personal gain,” IRS-criminal investigation acting Special Agent in Charge Shannon Hodges said in a statement. “Not only did he defraud his employer, but the everyday customer. Those who line their pockets with profits from these schemes should know they will not go undetected and will be held accountable.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report