



*Fantastic*

FAMILY

FUN

ALPINE ACTIVITIES AND ADVENTURES FOR THE  
PINT-SIZED SET ARE PLENTIFUL AT BEAVER CREEK

BY KIMBERLY NICOLETTI



**F**ROM A DISTANCE, BEAVER CREEK MAY LOOK LIKE A REGULAR MOUNTAIN, but its village and special kid zones are chock-full of sparks of laughter, imagination and memory makers. ♣ On any given day, an energetic, legendary accordion player named Helmut Fricker dresses in lederhosen and yodels through the village. In summer, kids splash along the banks of the creek underneath a covered bridge or play at the children's fountain. On wintry Thursday nights, they ski or snowboard down the mountain holding glow sticks while popular music plays, and then families gather to watch fireworks. Throughout the year, costumed characters, including



*Cookie Time, Old Man Winter and a festive lighted plaza greet visitors during the winter season.*



Old Man Winter, Western folks and springtime creatures infuse even more energy into Beaver Creek. In the middle of it all, a skating rink glistens, beckoning kids and parents to glide, stroke and maybe even spin, day or night, winter or summer.

While most ski resorts were developed with skiers in mind, Beaver Creek evolved out of a love for families, and it shows in nearly every detail, from escalators that ease the strain of walking in stiff ski boots to warm, chocolate chip cookies served fresh daily at 3 p.m.

Beaver Creek Ambassadors understand that one of the first things that can ruin a ski vacation — no matter how many free cookies they pass out — is struggling with kids' ski boots sliding off as they walk



**IT'S LIKE THE KIDS ARE IN DISNEYLAND."**

what seems like a mile, while parents try to precariously balance their own skis and poles and that of their kids'. That's why they're there to help, every step of the way, whether it's carrying skis, handing out lip balm or expediting ski school registration.

"From the very beginning, the folks who created Beaver Creek have clearly made a commitment to make it an incredible place for the entire family," says Brian Hall, of Blue Creek Productions, which puts on most children's events. "They know that Beaver Creek is a place where families come together to create memories."

### **EVERY DAY'S A WINTER WONDERLAND**

After kicking off the season with a gingerbread competition as well as the chocolate chip cookie contest, the fun begins in earnest.

On Mondays, Ripperoo, the mountain's official mascot, parades kids from the family-friendly Ranch down a beginner run, playing his favorite music. The mascot also chills at Ripperoo's Retreat, near the top of the Gold Dust run, waiting to take pictures with kids from 1-2:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays.

On Monday evenings, families can disco-skate their way around a swirling-lit ice rink.

Western characters come to life on Tuesdays and Sundays, when the Ranch hosts Children's Story Time — no lift ticket necessary. The characters also hang out at

kid-specific zones on the mountain and tell stories in various forts, mines, cabins and "Indian burial grounds," through which the kids can ski. "We bring the fun and the history of the West to life," Hall says.

During Rail Jam Playgrounds, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, instructors help intermediates and above crank up their skills in front of McCoy's Café, where parents can relax with a drink and snacks.

This year, Beaver Creek has added a new scavenger hunt called Foto Friday. Participants can check [beavercreek.com/fotofriday](http://beavercreek.com/fotofriday) on Fridays, beginning at 8 a.m. to view clues to find the exact spots so they can take a picture of themselves. From 4-5 p.m., participants can show off their pics outside of Beaver Creek Sports, print their favorite shots, and earn a prize, if they find at least five of the clues.

On Saturdays from 4-5:30 p.m., the village buzzes with games, caricature drawings and other family-fun events.

And great entertainment abounds, on various dates, when regional and local ice skaters perform routines featuring incredible costumes, music and lighting to dazzle spectators of all ages.

As if that's not enough activity, the Haymaker Tubing Hill and Marmot Maze entertain both skiers/riders and non-snow-sliders alike in the afternoons and early evenings. Kids can crawl through the maze, while tubing offers a wild ride as a tube careens down a choice of three carved lanes — always a bit of a heart-stopper that leaves the tubers grinning from ear to ear!

In addition to tubing, the resort has a lot more to offer, with its "BC<3t2," or "Beaver Creek Loves Teens Too" program. A half dozen times throughout the year, the resort offers a twilight snowshoe and pizza party for \$35. Everything's provided for the trek and dinner at the Nordic Center.

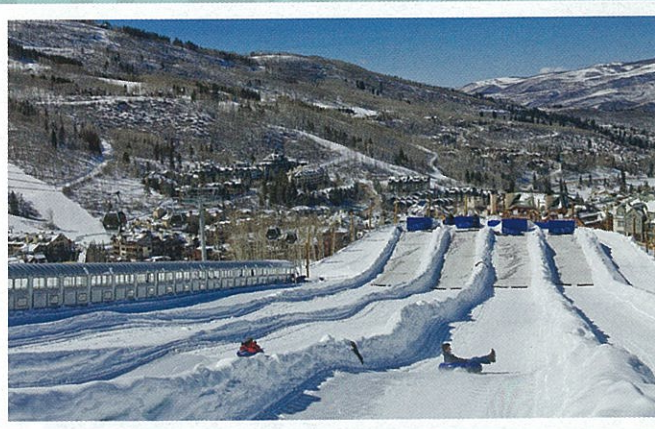
And the Teen Trick Class @ The Anti-Gravity Center allows adventurers to test their limits with flips and stunts as certified instructors teach a 45-minute class, followed by free time in the trampoline center. Beaver Creek offers specific dates in which staff members shuttle teens to and from the facility and provide ice cream.

## WINTER FESTIVALS SPARK IMAGINATIONS

Every December, the creatures of Winterlund crawl through a portal, which leads from their underground habitat straight to Beaver Creek's village. Throughout the holiday season, characters like Old Man Winter help kids' dreams come true as they tie a ribbon to his



*Snowball fights in aspen glades and tubing runs down Haymaker Hill turn a vacation into an adventure.*





An adventure center at the base of Centennial lift includes a bungee trampoline and mini golf, as well as a climbing wall.



wish stick. The Snow Princess sashays along, mirroring little girls' grace. Elves named Scurry and Snowflake scamper about, along with other characters who, each afternoon, spin their tales and invite kids into their enchanted world.

"It's like the kids are in Disneyland," Hall says.

Santa also poses for photos and invites kids to join his parade to play instruments and bang drums to their heart's content.

"It's all about believing there's a real magic to winter," says Coot Overcash, who plays Old Man Winter.

Of course, the joy of winter doesn't end in January — in fact, it's only just begun.

PrezFest chooses one lucky kid, through a Facebook competition, to be president for a day. He or she picks a vice president, and they live it up on the mountain as secret service ambassadors cater to their needs. But the president isn't the only one who has a blast during President's Weekend. Historical characters like Teddy Roosevelt and Uncle Sam come to life in the village to entertain kids and show them that history is far from boring.

Then, SpringFest comes to life with oversized flowers, spiders and ladybugs, who freshen up the stage with their own stories. The festival also harkens back to simpler days, when hula-hoop and pie-eating contests and water-balloon tosses filled the time. Soon the Easter Bunny hops out just in time for a huge Easter egg hunt where "there are always domestic and international guests, and all of the kids bond over the Easter Bunny and eggs," says resort spokesperson Jen Brown.

## COOL SUMMER FUN

Cookies and ice skating continue in the summer months, along with scenic chairlift rides, family hikes, biking, horseback riding, jeep tours, outdoor concerts, movies under the stars, and a base zone that offers mini golf, a rebound trampoline, and a climbing wall.

"The high mountain adventure tours show off flora and fauna for guests who have never seen the mountains," Brown says. "And they see a lot of wildlife, as well."

Beaver Creek's Thursday night rodeos are a blast for families who want to wrangle up some cowboy spirit. The resort shuttle whisks people down the mountain to the rodeo and into a whole new world of bronco riding, calf scrambles, team roping, barrel racing, bull riding and burro racing. Kids can participate in mutton bustin', pony rides and face painting, and nearby restaurants serve up a good ole Western barbecue.

An exceptional treat is the Vilar Performing Arts Center, an intimate 500-seat venue that offers family friendly, and kid-specific, concerts and shows throughout the year, from colorful, engaging children's stories to opera that appeals to kids.

And, the theatrical fun in the village doesn't stop. On Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at 11 a.m., professional actors perform street theater, bringing to life children's literature, poetry and folk and fairy tales. They meld six to eight pieces into one 45-minute show that involves audiences who might play anything from a group of villagers to penguins.

Throughout the summer, Hall also offers children's workshops in which the kids perform a smattering of pieces tied into one theme, such as the Wild West or ancient folk tales.

"They're fast-moving, changing shows that offer a lot of opportunity for kids to have multiple roles, from minor to major roles," Hall says.

Hall also runs the children's museum, located across from the Coyote Café that showcases about a dozen exhibits geared toward toddlers, up to age 14. In Toddler Town, youngsters build with blocks, while Kidstruction Zone for older kids offers pieces like Legos. Additionally, the Banana Jones Jungle Laboratory teaches kids about the environment with samples



Family activities such as biking and face painting are frequent activities during the summertime.

## WE BRING THE FUN AND THE HISTORY OF THE WEST TO LIFE."

of rocks, animal remains and fossils, and at Baby Tuckers, young ones can dress up and act on stage. Last, and certainly not least, a lending library that features new children's books is also available.

And, for its fall season, the resort recently added a Rendezvous Music Festival, which this year featured Michaelis, Zane Williams, Andrew Ripp, Jackopierce and Dave Barnes.

With so much to do, Beaver Creek may seem like it's brimming with activity, and, in a way, it is, but the village's relaxed, alpine environment and its expansive mountain provides a sense of spaciousness.

"It's a safe and welcoming place," Hall says. "It's just a place you can let loose and relax and really enjoy time together." ■

