

The Growth of a Ski Town

BY LARA KAYLOR

WHAT'S NEW (AND OLD) IN A MATURING MAMMOTH LAKES

A rich mining and tourism history paired with the grit of a skier named Dave McCoy first gave people a reason to visit Mammoth Lakes years ago. Yet, if you only know Mammoth Lakes as a destination for the hardest of skiers, it's time you take another look.

In 2014 the town commemorated the 30th anniversary of its incorporation from Mono County. Over the years it has developed into the base camp for many types of outdoor adventures and family traditions. With new businesses and amenities as well as old favorites still on tap, there was much to celebrate.

Today, there are plenty of alternatives for families, pampered weekends with friends, and more within this small town.

What's new

A growing food scene

The food scene in Mammoth Lakes is taking shape. New restaurants include Mammoth Tavern, a gastropub quickly becoming a local's favorite, and Jimmy's Taverna, offering authentic Greek specialties. Jimmy's completes the trifecta of restaurants at the Sierra Nevada Resort (SNR) along with Rafter's and Red Lantern.

Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl is the newest fun spot in town for bowling, virtual golf and more. It's a great place for après skiing and snowboarding since it also offers a selection of lane-side food and drinks, as well as fine dining at its in-house restaurant, Mammoth Rock Brasserie.

Award-winning Mammoth Brewing Company has moved its tasting room to the corner of Main Street and Minaret (in the old Whiskey Creek building). The location is now a bustle of beer tasting, an outdoor beer garden, and soon to come tasty, pub-style treats.



Hangin' out at the top of California photo by Joel St. Marie/Mammoth Lakes Tourism





If you are looking for a place in town to warm up with some hot cocoa and a fresh, out of the oven treat with little to no guilt, head to Mimi's Cookie Bar on Old Mammoth Road. Mimi's is an eco-friendly, all natural and organic gourmet bakery that specializes in custom cookies. If you'd rather warm up with an adult beverage, head to the unique Bleu Handcrafted Foods on Main Street. Bleu provides an array of handcrafted artisan cheeses, grass-fed meats, wine, beer and more. Enjoy a wine tasting accompanied by charcuterie in the quaint shop or pick up a platter to take home.

New and updated amenities and events

Snowcreek Athletic Club was completely remodeled in 2013/14 and the results are beautiful. As part of the remodel, the Club added an area that now houses the Mammoth Alpine Trampoline Club, or the MAT. Five world-class professional trampolines are available for anyone age 6 and over with an AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) membership.

If you're looking for some luxury rather than a good sweat, head to the Sierra Nevada Resort, which was also remodeled last year. As part of the remodel, the SNR added a spa to its list of amenities. Renew your mind and body under the care of professionally trained aestheticians and massage therapists.

Mammoth Fun Shop is a great new spot to take the kids at the end of the day. After a fun day playing outside head into the Fun



Virtual golf at Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl photo courtesy of Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl (top) Interior of Mammoth Tavern photo courtesy of Mammoth Tavern (top right) Après at Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl photo courtesy of Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl (right) Bowling at Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl photo courtesy of Mammoth Rock 'n' Bowl





Spa reception area photo courtesy of Sierra Nevada Resort

Shop to hang out and play games at the shop's multiple game stations, or pick one out to take back to the condo.

Looking to try a new activity? The Mammoth Winter Biathlon has become an annual tradition. The event, which combines high adrenaline racing with steady-handed shooting, takes place in March and has categories for beginners and kids all the way to pros.

Places such as The Westin Mammoth are raising the bar in Mammoth Lakes when it comes to luxury accommodations. With its signature Heavenly Beds and location across the street from the Village at Mammoth, where you can shop and dine as well as catch the gondola to Canyon Lodge, The Westin Mammoth situates you in the middle of it all. The hotel even offers special treats for your pup if you choose to bring him or her along for the visit.

Accessibility

Getting to Mammoth Lakes has never been easier with the continued growth of winter flights. This year, the Mammoth Yosemite Airport has added service to and from Denver, CO via United Airlines as well as Las Vegas, NV via Alaska Airlines to its usual lineup of Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego. The Denver and Las Vegas flights are the first offered to Mammoth Lakes from outside of California. Denver is a large hub for Midwest and East coast visitors, while Vegas makes a trip to Mammoth Lakes more appealing to international visitors who often visit for several weeks and want to bundle city adventures with their ski vacations.

New this year, more access to more slopes is also on tap. Mammoth Mountain and June Mountain recently merged with Snow Summit and Bear Mountain, two southern California resorts, so you can now purchase one pass, called the Cali4nia Pass, to access all four resorts.

Oldies but goodies

Skiing and snowboarding at Mammoth Mountain continue to be the top highlights when visiting Mammoth Lakes in the winter, but don't forget about the off-hill activities available to you as well. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog-sled rides, and even year-round fishing are just a few of the additional winter activities available. Head south about 10 minutes outside of Mammoth Lakes and you can even run on the same track where Olympic athletes and Asics Mammoth Track Club members train.

Well-established Nevados bar and restaurant can still be counted on for great cuisine and stiff drink pours, while the Clocktower Cellar remains the locals' favorite for an après beer, and now also serves a wide variety of whiskeys.

Slocums Grill and Bar, Mammoth Lakes' version of Cheers since 1983, is still a favorite hangout with one of the best happy hours in town.



Four snowshoers at Minaret Vista with Ritter and Banner in the background photo by Rebecca Garrett



Taking turns on Mammoth Mountain photo by Joel St. Marie/Mammoth Lakes Tourism



Kids partake in the Mammoth Winter Biathlon photo by Jim Bold

The annual Night of Lights continues to be the best show on the slopes of Mammoth Mountain. The event helps ring in the Christmas and New Year's holidays each year.

How to plan your trip

Whether it's your first time, your millionth time, or just time to check in with Mammoth Lakes after years of being away, the bottom line is it's time to plan a visit.

First, see if there is a flight that works for you. Air service in and out of Mammoth Lakes is an experience worth having. The views of snowcapped mountains and high alpine lakes from the air are reminiscent of an Ansel Adams photo collection. Whether you drive or fly to Mammoth Lakes, however, always take weather into consideration. Snowstorms, while bringing that good white stuff to the slopes, can also hamper your travel plans.

Do some research online prior to your visit so that you have an idea of what you'd like to do and where you would like to eat and stay. A good jumping off website for all areas of planning is visitmammoth.com. You can also use reservations bureaus such as 101 Great Escapes to find your perfect lodging location.

Once you arrive in Mammoth Lakes, swing by the Mammoth Lakes Welcome Center, a designated California Welcome Center, for any off-hill questions. For Mammoth Mountain-related questions, visit mammothmountain.com or pop up to one of the three lodges and talk with a MMSA representative face-to-face.

Finding it tough to nail down the price of a Mammoth Mountain lift ticket this season? The resort is following suit with the ski area trend of dynamic pricing, which means the cost is always shifting based upon the time you purchase. Pre-sale tickets will be less expensive than purchasing at the ticket window upon your arrival so plan ahead.

From its gritty origins, the town of Mammoth Lakes is unfolding into a year-round destination resort. Go see for yourself. **SH**