

# Colton's Top 5 Ski Resorts

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For those of you I've had the pleasure of hiking, rafting, or snowshoeing with, you know how much I love the snow and snowboarding. I have been fortunate to work at four resorts in three different states and feel like I'm in a unique position to recommend a few areas to everyone. While most of my suggestions are in Utah (we do actually get the best snow in my opinion), I've included a couple areas everyone should get to at least once and my favorite chairlift or zone at each resort.

## **Snowbird, Utah**

This is absolutely my favorite resort. Hands down. This was the first resort I worked at, spending three years working in multiple departments and there's just something special

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about this mountain. But it's also not for everyone. The same reasons I love the area are some of the same reasons people cite for disliking it. As an expert rider I'm personally drawn to Snowbird's steep terrain, deep ungroomed powder, and easy access from Salt Lake City. This resort is also situated in the Wasatch Mountains just right, so that when storms roll in from the Northwest they just seem to stall right above the Little Cottonwood Canyon resorts and dump outrageous amounts of snow before sending the leftovers over the ridgeline to Park City. Here are a few runs/zones to check out should you make it to "the bird." At the end of the day be sure to make a stop at The Tram Club, their beer and a shot special is one of the best deals in the entire state.

### **The Cirque**

As you approach the top of the tram, the Cirque is impossible to miss and can look daunting, especially the upper cirque. As you make your way to the middle and lower cirque things get less daunting and open up quite a bit, so choose whatever section suits your ability level. The traverse can be rocky so be careful while making your way into the cirque. If the wind is hitting the mountain just right during a storm, you're in for a treat! The wind can deposit snow into the cirque all day, making it deeper than other areas on the mountain and giving you free refills all day long.

## **Breckenridge, Colorado**

One of the most visited resorts in the country, if not the world. Breck can be overwhelming during peak weekends and holidays. But don't let that dissuade you from visiting, it's that popular for a reason. There's terrain for everybody spread out over multiple peaks, all sorts of restaurants, and stunning views from everywhere on the mountain. Be sure to give yourself a day or two to acclimate to the elevation and bring all your layers, Breck is pretty high up there, has the highest chairlift in North America (Imperial Chair is just shy of 13,000 feet), and has rightly earned the nicknames "Breckenwind" and "Breckenfridge."

### **Peak Six/Kensho Chairlift**

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If you make your way all the way over to the looker's right of the resort you'll find Peak Six and the Kensho Chairlift. During my winter season spent working the lifts at Breckenridge, this area is usually where you'd find me on my days off. The hike to terrain off the chair is some of the most fun experts only terrain I've been on, while just below is an assortment of groomed and ungroomed intermediate trails that are perfect for cruising or perfecting your powder skiing/riding ability.

## **Brighton, Utah**

With the population center of Utah so close to our resorts and all the amazing visitors we get each season, things can feel crowded and high strung some days once you've finally made it up on the mountain. Park City can have more than 20,000 people on the mountain on the busier days, and a high volume of insanely good skiers in Little Cottonwood can make it feel like you're being tailgated all day. Somehow Brighton has managed to cultivate and maintain and laid back, fun for everyone vibe that is unlike the other resorts in the area. With a perfect mix of easy, intermediate, and advanced runs, as well as some of the best terrain parks in the state, there really is something for everyone.

### **Milly Express**

On the far lookers right side of the resort you'll find Milly Express with the peak of Mount Millicent towering above the top of the chairlift. This lift provides access to a wonderful playground of rollovers, small to big cliffs, chutes, groomers, you name it!

## **Crystal Mountain, Washington**

For those of you with an IKON Pass, you've got to get out to Crystal Mountain if you can. My first recommendation is to just stay at one of the hotels at the base area. Crystal is a bit of a drive from the nearest town (about an hour from Enumclaw) and the parking lots are smaller and fill up quickly, so just avoid the hassle. Also keep in mind it is Washington so the snow quality can be um...variable. But when it's good, oh my is it good. Crystal is also

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the most scenic resort I've had the pleasure to spend time at. The views of Mount Rainier from the top of the Mt. Rainier Gondola are absolutely stunning and that alone would make the trip worth it, though all the amazing terrain certainly helps.

## **Chair 6**

A chairlift for experts only, Chair 6 offers up access to some of the rowdiest terrain in the states. Whether you choose to descend down from the top of Silver Queen or get some "Hamburger" off The Throne, you'll be in for quite the rush!

## **Powder Mountain, Utah**

To be totally honest, I've only ever ridden Powder Mountain once. But that was enough to know that this place is special. Tucked away outside of Ogden, Utah and further away (but not by much) from the Salt Lake Airport, Powder Mountain can get overlooked in favor of the Salt Lake and Park City resorts. If you're looking for a true getaway to a place with powder that lasts for days not hours, little to no lift lines, and a no frills experience this is the place. With over 8,464 acres this resort is MASSIVE, and actually beats Park City Resort by 1,000+ acres!

## **Timberline**

I feel that Timberline embodies Powder Mountain perfectly. An old school fixed grip chairlift that lets you catch your breath and enjoy the scenery, yet still accesses a surprisingly wide variety of terrain. I'm usually somewhat apprehensive about riding through trees, yet I found these to be fun to ride through, not too steep, not too close together. Just enough to make each run unique and keep the powder fresh!