

# THE NEWEST AND BIGGEST:

## PARK CITY, UTAH



Utah

**Blessed with powdery white gold and a historic heart, Park City Utah is fast becoming the new favourite US snow destination for Aussies. Toni Krasicki reports.**

ANYONE THAT'S SKIED OR BOARDED IN Utah will wax lyrical about the pow pow. Utah's deep, dry and light powder snow is legendary. The state gets a massive average dump of 12m of snow a year, crediting west coast weather patterns, the dry desert conditions and the Great Salt Lake (the second saltiest body of water in the world after the Dead Sea) in producing some of the best snow in the world.

Within an hour of Salt Lake International Airport lies America's newest and biggest ski resort, Park City. Framed by the craggy Wasatch Range, Park City is bordered by

the Deer Valley Resort and the huge Park City Mountain Resort (PCMR), both known for their ski slopes.

Operated by Vail Resorts, and recently connected to Canyons Village at Park City by the Quicksilver Gondola, PCMR's 300 plus trails and 3,000ha of terrain make it the biggest ski resort in the country. Also new last season were the addition of two new trails, the Miners Camp mountain restaurant and chairlift upgrades.

The news has filtered back to Australia, and Aussie skiers and boarders are heading out to PCMR and Deer Valley Resort in

increasing numbers. Chad Wassmer, Director of Tourism Sales and Marketing from Park City Visitors Bureau, confirms that there's been a noticeable rise in Australian visitors this past season. It makes sense, since PCMR gives Aussies a welcome new alternative to Colorado.

PCMR has three mountain access points: Canyons Village, Park City Base and Town Lift. All are well placed to service the main accommodation hubs, and are linked by a free bus service.

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When I visited Park City in February I stayed on Main Street, so the Town Lift was a short walk from my hotel Main and Sky. During my stay, I woke one day to cloudless skies and 10cm of fresh snow on top of the existing 1.5m base. For me this was cause for celebration, but for locals it was an everyday occurrence. Only a foot of the fresh stuff would bring out the victory dances.

What surprised me was the lack of crowds. There were no lift queues and some runs were literally empty. Unbelievable! It was midweek, but still, it was February with a fabulous covering of snow, varied terrain and long runs. In fact, it was so damn spectacular that I didn't want the day to end. The locals told me that the mountain is super quiet at the end of January when Park City hosts the Sundance Film Festival. The celebrities hit town to party, accommodation prices soar, and the rest of the US steers clear.

Considering that most visitors come to Park City in the winter to enjoy the mountains, it's easy for history to take a back seat. All over the mountain and among the (mostly empty) privately owned, supersized homes are old mine buildings, shafts and hoists – a reminder of the silver mining days. It's hard to believe that in the 1950s, Park City was almost a ghost town, since being revived by white gold and transformed into an all-season tourist destination.

Vibrant Main Street is Park City's historical heart, and when the sun sets it's the place to go for a lively mix of restaurants and bars. Lining the street are 64 heritage-listed Victorian buildings that now house art galleries, boutiques, adventure wear stores and eateries.

Included in the TRIP pass, swanky Deer Valley Resort is worth a day on the slopes. Unfortunately for snowboarders it's a ski only resort, and I reluctantly swap out my board. Only a 10 minute bus ride from Main Street, Deer Valley prides itself on five-star service, both on and off the mountain. There are free mountain tours, ski valets and overnight equipment storage, with enough varied terrain to challenge all levels.

Predominantly ski in/ski out condominium and classic mountain lodge-style accommodation (on a grand five-star scale), the vibe is definitely old school calm and charm. The 100-odd well-groomed trails rarely get overcrowded as the daily lift ticket quota is capped at 7,500. Spanning six mountains, it's a pretty ski area with magical views, and opportunities to find some powder amongst the Aspens.

[visitparkcity.com/australia](http://visitparkcity.com/australia)

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## MORE WINTER ACTIVITIES

Whether you're a non-skier or just need a break from the slopes, Park City delivers an ivory front. You can ice skate under the stars or stars, head off into the wilderness on a snowmobile, strap on snowshoes and hike the trails, dog sled with canine companions or take a romantic sleigh ride to a mountain restaurant. Otherwise, check these out:

### UTAH OLYMPIC PARK

The Olympic Park may have had its heyday during the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics, but as a training ground for elite athletes and an established adventure activity hub, the park makes for a fun and thrilling diversion. The museum offers an insight into the history of snow sports in Utah and explains why Utah gets the best powder in the US. Virtual athletes can ride the bob sled and Eddie the Eagle wannabes can strap in for a virtual ski jump.

Piloted by a professional bobsledder, adrenaline junkies can take a thrilling 47 second ride on the Comet Bobsled that races down the actual 2002 Olympic track! If you're still itching for more, try the extreme tubing, the Drop Tower, zip line or test your strength, agility, balance, and coordination on the Canyons and Summit Aerial Adventure Courses.

[utaholympiclegacy.org](http://utaholympiclegacy.org)

### YOGA IN THE CRATER

The steamy mineral waters of Homestead Crater are a 30 minute drive from town. There are options to swim, scuba dive or do a 1 hour paddlboard yoga class. The class is impressive, the challenge is the unstable paddleboard, but who doesn't want to fall into silky warm water? Bookings are essential.

[parkcityyogaadventures.com](http://parkcityyogaadventures.com)

### CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Work up a sweat and test every muscle in your body while you ski and skate along mostly flat paths that meander through the valley around town and further into the Aspen forests. White Pine Touring operates a 20km cross-country ski centre (passage fees apply) for skate and classic skiing that conveniently connects to miles of skiable loops and less-groomed public trails.

[whitepinetouring.com](http://whitepinetouring.com)

### FAST FACTS

[visitparkcity.com](http://visitparkcity.com)

Stay at Main & Sky [skyparkcity.com](http://skyparkcity.com) in the heart of Main Street. Eat small plates at Handle, American fare at Fetchers, healthy eats at Articus, or soak up the atmosphere at Zoom, Robert Redford's restaurant.