



# Vail Daily

## **Ski instructors get cultural**

### **Instructors will greet guests in their native language**

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VAIL, Colorado — Aussie ski instructors will be teaching about more than moguls next winter. They will, perhaps, touch on koala bears, the Great Barrier Reef and their government's system of constitutional democracy.

About 400 foreign Vail Resorts instructors have been approved for Q visas, which are issued for cultural exchange visitors, the company said Wednesday.

After Vail Resorts was unable to secure the hundreds of H-2B visas it normally uses, the company has turned to the cultural visas to bring instructors to the company's resorts.

"Vail Resorts is ideally suited for such a program because of our international influence and the fact that our instructors spend a significant portion of their day with our guests," wrote Mark Gasta, chief human resources officer for Vail Resorts.

Instructors will greet guests in their native language and introduce themselves as a "cultural ambassador," Gasta said. The instructors will also "proactively share cultural insights from their home country," he said.

There will be also be cultural food and beverages, special cultural events, and international children's programs offered at resorts, Gasta said.

Vail Resorts is partnering with the American Hospitality Academy, a South Carolina company that provides internships for hospitality students, for the Q visa program.

This year, Vail Resorts didn't get a chance to apply for H-2B visas, which it normally relies on to bring hundreds of ski instructors, restaurant workers, lift operators and other workers to its mountains. This year, Vail Resorts sought 1,900 workers for its ski resorts, Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone and Heavenly, under the H-2B program but only got a handful of visas.

A nationwide cap for H-2B visas was reached in July before Vail Resorts was able to submit applications. A recently expired clause that allowed returning workers to be exempt from a nationwide cap of 66,000 meant that many longtime Vail Resorts workers were not able to return.

"We do realize that there are many non-instructor international employees that will not benefit from the Q visa program," Gasta said. "We are still committed to our efforts regarding the returning worker exemption for H-2B visa holders and will continue to work towards a satisfactory resolution."

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