



the inside track

Departing Snowbird

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A mixed bag

As Snowbird begins to wind down for summer operations, there's a big sensation of mixed feelings. After spending three seasons in Utah and experiencing everything from brilliance to down-right dismay, it's come to a marvel of amazement. I've never seen the Wasatch Mountains be pummelled by powder storms dumping over 25cm this late in March and April, and temperatures remaining cool to keep the snow levels hanging around. With great ease Utahns should be skiing into May and possibly June without hesitation. **Preparing the sacrifices** Again, "The Greatest Snow on Earth" has rung true with many employees being depressed at the lack of sunshine, yet stoked at the waist-deep powder falling outside their doorsteps for weeks on end. Despite an extremely worrying and slow start to the season, where lessons were being taught on 5-a-side sized patches of snow, the continuous dumpings, early morning road-closures and endless journeys down the canyon have kept many instructors coming to work. The average snowfall of over 500 inches has been gratefully met and already old 210 skis are being stock-piled to be burnt in an offering to the snow gods next season.

Worth the journey

Admittedly, business has been a bit slower than usual as healthy snowfalls across the US and a stumbling economy have meant many Americans have chosen to stay closer to home. The result being that skier days are down a little in Utah. That said, many guests from Europe and Australia have made the trek to Salt Lake in order to experience some pow pow. Even now, storms are supposed to pop in among the bluebird days as Snowbird is fortunate enough to remain open later than most other resorts in the area.

Everything depends on the visa

As spring starts to merge into summer, the temperatures in Salt Lake Valley are warming up nicely and the cool evenings are spent BBQing and drinking 3.2% beer – a short trip to California and Idaho will round off my season ready for a stint in the UK before hopefully heading back to Utah. At the moment this all hangs in the balance as H2B work visas are a sore subject for many HR departments in ski resorts across the country. Many resorts have been suffering as a result of not getting visas approved for foreign workers this season – who are a lifeline to keeping operations running, due to American nationals choosing not to take the rates of pay and a free season pass. I dare say recruiting trips during the Southern hemisphere will begin in earnest sooner or later, but until that visa is in my passport, who knows?

Six months and counting!