

Independent reviewer offers ski pass analysis

Website compares value of popular multi-resort passes

By Alli Langley
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Not too long ago, ski resort season passes were only for those who lived in or near the resort towns and could hit the slopes often enough to make the pricey passes worth it.

Not so anymore. Season passes now make financial sense even for people who live a plane ride or two away, signaling a huge shift in the ski industry over the last few years.

The resorts have changed the way they sell lift tickets, moving toward multi-mountain combinations that give skiers and snowboarders who take advantage of the passes more flexibility for a lower price than ever.

"The great thing is the consumer, the skier, has won, at least in Colorado," said Amy Kemp, a Summit County resident who represents Scout, a new independent review company that rates ski resorts and lodging properties around the world.

Scout's founder, avid Australian skier Sarah Plaskitt, said it's rare to find a resort not included on some sort of group pass these days.

Earlier this month, Scout released a comparison of the popular Vail Resorts' Epic Pass and Liftopia's Mountain Collective

ski pass, breaking down the two passes by cost, number of member resorts, number of skiing days and other features.

According to Scout, the most comprehensive version of the Epic Pass, which debuted in 2008, gives adults more than 170 days of access at 18 resorts for \$729.

For almost half that price, an adult who buys the Mountain Collective pass can ski for 14 days split among seven participating destinations; any additional days are 50 percent off. The only Colorado destination on the pass is Aspen/Snowmass.

For regular skiers in Summit County, where Vail Resorts dominates, the decision is a no-brainer. The comparison shows the Epic Pass provides better value for locals who might ski or ride for 30 days in a season at two resorts.

But for "destination skiers," or those who travel to ski resorts on vacation and plan to ride the snow at several resorts for a few days each, the Mountain Collective pass offers better bang for your buck, according to Scout's breakdown.

Some of the regular, local skiers also fall into the destination skier category, Kemp said, and might find the comparison useful if they're considering purchasing another pass.

The comparison also analyzes the passes by desired features like skiable acres, terrain difficulty level and where in the Rocky

SKI PASS, 6



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