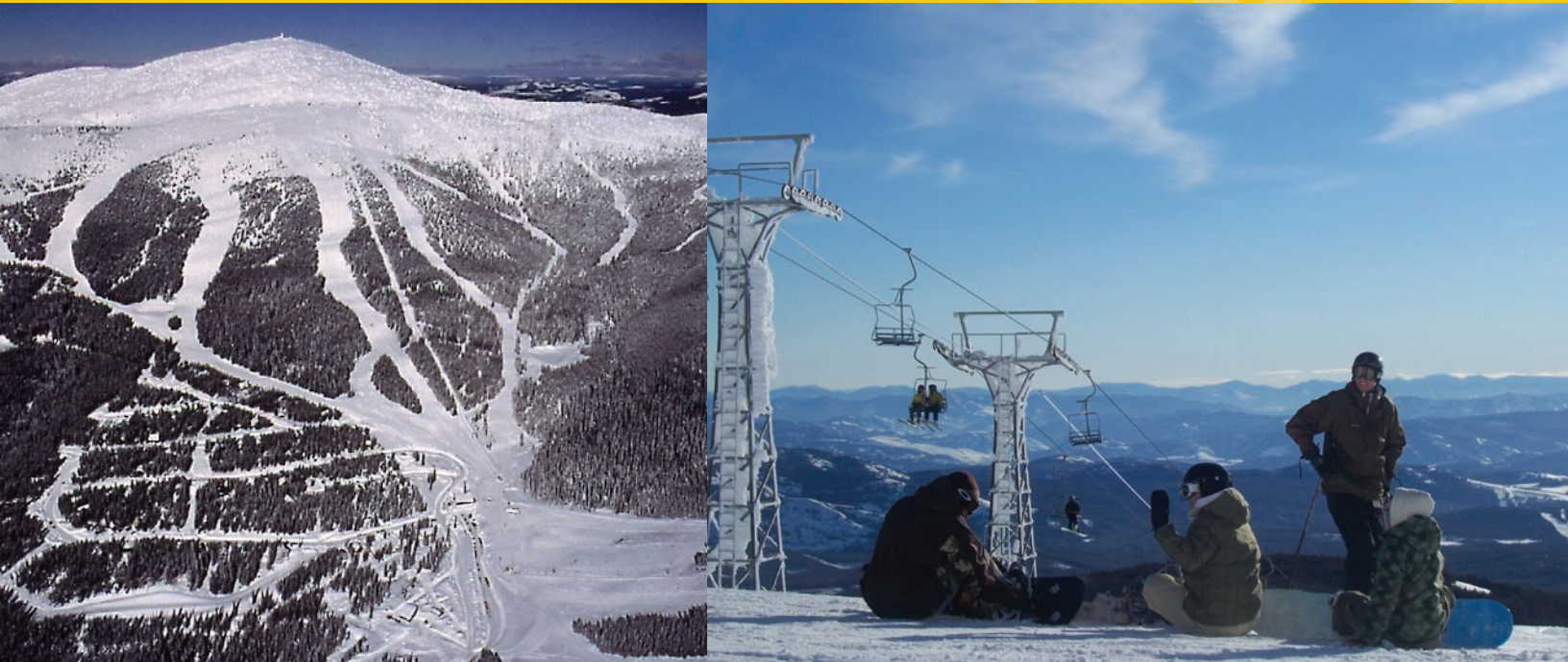


Story Time - Winter



Winter fun in the desert. Osoyoos emerges as a four-season destination.



With British Columbia's reputation growing rapidly as a top international winter sports destination, dramatic changes are underway at popular ski hills in the Okanagan. Nowhere is this more evident than at Mt. Baldy, a high-mountain ski area 45 minutes northeast of Osoyoos. Situated in a region known for its award-winning wines and feet of fluffy powder snow, Mt. Baldy is modest in size but lofty in future plans.

Purchased privately in 2004, Mt. Baldy Ski Area is pursuing a major expansion which signifies a shift in focus for the Osoyoos region from a "fun in the sun" summer playground, to a multi-faceted four-season destination offering a wide range of activities in spring, summer, fall and winter.



Story Time - Winter

High-altitude experiences 12 months a year in Canada's only desert

Mt. Baldy is a mountain resort on the move. While the 2008-09 season marked its 40th anniversary, this family-oriented ski area isn't resting on its laurels. It has begun to implement an ambitious Resort Expansion Master Plan aimed at transforming the area into a year-round recreational paradise. In one of the first actions, Mt. Baldy opened the large new Sugar Lump Quad Chair. Keeping pace with other developments in the region, it also launched resort residential real estate offerings, with the release of 24 single-family cabin lots in its McKinney subdivision.

Centred around a focal point of two base areas – Upper Base and Mt. Baldy Village – upon build-out the Master Plan will include a total of 13 lifts, more than 150 ski/bike trails (1,725 acres), a tube park and an 18-hole golf course. To ensure that the experiences at Mt. Baldy revolve around "mountain play" and an expanded sense of alpine recreation, including features like snowshoe trails, Mt. Baldy is incorporating additional infrastructure on its back-country and Nordic trail networks throughout the Alpine skiing area. This back-country expansion is also allowing for development of more summer recreation including mountain biking, hiking and birdwatching.

Room with a view

The Master Plan calls for Mt. Baldy Village to grow to include hotels, condo-hotels, retail outlets, convention/seminar facilities, a mountain resort spa and resort services. This translates into 379 hotel rooms, 303 condo-hotel rooms, 52 bed-and-breakfast homes, and 275 cabins. The resort residential offering will total 428 single-family units, 226 multi-family units, and 30 recreation vehicle stalls. About 10% of the bed units in the Plan are zoned to provide accommodation for up to 770 full- and part-time employees.

Lift to the top

The Eagle chairlift rises 1,293 vertical feet, with access to 18 diverse trails and glades on nearly 400 skiable acres – and the mountain rises another 500 feet, with access available to the South face, which is skied by the more adventurous. The new Sugar Lump quad chair rises 742 vertical feet, opening up nine additional beginner and intermediate ski trails and a terrain park. The McKinney T-bar rises 337 vertical feet and services an additional four beginner and intermediate trails. Mt. Baldy also has a Magic Carpet lift which services the novice and kids' terrain area. The expansion Plan calls for eight new lifts, which will open up more than 2,000 acres of terrain, with a total vertical drop surpassing 2,000 feet.

Current facilities on the hill include a day lodge, a Canadian Ski Instructor Alliance (CSIA) ski and snowboard school, rental shop, ski ticket office, café, lounge, and retail shop. In addition to downhill pursuits, Mt. Baldy offers 20 km (12 miles) of marked snowshoe trails and non-groomed cross-country ski trails, 20 km of groomed cross-country ski trails for day use maintained by the McKinney Nordic Ski Club, a tobogganing area, and an 18-hole championship Frisbee golf course.

A four-season boutique resort in the making

For now, the Mt. Baldy vibe is decidedly local. With one of BC's highest base elevations (5,665 ft), it offers dry, reliable powder snow despite its proximity to the warm Osoyoos desert climate. During many weeks of the winter, the resort closes on Tuesday and Wednesday to allow snow to pile up for a memorable "Powder Thursday", an event that draws skiers and snowboard riders from throughout the Okanagan. Mt. Baldy is also a favourite for "tree skiers", who come to play in over 700 acres of lift-accessible glades. But with its Plan for growth now underway, Mt. Baldy is on-track to become much more than a local secret. It is reinventing itself to become Canada's first four-season boutique resort, with a focus on building a true skier's community.

Mt. Baldy Ski Area www.skibaldy.com

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