

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

El Nino is supposed to be the weather pattern that brings all the snow to Big Bear, and two years ago it stayed true to form. Nearly



twice the average amount of snow fell in Big Bear, much of it coming in one big 4-5 foot dump that closed the roads and no one could get to the resorts to ski or ride it anyway.

Last winter was supposed to be a La Nina year, cold and dry. It was cold all right, but hardly dry, especially in February when frequent storms made for bountiful powder days. In fact when the last flake has fallen during another snowy spring, Snow Summit and Bear Mountain had received only about 10 inches less natural snowfall than they had in the record-breaking El Nino the year before.

Powder has definitely been the story the last three straight winters in Big Bear, Southern California's favorite four-season resort. Getting to it has been the challenging part. Severe storms in December 2010 before the wet turned white washed

away Hwy. 330. Now the rebuilt "Front Way" through Running Springs is better than ever, the new route over the dam makes for even easier access, and Big Bear is still just a couple hours and half-tank of gas away from wherever you picked up this magazine.

El Nino, La Nina, doesn't really matter in Big Bear anyway. Natural snow comes and goes, but in Big Bear there's always near-nightly blizzards, plus week-long stretches where snow falls around-the-clock and only on the runs, not the roads. That's what happens when two massive snowmaking systems fire up with an essentially endless water supply, which the Big Bear resorts have and other Southern California areas do not.

It doesn't take El Nino to pack the slopes with powder; just a few cold, dry nights does the trick. To make sure the snow falls precisely where they want it, Snow Summit and Bear Mountain again spent a half-million dollars in the off-season to improve snowmaking systems to assure winter in Big Bear, El Nino or no. That's on top of the \$12-\$15 million spent in fan guns and putting in the power to run them the past few years.

With not one but two distinctly different resorts, Big Bear is a destination-quality resort that's day trip

close. Snow Summit is the Southland's most complete resort—voted tops in Southern California by *Orange County Register* readers in a 2010 poll—with miles of groomed terrain, family park, hidden tree stashes and black diamond steeps. Featuring heated brick pavers in the beautiful base area and not one but two mountaintop facilities that each sport stunning views, Snow Summit can be considered the Deer Valley of Southern California.

Bear Mountain is the nation's top freestyle park as voted by readers of *Transworld Snowboarding Magazine* with hundreds of jibs, jumps and tree-filled canyons to explore. Three halfpipes, four mountain peaks—one is home to Geronimo, the longest, steepest designated run in the Southland—the largest beginner area around and one big deck for apres ski are part of Bear's allure.

Settle on your favorite or mix and match—lift tickets are valid at each and a free shuttle runs between them—to experience 26 lifts, 55-plus runs, four high-speed quad chairlifts, and base areas you're actually comfortable taking kids into. You'd drive to the Sierras for that, only Big Bear Lake is a whole lot closer.

Snow is just part of the Big Bear experience, where all the amenities of

a resort town turn every short getaway into a destination escape. Lodging options abound ranging from family-sized cabins to romantic cottages and rooms with private spa in front of the fireplace. Sure you're close enough to drive home after a day on the slopes...but why when there's ski and lodging packages that start at just \$69 per person midweek, only \$89 on weekends?

Frolic in the winter wonderland at two worldclass inner tubing areas, including snow play sessions under the night stars. Snowshoe or cross-country ski in the forest on your favorite trails, see a dozen wolves and grizzly bears at the famous Moonridge Animal Park, watch a top flight stage production by Big Bear's award-winning Community Arts Theater Society or scan the skies for bald eagles, America's national symbol.

So much winter to enjoy, it takes a few days to pack it all in. Fortunately Big Bear is the getaway you can get away to anytime, a half-tank away but a world apart. And when you can't visit in person you can always visit virtually on our website at www.BigBearToday.com.

Marcus G. Dietz

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