

Too Small for Skiing, Just Right for InnerTubing



Big Bear Snow Play Has Longest Tubing Runs Around!

As a ski area, its runs were too short to really let carvers crank up the speed. And with a vertical rise of only a few hundred feet, it couldn't keep up with bigger, badder neighbor Snow Summit.

So it was that Rebel Ridge, despite being the first resort to introduce snowmaking in Southern California five decades ago, hasn't had skiers on its

slopes since about 1974. Not that several owners didn't try to make a go of it, starting with Chuck Smith, who gave the area the name Rebel Ridge after falling out of favor at Snow Summit in the 1950's. Then there was the legendary late Fred Ransom, who installed a chairlift, and Sepp Benedikter, who put a chair in at Holiday Hill (now Mountain High East) in 1950 and knew something about resort operations. In the ski business, size matters, and Rebel Ridge

When it comes to inner tubing, though, an entirely different story has unfolded. The runs may not have been long enough for skiing, but they were plenty long for twisting, turning and careening on an inner tube. For that reason Big Bear Snow Play, as the area once called Rebel Ridge is now known, has been a generational favorite with families, and now kids who got their first taste of snow on its long runs are bringing their kids to play in the white stuff.

Big Bear Snow Play sports the longest inner tubing runs in Southern

California, with eight runs that let sliders really get moving downhill. Thanks to state-of-the-art snowmaking powered by Lenko fan guns just like those used at the ski resorts, the area opened before Halloween 2009... no trick, just treat!

As the season progresses and more snow is made, depths eventually reach 30 feet or more, providing enough white stuff to slide on through Easter and beyond. Keeping the snowpack in tip-top shape is nightly grooming in addition to all the snowmaking.

Those long runs would be as inaccessible for young children and parents as Mt. Everest if they had to climb to the top over slippery snow piled three stories high, but instead two Magic Carpet uphill lifts are at the ready to whisk them up back up to the top. Guests just step onto the moving conveyor belt and in moments they're gliding and bouncing back to the bottom on their tubes with smiles and giggles plastered over their faces. Save energy for tubing, instead of climbing!

Melissa Michael and her family enjoyed the Winter Wonderland at Big Bear Snow Play on their outing. "We've already done eight to 10 runs I'd guess," she said. "The kids absolutely love playing in the snow. Riding the carpet up makes it a lot easier to get in all the snow play we want."

So did Brittany Lunde from Lancaster, who described herself as a snow play veteran at age 11. The pony-haired girl was there with friends Cheyanne and Ariel Terrazas. "We were going about 70 mph," Brittany exclaimed in only a slight exaggeration.

Big Bear Snow Play is open daily from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and tubing remains a great family value after all these years. Just \$25 buys an all-day pass—guests can come and go as they want—and includes use of the Magic Carpet, even tube rental.

Big Bear's second tubing area, Alpine Slide at Magic Mountain, also makes its own snow and is home to the famous "Snake." The twisting, turning track takes tubers on a totally different type of adventure compared to the ordinary downhill plunge.

Alpine Slide also offers the region's only night tubing sessions, on Fridays, Saturdays and holidays from 5-9 p.m. Experience tubing under the stars by sliding through the shadows on snow that's freshly-groomed after the day session and gets faster as the evening progresses. To warm up, head to the heated lodge for cocoa or coffee at the family priced snack bar.



Magic Carpet to the Top

The signature Alpine Slide bobsleds are another unique ride, allowing folks to get their own taste of Olympic bobsledding. Each individually-controlled sled slides on ball-bearing wheels down two quarter-mile cement tracks filled with hairpin turns and long straightaways. Lean into and out of each turn, go into a tuck, and experience many of the same gravitational forces served up in luge or bobsledding.

Big Bear Snow Play is on the boulevard east of the supermarkets; call (909) 585-0075. Alpine Slide is 1/4 mile west of the Village; call (909) 866-4626. ■

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