

# Mountain merriment

**Rachael Oakes-Ash** finds a Utah mountain town that is pumping all year round

**W**HEN the snow melts, most alpine resorts prepare for leaner times in summer. Not Park City, Utah. This thriving town holds year-round appeal for those who like their mountains green and white.

It's here, in 1978, that actor/director Robert Redford helped establish the now famous annual Sundance festival of independent film, for which Hollywood's finest descend on Main St in January.

And Park City sure knows how to host a party.

Regulars have learned to negotiate the Mormon state's strict licensing laws. It's all about the "sidecar". Patrons order a spirit and soft drink, then a sidecar of straight liquor with which they top up their cocktails accordingly.

Why the bartender can't just make a double is a question with a very convoluted answer. Just enjoy the novelty and drink up.

Park City has three winter ski resorts. The most expensive is Deer Valley, where the rule is "strictly no snowboarders allowed".

Park City Mountain Resort is the snowfield of choice for Australia's Olympian snowboarder, Torah Bright, and the US's Shaun White.

The Canyons, a purpose-built resort five minutes from town, delivers big-mountain skiing.

When the snow has melted, these resorts swap skiing for mountain-biking along more than 520km of trails, and hold concerts on the peaks.

Deer Valley's hillside amphitheatre hosts the Deer Valley Music Festival in summer, when the Utah Symphony and Opera plays everything from chamber music to opera and pop.

As well, there's the Park City Jazz Festival in August and the Canyons free concerts on Saturdays in summer.

Utah residents prefer to be outside — and who can blame them. This is the adventure and outdoor-sport capital of the US.

Mountaineering enthusiasts munch power bars as they limber up for an assault on the wind-blown, red-rock faces of Utah.

The rest of us take to Park City's Utah Olympic Park and act like elite athletes, throwing ourselves on to bobsleds and taking on the steep Xtreme Zipline at 80km/h.

I prefer shopping as an extreme sport. Who knew an outlet mall could be such an adrenalin rush? Just when you've seen one bargain at the Tanger Outlet Mall, another comes into view.

Park City began as a mining town in the late 19th century. The now gentrified streets of the funky Old Town were once home to bordellos and saloons.

Lead, gold and silver were found in the hills and the place boomed until the mines flooded. A fire razed the town in 1898, then silver prices plummeted.

As in most US towns, it's hard to get a good cup of coffee. But it is possible to dine on some outstanding



**Airborne:** when the snow gets thin, opt for a balloon ride.



**Ride on:** there are 520km of mountain-bike trails.



**Look, no hands:** in for the ride at Utah Olympic Park.



**Happy trails:** soaking up the sun on a leisurely ride.

fare. Robert Redford's Zoom restaurant is more about the owner than fine dining, but Wahso Asian Grill and Chimayo's make up for it with impressive flavours.

Apparently 12 high-altitude golf courses are nearby, as is hot-air ballooning over the Wasatch Range, but for some reason I'm drawn back to the bars.

From the long hole-in-the-wall establishment of Oh Shucks to the hunting lodge sports bar called No Names and the appropriately tagged cocktail bar Sidecar, there are enough intimate drinking holes to keep you lubricated from summer to winter and back again.

## THE DEAL



→ **Getting there:** Park City is 30 minutes' drive from Salt Lake City. Air New Zealand flies from Melbourne to San Francisco via Auckland with connections to Salt Lake City. [www.airnewzealand.com.au](http://www.airnewzealand.com.au)

→ **Staying:** the Sky Lodge is a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World group and is the most recent addition to Park City. It offers New York City-style

accommodation with hot-tub balconies, a private rooftop members' lounge and swanky day spa. [www.theskylodge.com](http://www.theskylodge.com) or [www.slh.com](http://www.slh.com)  
Park City Lodging has self-contained apartments and luxury homes in Deer Valley and the Canyons. [www.parkcitylodging.com](http://www.parkcitylodging.com)  
→ **More information:** [www.parkcityinfo.com](http://www.parkcityinfo.com)