

News, Apps, Deals, and Gear from New England and Beyond

HERE

GO MUSHING AT WATERVILLE VALLEY
Explore Waterville Valley by moonlight or headlamp during twilight dogsled rides through March. Valley Snow Dogz runs excursions Friday and Saturday nights, led by owner and 18-year mushing veteran Lidia Dale-Mesaros. Choose the 20-minute Valley Taster, when you will get to experience mushing on an open golf course near Town Square, or the new 40-minute Mountain Taster, which heads for a campground and then finishes after a good downhill stretch. On both trips, you get to meet the guides, ask questions, and get your photo taken with the dogs. Rates: \$35 Valley Taster, \$65 Mountain Taster. Participants must be 7 and older. 603-236-8175, www.valleynowdogz.com



BRING YOUR EAGLE EYE TO CONNECTICUT
The eagles have landed in western Connecticut's Litchfield County. Each year, bald eagles journey from the frozen north to the Housatonic River in Southbury. They hang out around the Shepaug Dam, where the running waters prevent ice from forming and therefore keep the fish accessible. Visit the Shepaug Eagle Observation Area, where you can look through telescopes to get an up-close view, then chat with Connecticut Audubon volunteers. You may see up to a dozen eagles a day. Viewing runs on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. through March 13. Entry is free, but reservations are required to avoid overcrowding. 800-368-8954, www.shepaug-eagles.info

THERE

NEW ALASKAN CRUISE SHIP AND ITINERARY
The Native American-owned small-ship cruise line Alaskan Dream Cruises launches a vessel called the Baranof Dream this year, and an 11-day itinerary that sails round trip from Sitka, stopping at Juneau, Skagway, Petersburg, Kake, and the company's exclusive Orca Point Lodge and Hobart Bay destinations. The new trip, called the Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Explorer, takes cruisers to Alaska's Glacier Bay and beyond, with an emphasis on wildlife viewing and coastal exploration by smaller watercraft. Trips depart May 23, June 30, and Aug. 24. Rates from \$2,699; book by Jan. 31 for cheaper rates. 855-747-8100, www.alaskandreamcruises.com



BC SKI CONDITIONS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS
If you're planning a trip to British Columbia, check out the new Ski It to Believe It website, which provides handy up-to-date info on the province's top ski resorts, including Fernie, Kicking Horse, Mount Washington, Revelstoke, and Whistler Blackcomb, along with more local ski areas like Grouse, Cypress, and Mount Seymour in the Vancouver area. The site lists real-time snow conditions, names of heli- and cat-skiing operators, and information on special deals. Find out where you can get the fourth day of skiing and fourth night of accommodations for free, or where to you can get a special ski and surf package, for instance. www.skiittobelieveit.com

BEIJING WELCOMES FOUR SEASONS
Stay at the new Four Seasons Hotel Beijing and you can enjoy a decadent afternoon tea at the two-story Opus Lounge that includes truffles, caviar, champagne, and a two-hour massage. The 313-room hotel, located in the heart of Beijing's business district, has a grand facade that is reminiscent of the city's Imperial Palace, a sky-lit central atrium, and contemporary Chinese artwork. Enjoy the indoor pool, the 24-hour fitness center, and the spa. One restaurant offers Italian dishes made in a wood-fired oven, another specializes in Cantonese cuisine. A special introductory package, good through Feb. 28, includes room, complimentary Internet, and daily breakfast for two for \$362. 800-819-5053, www.fourseasons.com/beijing

EVERYWHERE

A PORTABLE CHARGING STATION WITH 'TAILS'
Take a Zip Mini Touch-n-go on the road and save space and weight in your travel bag. This clever disk-shaped charging station saves you carrying and keeping track of all your Apple and USB cords — and getting a tangled nest of cords en route. It works with three-inch cables called zip tails that have either a 30-pin Apple connector or a micro or mini USB connector on one end and small magnetic disk on the other end. Attach up to four zip tails to the magnetic base, then plug in your tablet, smartphone, e-reader, GPS, and other portable device. \$49.95, includes one Apple and one micro USB zip tail. 877-569-3228, www.thejoyfactory.com



KIDS' MASTERPIECES, MESS-FREE
Keep your kids entertained while they travel with the Sensu Brush, a compact paintbrush with synthetic bristles that can be used to create colorful pictures on a tablet or smartphone. Or you can use it to sketch scenes from your worldly adventures. Save your family's digital masterpieces and then e-mail them, or print and frame them as mementos of your trip. The brush works with most painting programs, or download Sensu's recommended apps, such as Fresh Paint, ArtRage, and Sketchbook Pro. The brush has copper-infused bristles that enable it to work on touch-screen devices, and a rubber tip on the opposite end that acts like a stylus. \$39.99. 847-983-0716, www.sensubrush.com



KARI BODNARCHUK

Colorado fluff, special flair keep skiers coming

By Brian Irwin
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo. — I grew up skiing in the hills of western Maryland, where hardpan was always the condition du jour and fluffy snow came only a few times a year. Powder was a rare commodity, but something for which I yearned, being taunted by airline ads showing Billy Kidd bouncing through pillows of fluff at Colorado's Steamboat Springs Resort.

Kidd was the first man from the United States to win an Olympic medal in skiing, which he did at the 1964 Winter Games in Innsbruck, Austria. He is now director of skiing at Steamboat, and his persona embodies the Wild West. One can almost imagine him, with his flashy belt buckle and Stetson hat adorned with a plume of feathers, galloping on a horse down Lincoln Avenue, the main street here. That sight may not happen often, but during Steamboat Springs Winter Carnival you are guaranteed to see someone, maybe Kidd, clopping along towing a child on a shovel.

This year the carnival is celebrating its centennial. Started in 1914 by Carl Howelsen, it was initially a way to bring the community together and fight winter's cabin fever. Organized by the not-for-profit Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, also founded by Howelsen, the carnival is five days of music and dancing, races and ski jumping competitions. Today, rather than a series of barn dances and sled races, it's a tightly organized collection of outdoor events and social festivities. Still held on Lincoln Avenue, the modern carnival hums with energy, representing the cutting edge of winter sports contests with a decisive whiff of the Wild West.

According to Rick DeVos, executive director of the sports club, the club "was Howelsen's opportunity to show the goods." The goods were the sport of distance ski jumping. Howelsen was a revered Norwegian jumper, so when he built the first jump in Steamboat, DeVos says, "every boy in town looked and said: 'Hey! I want to do



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEAMBOAT WINTER CARNIVAL

The winter festival in Steamboat Springs, Colo., marks its centennial next month. The children's events include skijoring, with a horse doing the pulling of a young skier, and three-legged races like the youngsters below are navigating on skis.



they race toward a ski jump. Gaining speed, the boy launches into the air, pulling his skis into an "iron cross" before landing on the snowy street. Slalom races, events with names like Donkey Jump and Ring and Spear follow, eventually giving way to one of the most popular events: the Diamond Hitch Parade.

Steamboat is steeped in ski

history. The town has produced more Olympic athletes than any in the country. Many of those athletes didn't just train at Steamboat's Olympic facilities; they also grew up here, went to school here, and learned to play instruments here. Many of them are in the Steamboat Springs High School Marching Band, which crowns the Diamond Hitch Parade just

as it has every year since 1935 with members sliding their way down Lincoln on cross-country skis, playing horns and drums as they shuffle.

The first time I pulled into Steamboat it was sunrise and I'd just driven through the night from Montana. I passed throngs of coffee shops and pedestrians in down vests walking handsome dogs. Steam belled into the cold air with their every breath and every sip of their lattes. The winding slopes of Steamboat Springs Resort poured from the hills toward the road. On the other side of Lincoln the opaque, green water of the Yampa River flowed in front of Howelsen Hill's ski jump.

Howelsen Hill rises 440 feet over the Yampa. Its namesake chose this slope on the edge of town as the carnival's site for ski jumping shortly after the inception of the festival. Over 70 Olympians have trained here. Records have been set here. In 1917, when the jump opened, the soaring skiers gripped the

If you go . . .

Where to stay
The Steamboat Grand
2300 Mt. Werner Circle
Steamboat Springs, Colo.
877-306-2628
www.steamboatgrand.com
The area's top pick if access to the slopes is your priority. Spa, restaurant, and all the amenities you could want. From \$340.
Hotel Bristol
917 Lincoln Ave.
800-851-0872
www.steamboathotelbristol.com
A comfortable option, with a saloon, in the thick of downtown's shops. From \$109.
Where to eat
Ghost Ranch Saloon
56 Seventh St.
970-879-9898
The best ribeye steak in town and even better live music. Great food in a Western atmosphere. Dinners from \$14.95.
Information
Steamboat Chamber of Commerce
www.steamboat-chamber.com
The best resource for information about carnival events. To register for an event, check with the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, www.sswc.org.

imaginations of onlookers, redefining what they thought was possible to do on skis.

In the morning sun I stopped to watch a young skier pull her planks over the lip of Howelsen's jump. The girl tucked back her ponytail, adjusted her goggles, and took a deep breath. She eased forward, sliding down the slope and eventually popping off the scoop and sailing through the air. Silently, she touched down and skidded to a halt. There was no one there to cheer. Only I, across the street, and her coach on the flats witnessed her grace. She simply clicked out of her skis, shouldered them, and booted up the hill to do it again.

The 100th Steamboat Winter Carnival will be held from Feb. 6-10.

Brian Irwin can be reached at irwin08.bi@gmail.com.