

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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Grace Wright snowshoed through the woods just off Mount Hood's Glade Trail.

OREGON

Enjoying life on the Hood

So much to do inside and out at historic ski resort

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

MOUNT HOOD, Oregon — Rooted at 6,000 feet on the south side of Mount Hood stands Timberline Lodge, a grand structure overlooking the Cascade Mountains that's drawn visitors since the 1930s. The purpose-built ski lodge, constructed during the Great Depression to provide jobs, once attracted skiers in their ascots and colorful Norwegian sweaters who came to enjoy the brisk mountain air, alpine views, and country's second chairlift. (Idaho's Sun Valley Resort had the first.)

Today, visitors still come here for the skiing (Timberline offers the country's only lift-served year-round access), the history of the place (it's a National Historic Landmark), the food and wine (the lodge owns a herd of cattle, and offers tours of its impressive wine cellar), and its easy access (just a one-hour drive from downtown Portland).

In December, my family and I spent a couple of nights on Mount Hood's south side, using it as a base to explore Timberline and Government Camp, a village with snow tubing, restaurants, a tiny museum, and North America's largest night skiing area. Then we spent a

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HOUSTON'S GOT GAME

Can the city's sights and sounds offer up as much excitement as the Super Bowl?

BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER | GLOBE STAFF



HOUSTON — Apparently there's going to be a football game here.

I've heard some low-level chatter about a New England Patriots match taking place Feb. 5 in Houston. The Supper Plate? The Super Plate? The Super Bowl? That's it. It's a bowl.

New England fans will flood Houston in their finest Gronk jerseys and Bill Belichick-inspired couture hooded sweatshirts to see their beloved team battle the Atlanta Falcons. But can the sights and sounds of Houston offer up as much excitement as the big game itself?

America's fourth largest city is a massive, automobile-dependent metropolis that is circled and dissected by multi-lane motor-

ways with ramps that twist around like asphalt cyclones. The car mentality continues into the neighborhoods, where people drive to stylish downtown restaurants and bars rather than walk. I felt odder walking around Houston than I ever did in Los Angeles.

These neighborhoods, each with its own flavor, are where fans will converge for Super Bowl LI. If these fans are anything like me, they'll get lost quite often. Admittedly, my sense of direction is on par with a visually impaired groundhog that has lost its contact lenses.

That's the downside, unless you're on a party bus, in which case there is no downside because you won't be driving and the only thing you'll be concerned with is the location of the beer cooler.

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PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER MUTHER/GLOBE STAFF

Historic Mt. Hood mixes old and new

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few nights in the hip town of Hood River, located 35 miles north of Mount Hood on the Columbia River, an outdoor hub with boutiques, breweries (pFreim, Full Sail, and Double Mountain), and an easy vibe.

The drive from Portland International Airport follows US Route 26, a major road with 18-wheelers heading to Bend and beyond, and past small towns where one-of-a-kind shops and hotels mingle with Subway and Dairy Queen. After passing the turnoff for Government Camp, we learned how to put on tire chains and made the final 6-mile drive up Timberline Road, a route that's closed from midnight to 7 a.m. daily for snow removal.

Timberline Lodge sits next to the ski lodge at tree line with clear views up to the Palmer snowfield and glacier, and to Mount Hood's 11,250-foot volcanic peak. We stayed in a clean no-frills room with puffy down comforters, Pendleton wool blankets, hide lamps, and a heavy door that had a hefty metal key, which the kids had never seen at a lodge before, and a wrought-iron handle.

Despite the 105-inch snow base outside, we spent half of the next day exploring the lodge, wandering through narrow doorways, down stairs with animal carvings on the banisters, and along hallways with vintage ski memorabilia on the walls. A 90-foot stone fireplace stands at the heart of the lodge (so large that Santa actually pops out of it at Christmas), and rough carvings and wrought-iron handiwork speak to the past.

"The lodge has this really industrial-looking art created by the iron workers who came here from Boston and Philly," Timberline-spokesman John Burton says of the building, a Works Progress Administration project. "You'll see a pine cone on a door knob, but it's not refined. And they had to



PHOTOS BY KARI BODNARCHUK

utilize whatever they had on hand, so they used tire chains off the vehicles to make spark protectors for the fireplace."

After exploring, we headed for the slopes. Timberline has a small beginner's area with a mini chairlift, forested trails below the lodge, and exposed runs on the snowfield above. About 50 percent of the trails suit intermediates with the remainder evenly split between beginner and advanced levels. On weekends, visitors with a lift ticket can hop a free ride on the snow cat up to the snowfield.

More adventurous skiers and riders can take the 3-mile Glade Trail from Timberline Lodge down to Government Camp (known as Govy to the locals), a small village that's home to the Mount Hood Skibowl, which offers night skiing on 34 lit trails. Our 5- and 7-year-olds, however, were drawn to The World's Only Cosmic Tubing: A snow hill with about 12 lanes that we plunged down on tubes holding anywhere from one to four people, while music pounded and the hill lit up in a rainbow of colors from the 600,000 LED lights.

One bluebird day, we did a family snowshoe hike through Mount Hood Adventure that took us from Govy up the Glade Trail toward Timberline, passing a few skiers, snowboarders, and sledgers along the way. Our guide,



Above: Cosmic Tubing offers riders 12 lanes of tubing accompanied by music and a rainbow of LED lights.

Left: The 11,250-foot volcanic peak of Mount Hood rises above the ski resort.

Bangor-native Desi Rae Clark, gave us the history of the area, from the Army officers who came here in the mid-1800s to the Norwegians who arrived in the 1950s for ski jumping. She also gave us backcountry safety tips, pointed out the prints of snowshoe hare and Douglas squirrels, and explained how to identify the area's lodgepole and ponderosa pines by their needles. We hiked up packed-down trails that offered stunning views of Mount Hood (called Wy'east by the local Multnomah tribe) and then went off-trail through deep snow through the forest.

"You just found an awesome thing," said Clark, as our son Sam plopped down on a bent tree to rest. "This is

called a J tree. One of the big trees fell on and broke it, and it continued to grow around it. The Native Americans learned this and then would intentionally break trees to be directional — to point toward water sources or trails."

After a few days playing in the snow, we joined friends in Hood River and rented a house in town through Columbia Gorge Vacation Rentals, a company that's run by former Olympian A.J. Kitt and his wife, Amy. From our home base, we could walk down to the independent toy store (G. Willikers) and book store (Waucoma Bookstore), and have wood-fired pizza at Solstice restaurant overlooking the river.

Hood River offers easy access to Waterfall Alley, a section of the Columbia Gorge along Interstate 84 between Hood River and Portland that has more than 90 waterfalls, all fed by glaciers and snowmelt. We hiked 1 mile up to Wahclella Falls on a singletrack route along Tanner Creek, but many falls are visible from the road.

Another morning we visited Hood River's WAAAM museum, as it's called, or Western Antique Aeroplane and Automobile Museum. Under the roof of this 3-acre enclosed structure, we found about 100 planes (mostly from the 1920s to 1940s), 140 cars, 30 motorcycles, and a kids' play area where our children scrambled around a small-scale helicopter and submarine. WAAAM's planes, all but nine of which are owned by museum-founder Terry Brandt, include a 1933 Stearman Model 70 and a 1917 Curtiss Jenny biplane. The museum also flies planes the second Saturday of every month.

Hood River locals often head to the tiny Cooper Spur Mountain Resort 35 minutes away for alpine skiing (it has 10 trails on 50 acres, with 350 feet of vertical), Nordic skiing (6.5 kilometers of groomed trails), and tubing. We opted for Mount Hood Meadows, which has such varied and fun terrain that people line up at the lifts more than an hour before opening time (it offers 2,150 acres of skiable terrain, and a lift that reaches up to 7,300 feet). It also has a well-run children's ski and snowboard program with two 60-foot-long magic carpets and a terrain-based learning park, and a new 150-foot-long covered magic carpet that can be raised as snow levels increase (the area gets that much snow).

We put the kids in the ski and snowboard program so we could go explore, knowing that the school would flag our lift passes at the chairlift if the anyone needed us — a handy feature. We spent the morning skiing along ridges and down wide runs with views into Heather Canyon, above which loomed Hood's chiseled peak, and out across the Cascade Mountains to cone-shaped Mount Jefferson, another volcano and Oregon's second highest peak, which rose in the distance.

We ended the day, and our trip, with a final stop at Timberline Lodge for one last cup of oversized hot cocoa by that fantastic stone fireplace, and to watch the setting sun light up the mountain in cosmic style.

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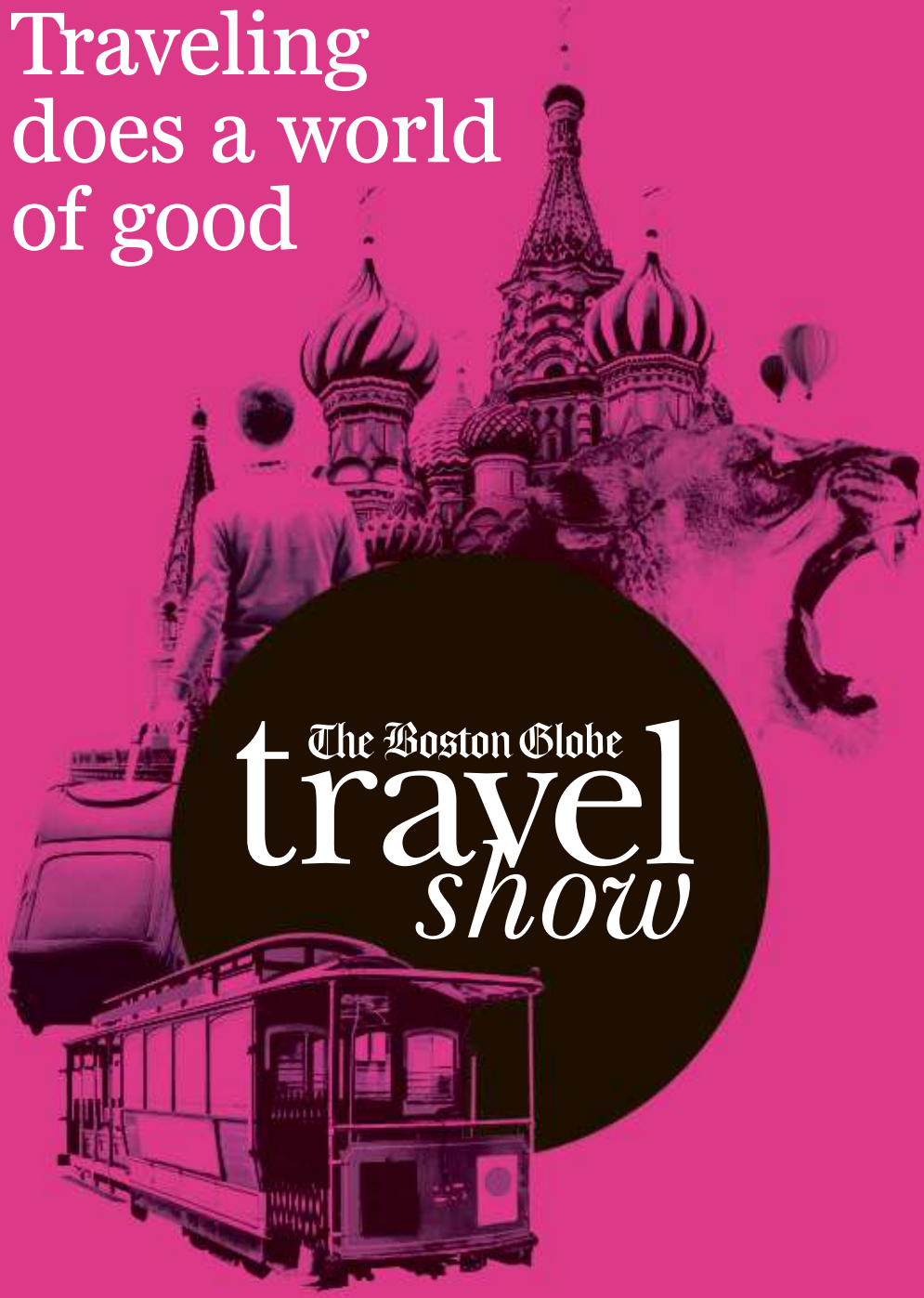
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