

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



PHOTOS BY MIKE SCHIRF/SKI BUTLERS

LESS LUGGING, MORE SKIING

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When Kristiina Almy and her family rented skis for their trip to Vail, Colo., the gear was delivered to their condo and fitted to them by ski technicians. If snow conditions changed during the Almys' vacation, the family could swap out their skis for different ones, which would be delivered to their doorstep within an hour. Sounds easy, right? That's the idea, according to Bryn Carey, founder of Ski Butlers, a company established in Park City, Utah, in 2005 that will deliver its one-millionth rental this year. "Imagine sitting by the fire and having a glass of wine while someone fits your boots and answers all your questions about where to ski and what restaurants to eat at, and provides other local knowledge," says Carey. "That is the Ski Butlers difference and why our customers love us."

Almy can attest to the convenience of using the service: "They showed up right when they said they would and spent quality time making sure we all got the right equipment," says Almy from Sherborn. "I really liked not having to travel with skis."

These days, flying with your skis or snowboard can get pricey, and packing gear into a rental car can be a hassle. Sure, you can rent ski or snowboard equipment at your destination, but consider this: Ski Butlers will deliver freshly waxed and tuned gear to your hotel, condo, mountain yurt, or cabin — anywhere that's accessible by the company's all-wheel-drive vehicles. This lets you skip potentially long rental lines in the morning.

Upon delivery, a ski technician will fit your boots, skis, snowboards, and poles, and even provide a hel-

met and other accessories, if needed (helmets, goggles, and insurance cost extra). The delivery packages, which range from \$31 to \$71, include on-mountain adjustments and equipment replacement within 45 minutes of calling Ski Butlers. That means if you rented good carving skis for groomers and then the area gets a foot of fresh powder, Ski Butlers will swap out your carving planks for powder skis, for instance.

Here's the catch: Ski Butlers offers these services at 19 locations that serve 47 ski resorts worldwide, meaning it's not everywhere yet. You can book these services for resorts in California, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, plus Whistler/Blackcomb in British Columbia and several resorts in the French Alps. Gear gets delivered hourly between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m., and then picked up between 4 and 6 p.m. on your final ski day.

The program also gives skiers and snowboarders a chance to try some of the season's top gear. All of Ski Butlers' US locations offer the latest Rossignol 7 Series and Experience skis, and the company's new high-performance demo center at Aspen Resort lets partici-

pants try out limited-edition skis and next year's top-of-the-line Rossignols. Skiers must visit the center for a fitting, but gear can still be delivered, picked up, and swapped out. The new Aspen center opened Dec. 21.

Flying to a destination not covered by Ski Butlers? Consider bringing your own gear and using Bags VIP (www.maketraveleasier.com), a company that will collect your luggage from baggage claim at more than 250 US airports and deliver it to you within four hours

for destinations up to 40 miles from the airport (or up to 100 miles within six hours for an additional fee). Transport fees range from \$30 for one bag to \$50 for up to eight bags.

The service works great on the return trip, too, especially if space is tight on the ride home from the airport or you're catching a train or taxi. Bags VIP can transport your luggage home from airports in Boston; Portland and Bangor, Maine; Manchester, N.H.; Burlington, Vt.; and Windsor Locks (Bradley International Airport), Conn. Wherever you're headed this ski season, take advantage of gear delivery services so you can save your energy for ripping down the slopes.

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ABOVE AND RIGHT: A Ski Butlers technician fits rental equipment for a family. Ski Butlers will deliver freshly waxed and tuned gear to your lodging at 47 resorts worldwide.

HERE

TRAINS LINK BOSTON, BRUNSWICK

Travel between Boston and Freeport, Maine, just got easier thanks to expanded service aboard the Amtrak Downeaster. The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority, which manages the Amtrak Downeaster, added two additional round trips between Brunswick and Boston and one additional round trip on weekends. New departures from Boston leave at 11:25 p.m. northbound on weekdays and weekends whenever Boston holds a major concert or game, and the 9:05 a.m. northbound train now extends to Brunswick daily. New departures from Brunswick heading southbound leave at 4:30 a.m. on weekdays (great for commuters) and 6 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on weekends. *One-way fares range from \$6 to \$30; roundtrip fares \$12 to \$60. 800-872-7245, www.amtrak-downeaster.com.*

TRY OUT TELEMARK SKIING IN VT.

Bring your whole family to Bromley Mountain for a weekend of free-heel fun and clinics for skiers of all ages. The 34th annual Kare Andersen Telemark Festival runs Feb. 23 and 24 and features instruction for beginner to expert skiers. A classic-style, sanctioned race on Feb. 24 includes two runs on a course with 20 gates, a small drop jump, and a 360-degree banked turn. The event celebrates Andersen, a Norwegian who emigrated to Connecticut in the 1950s and taught telemark skiing at Bromley until he was in his 90s. *Tickets \$45 race only; \$45 per clinic; \$76 (under 18) to \$87 for lift ticket and two clinics, or lift ticket, one clinic,*



CHRISTIAN SUNDQUIST

and Sunday race registration; \$141 (under 18) to \$164 for lift tickets Feb. 23 and 24, three clinics, and race registration. 802-824-5522, www.bromley.com/twinter/telefest.

THERE

RULES FOR VISITING MACHU PICCHU

The world's most popular destinations risk being overloved, at times, which is why the Peruvian government has established a new system for regulating visitors at Machu Picchu. To visit this famous 15th-century Inca site, you must now book tickets for a specific time — every hour from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. — for a visit that cannot last longer than four hours. Reentry will no longer be allowed. Additionally, visitors to Machu Picchu, the National Park of Huascarán, and 74 other protected areas across the country can no longer enter with single-use plastic containers due to new legislation approved by Peru's Ministry of the Environment. www.machupicchu.gob.pe

GOOD LAUGHS IN JAMESTOWN, N.Y.

Learn about your favorite comedians at a new state-of-the-art museum in Jamestown, N.Y. — Lucille Ball's hometown. The National Comedy Center chronicles the history of comedy in America, offering more than 50 interactive exhibits. See performances in the Hologram Theater, perform a stand-up routine in the Comedy Karaoke Lounge, and record a classic "Saturday Night Live" skit. The center looks at the careers and work of America's top comedians, from Charlie Chaplin to Amy Schumer, and includes comedy clips, memorabilia, and



DAN CAPPELLAZZO

famous props such as Harpo Marx's trench coat and Jerry Seinfeld's puffy shirt. As a visitor, you wear an RFID wristband programmed with your favorite comedians and comedic styles — this helps personalize your museum experience. While in town, visit the Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum, which houses rare memorabilia from "I Love Lucy," including props, costumes, and replica studio sets, and don't miss this year's Lucille Ball Comedy Festival, Aug. 7-11. 716-484-2222, comedycenter.org

EVERYWHERE

BOOST AUDIO WITH THIS MINI DEVICE

Listening to your favorite tunes or movies on your mobile device can be tricky with the drone of airplane engines, voices, or other intrusive background noise. AudioQuest's latest digital to analog converter (DAC) and headphone amplifier, the DragonFly Red, provides significantly better sound than your laptop or smartphone's DAC can produce (those simply aren't designed to create amazing high-fidelity sound). It also offers more powerful headphone output, boosting volume, richness, and detail. Plug the thumb-drive-size DragonFly into your computer's USB port or into your Android or Apple device using the compatible DragonTail adapters (USB-A, USB-C, or micro USB) and listen to anything from MP3s to 24-bit/96kHz high-resolution files. The DragonFly Red's more advanced DAC chip and 2.1-volt output enable



it to handle demanding headphones. *\$199 DragonFly Red; \$19.95 per adapter, www.audioquest.co.*

CARRIERS THAT KEEP CAMERA GEAR SAFE

Protect your photo equipment from dust, snow, and rain with Matador's new base layers — essentially high-tech puffy jackets for your camera gear. The Camera Base Layer and Lens Base Layer have a synthetic down filling and a durable shell that cushion your equipment and help shield it from the elements. The Lens Base Layer has a waterproof inner liner that prevents moisture from seeping through, while the Camera Base Layer has a built-in rain cover that unfolds from a small external pocket and slips over the padded camera. Each carrier has a roll-top closure with a buckle on top, allowing you to adjust for different size cameras or lenses. The 3-ounce camera case can hold a DSLR and lens up to 7 inches long total, while the 1.5-ounce lens holder can accommodate a lens up to 6 inches long. *\$39.99 lens layer, \$59.99 camera layer. 720-242-6437, matadorup.com*

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