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Family Snow Vacations

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Here are four of our favorite regions for making memories in this enchanting season.

By Ginny Prior Dec 1, 2023 Updated Dec 1, 2023



Diamond Peak ski area offers plenty of fun for all ages.
Photo by Chris Bartkowski, Courtesy of Diamond Peak Ski Resort

Winter in the Sierra. It’s a magical time for sleigh bells and snowflakes, playing in the powder, and warming your toes by the hearth. Mountain resorts put on their best show in winter, with family activities that focus on snow play in the West’s most beautiful settings.

North Lake Tahoe

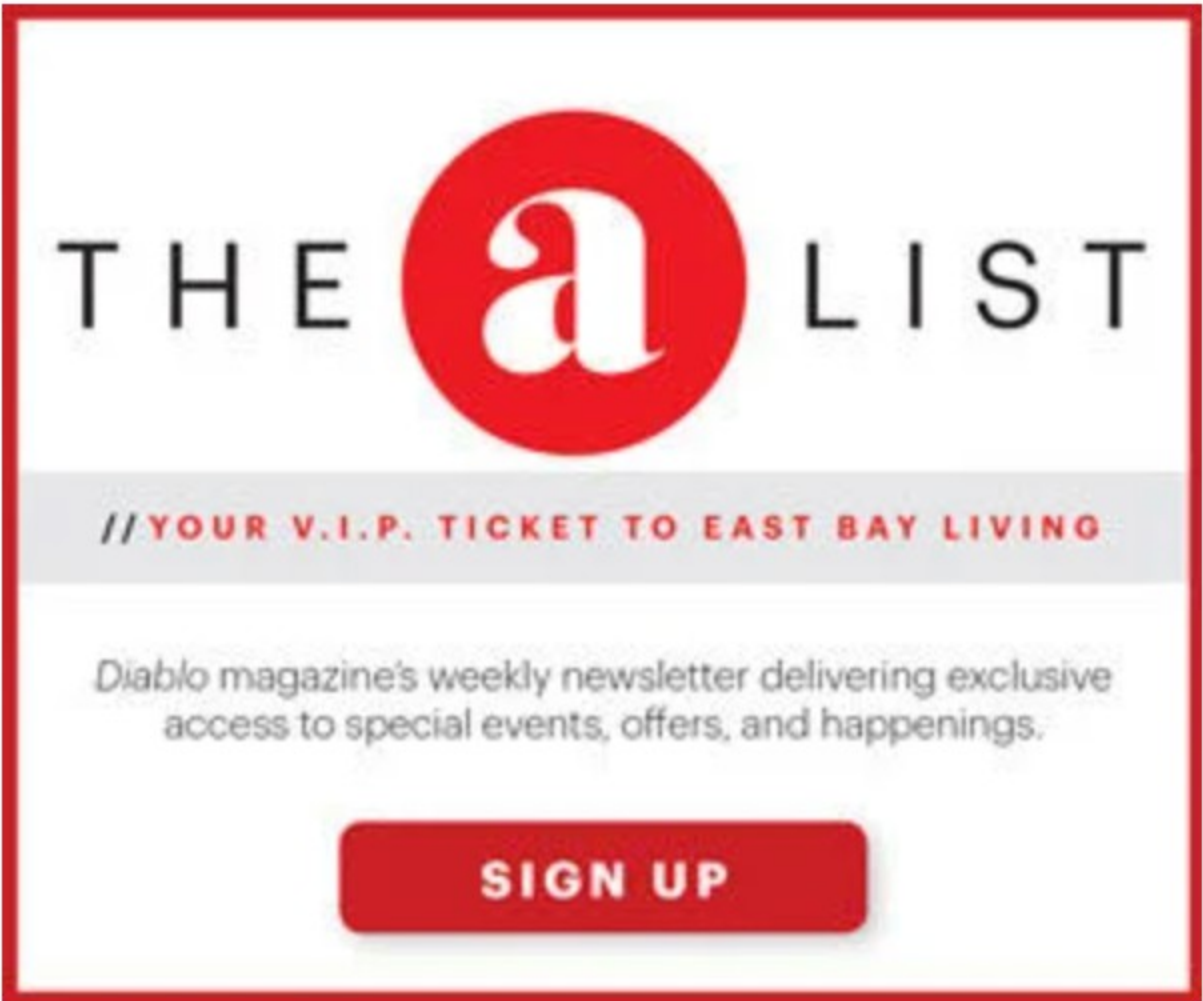
Things are naturally quieter on the north side of picturesque Lake Tahoe, and this is a good thing. With less development and more open space, you often feel like you have the shoreline and surrounds to yourself.



Save time for a snowshoe hike at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa and Casino.
Courtesy of Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa and Casino

Book a suite or a lakefront cottage at the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa and Casino in Incline Village, and your family will have everything at their mitten-clad fingertips. This award-winning property provides real value for its resort fee, with daily activities, snowshoe hikes above the lake, and a charming trek through the forest to Chickadee Ridge.

Chickadees flutter from the pines to eat from your hands, your hair, or wherever you



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sprinkle birdseed (but don’t offer them human food). Free Hyatt shuttles and great guides make it easy to access these offerings, and the resort has snowshoes and hiking poles on-site.



Diamond Peak is an ideal destination for all ages.
Courtesy of Diamond Peak Ski Resort

For skiers and boarders, Diamond Peak ski resort is a shuttle bus ride from the Hyatt and couldn’t be more focused on family fun. With over 600 acres and 1,840 vertical feet of terrain, this community-owned ski area has views of Lake Tahoe from almost every run. Plus, every trail, bowl, and glade run funnels down to the base lodge, where guests can meet up for lunch without getting lost.

After a day of rosy cheeks and rushing adrenaline, families can splash and soak in the Hyatt’s large outdoor pool and jetted whirlpools, with a backdrop of snow-capped mountains and lighted pines. Three chef-driven restaurants are on-site, including the lauded Lone Eagle Grille, with its stone fireplace and large windows looking out on Lake Tahoe.



The North Lake Tahoe area boasts beautiful vistas.
Courtesy of Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe Resort, Spa and Casino

Adults can also pop into the resort’s full-service casino and book a treatment at the celebrated Stillwater Spa, an ode to nature’s elements of air, water, earth, and fire. Stillwater Spa has 16 treatment rooms, including a pair of sanctuaries for couples—one with a fireplace and the other with an infinity tub. The spa’s facials use state-of-the-art SGF-4 Technology, and it is ahead of the curve on wellness trends, too, with the latest in touchless treatments like the FDA approved Biomat, which uses infrared heat to soothe arthritis and increase mobility. You can use the Biomat alone or combine it with a blanket-like Bioacoustic mat for supreme swaddling and a deep acoustic massage.

WINE COUNTRY

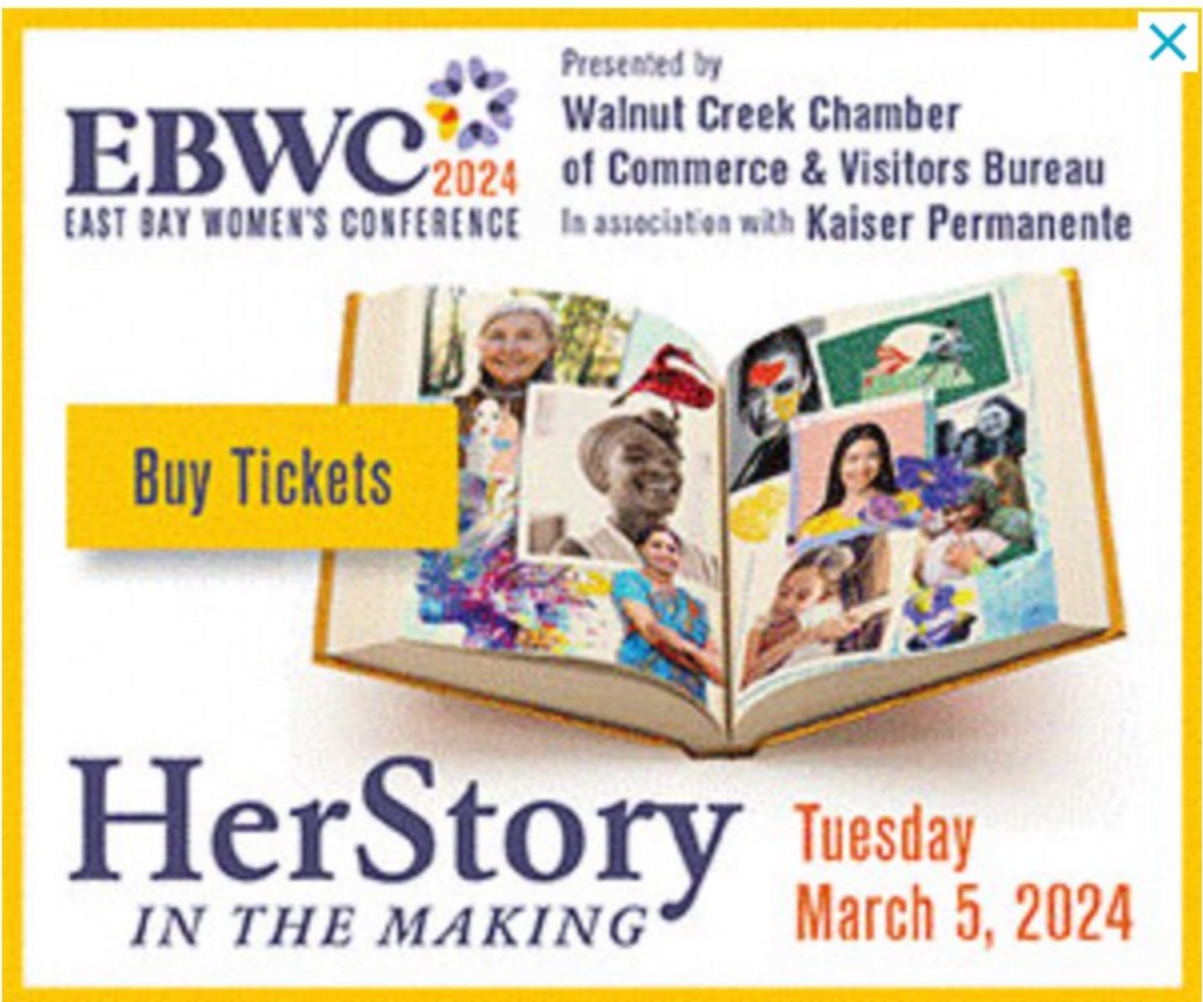
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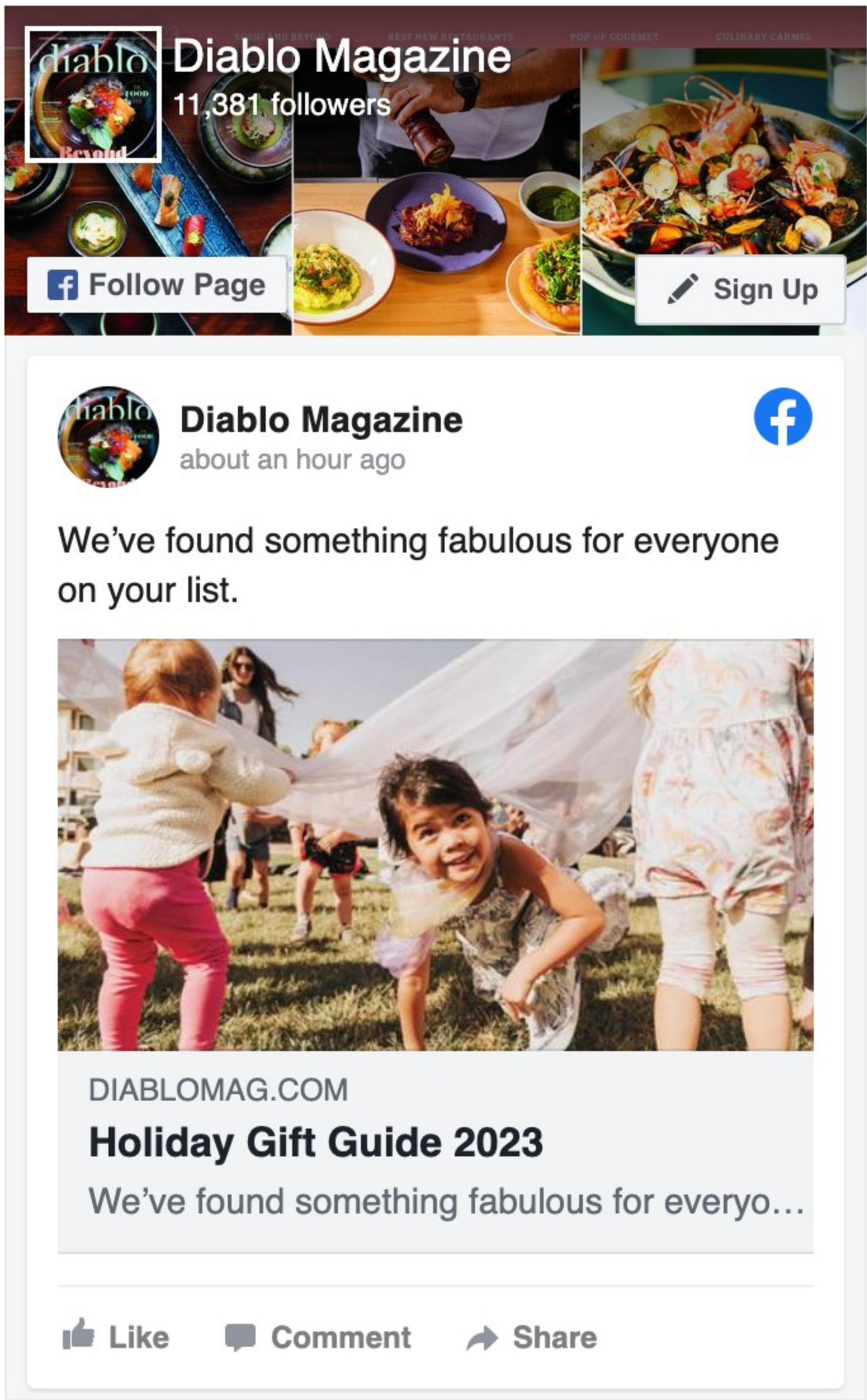
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Enjoy a wintry bike ride at Tenaya at Yosemite.
Courtesy of Tenaya at Yosemite

Yosemite National Park (Southern entrance)

Perfect as a painting, quintessential Currier and Ives scenes abound at the southern entrance to Yosemite National Park. John Muir said it best when he likened Yosemite to a great temple where one could “listen to the winter songs and sermons preached and sung only there.”

Consider booking a luxurious room, suite, cottage, or cabin at the award-winning Tenaya at Yosemite, and you’ll get a rush of happy hormones. During the holidays, from late November through the end of December, a towering, sustainably harvested tree fills the lobby with wonder and good cheer.

Speaking of seasonal decor, you can make your own ornaments and even a gingerbread castle at Tenaya at Yosemite. During the Christmas season, Santa is on staff to interact with the kids, and his elves bake cookies for guests to decorate with red candy buttons and sprinkles. Outside, skaters glide on the resort’s sheltered rink and take breaks to roast marshmallows for warm, gooey s’mores. Kids of all ages can whiz down Tenaya’s sledding hill (rental sleds are available), go snow tubing, take a guided snowshoe walk in the forest, or swim in the year-round outdoor pools.

The Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias is a short drive from Tenaya with more than 500 giant sequoias stretching their snow-dusted limbs toward the marshmallow clouds. You’ll have the big trees mostly to yourself if you don’t mind a two-mile hike each way to Mariposa Grove (shuttle service is suspended in winter). And, like snowflakes, no two trees are alike, from the intertwined beauties known as the Faithful Couple to the harem of sequoias aptly named the Bachelor and the Three Graces. Tenaya at Yosemite also offers park tours via bus in the winter.



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Daredevils will relish the slopes at Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort.
Courtesy of Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort

Yosemite is one of the few national parks to have its own ski area; Badger Pass was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. It's a great little spot for skiing and boarding, snow tubing, and cross-country skiing with 90 acres of terrain, 10 runs, and five lifts.

A busy day in the park may have you pining for a massage at Tenaya at Yosemite's Ascent Spa. Hydrate your dry skin with everything from a peppermint scalp treatment to a hot stone massage or facial.



Rush Creek Lodge and Spa looks picture-perfect during the chilly season.
Rush Creek Lodge and Spa at Yosemite, Kim Carroll

Yosemite National Park (Northwest entrance)

What does the northwest end of Yosemite National Park offer visitors? Solitude. The Hetch Hetchy gate is the least-visited entrance to the park and a dream for waterfall lovers. The highlights are the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir and the hike to Wapama Falls to see incredible volumes of water tumble over sheer granite walls in the grandeur of what John Muir described as a place as beautiful as Yosemite Valley.

There are two popular resorts near this entrance to the park. The upscale Rush Creek Lodge and Spa is laid out for optimum family fun with a large saltwater pool and two outdoor hot tubs, zip lines, trails, and lots of organized activities. The crown jewel is the indoor/outdoor Rush Creek Spa, designed with elements of Yosemite's waterfalls, granite, river rocks, and more. The Evergreen Lodge at Yosemite (circa 1921) is the more rustic of the two properties, with nicely appointed cabins and year-round activities. Skiers and boarders should make sure to hit Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort.



Plan a trip to Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort when it is blanketed in snow.
Courtesy of Dodge Ridge Mountain Resort



Calaveras Big Trees State Park offers the chance to get up close and personal with towering sequoias.
Courtesy of Go Calaveras

Calaveras Big Trees State Park

You can take snow or leave it in Calaveras County, where the low-lying areas may be dry but there’s plenty of white stuff at the higher elevations. That means powder for part of the day and a warmer lake hike in the afternoon sun.

The town of Arnold is the gateway to the unforgettable Calaveras Big Trees State Park, where stunning giant sequoia trees were first discovered in the Sierra Nevada.

On Saturdays in winter, a cool family activity is a guided snowshoe walk on the park’s North Grove Trail. Free snowshoes are provided while they last, and you can also rent snowshoes, cross-country skis, and other gear in Arnold as well.



Bear Valley Resort offers an unforgettable snowy getaway.
Gocalaveras.com

Arnold’s overnight options include various charming inns and hotels, along with lodging at nearby Bear Valley Resort off Highway 4. Laid-back and fairly uncrowded, Bear Valley has nine lifts (including two high-speed chairlifts) and just over 75 trails with the majority accessible to beginners and intermediates.

You can also go sledding or tubing on Bear Valley Adventure Co.’s groomed hills, or in nearby SNO-Parks at Lake Alpine or Spicer Reservoir.

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- Bear Valley Adventure Co.
- Evergreen Lodge
- Stillwater Spa
- Rush Creek Lodge And Spa
- Diamond Peak
- Lone Eagle Grille
- Tenaya At Yosemite
- Ascent Spa
- Bear Valley Resort



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