

# Far West NewsFlash

January, 2024

**LONE PEAK TRAM OPENS AT BIG SKY:** The first new Tram built at a North American ski area in 15 years, this new higher-capacity system is a complete replacement of the resort's original 15-passenger jig-back tram built in 1995. The resort broke ground on the installation in summer 2022 and began load testing the new Doppelmayr/Garaventa system in November. Spots on the inaugural public tram ride were auctioned off to benefit local organizations. The tram can travel up to 22 mph, providing a ride time of 3.7 minutes. It starts at 9,024 feet and rises 2,142 vertical feet to a new top terminal, which offers the highest scenic overlook in the state of Montana.

**JACKSON HOLE MOUNTAIN RESORT SETS RECORD:** Over the weekend of December 9, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort (JHMR), Wyoming, set the record for the most people skiing or riding in jeans at one time. The final count of participants was 3,114 denim-clad guests, shattering the previous record of 102 that was set at *The Remarkables Ski Area* in New Zealand earlier this year. The conditions were the best of the season so far with bluebird skies, 19 inches of new snow in the last 48 hours, and all lifts open, minus the Aerial Tram. To aid in setting the record, the resort offered \$25 lift tickets, \$25 rentals, and \$100 off group lessons. After the record-setting day, there was a celebration at the RPK3 restaurant under the Aerial Tram with live music.

**THE FIVE BEST PLACES TO HELI-SKI IN THE WORLD:** Heli-skiing is considered the ultimate ski experience and is on many die-hard skiers and snowboarders' bucket lists. Here's an interesting fact: four out of 5 of the best heli-skiing places in the world are in British Columbia. Listed from #5 to #1 are: *Silvertip Heli-Skiing* in the Cariboo Mountains; #4, is *Tyax Heliskiing*, in the Southern Chilcotin Range, near Goldbridge, B.C.; #3 is *Points North Point Heli Skiing* in Cordova, Alaska. #2, is *Last Frontier Heliskiing*, in northern British Columbia. And the #1 spot is *Skeena Heliskiing*, British Columbia, in an area about a quarter the size of the country of Switzerland.

**HOW A CORPORATE DUOPOLY RUINED SKIING:** Skiing looks different in much of North America today. That's because it has been reduced to a binary choice: *Epic* or *Ikon*? The Epic Pass (offered by Vail Resorts, \$909 early-bird) provides varying levels of access to 80 ski areas on four continents, from Podunk hills in Missouri to world-class peaks in the Rockies. The Ikon Pass (Alterra Mountain Company, \$1,159 early-bird) has a similarly impressive and globe-spanning repertoire of 55 areas. Vail and Alterra are in an arms race for acquisitions and partnerships with no end in sight. Skiing, like personal computing, credit cards, and soft drinks, is now a duopoly. On paper, the industry looks healthier than ever! Last year was the busiest ski season in U.S. history, with visits up 6.6 percent to 65.4 million days skied, driven by record Epic and Ikon sales. But behind the numbers, a tragedy is unfolding. High-spending pass holders may be getting a bargain, but all the other prices, from single-day tickets to ski school to housing, have skyrocketed. Locals are being forced out and workers squeezed. The new business model is attracting jetsetters and displacing ski bums. Mountains are losing their culture as the same two companies take over lodge after lodge after lodge. Gone are live bands, independent outfitters, free lift-side parking. It has fast become just another soulless, pre-packaged, mass commercial experience. For skiers and boarders, the pass is a great deal! For the everyday dad, who just wants to take his kids up for a day of fun in the snow.....not so much! It now costs a family of four, a minimum of \$800 for lift tickets, rentals, lessons, lunch, and parking. Workers are struggling with rising costs of lodging while working on-mountain and facing low-wage jobs. Locals rage about how corporate ownership has ruined the culture and community of their mountains. High-end chains replace independent retailers. Local lift ticket deals have vanished. Corporate policies ban barbecues, spontaneous après-ski parties. As the duopoly grows, the lay-back irreverence and fellowship that constitute skiing's soul recede.

**AVALANCHE!! BEWARE:** Please be safe out there! With all the cold temps, ice storms, high winds, and new snow we've had dump across the country these past couple weeks, the avalanche danger throughout the Western U.S. will be very high. The avalanche danger is not just high-altitude cornice sides, but also lower elevation slab slides; 1) persistent slab avalanches caused by weak base layers that can react to new snow on

top; and 2) wind slab avalanches which occur when winds move snow into slabs that then collapse into avalanches. Last week inbound avalanches at *Palisades Tahoe* in both the Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows sides took one life and injured several people. There have been avalanches in Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming since the beginning of the year. To increase your awareness and education go to [www.brassavalanche.org](http://www.brassavalanche.org)

**2023 INTERNATIONAL SKIING HISTORY ASSOCIATION AWARDS:** The winners of these awards have been announced and will be presented March 22 in Park City, in conjunction with the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame:

**\*ULLR AWARD - Presented for a single outstanding contribution or several contributions to skiing's historical record in published book form:** *Around the World in 50 Slopes*, by Patrick Thorne; *Georges Blanchon: Cet homme protégé libre et généreux*, by Daniel Sage; *Winterdanse: The Misplaced Art of Snow Ballet*, by Michael Russell; and *Une Histoire des skis Dynamic: Skis de Légende adoptés par des coureurs exceptionnels*, by Jean Michal.

**\*BALDUR AWARD - Presented for an outstanding work of general interest that sheds significant light on an aspect of skiing history:** *Junior Bounous and the Joys of Skiing*, by Ayja Bounous; *Disneyland on the Mountain: Walt, the Environmentalists, and the Ski Resort That Never Was*, by Greg Glasgow & Kathryn Mayer

**\*SKADE AWARD - Presented for an outstanding work on regional ski history or for an outstanding work published in book form that is focused in part on ski history:** *From Ranch to Resort: The History of Sierra at Tahoe*, by Christopher C. Couper; *Eldora: Six Decades of Adventure*, by Rett Ertl & Andy Bigford; *Skiing off the Roof*, by Rick Walkom.

**\*FILM AWARD - Presented for outstanding contribution to the historical record of skiing in photographic or film/digital form:** *Full Circle: A Story of Post Traumatic Growth* Trevor Kennison, Barry Corbet & Josh Berman - Trish Sullivan-Rothberg; *Buried: The 1982 Alpine Meadows Avalanche* Jared Drake & Steven Siig (directors & producers), Evan Hayes & Mark Gogolewski & Shannon Houchins & David Hillman & Michael Sugar (executive producers); *Alf Engen - Snapshots of a Sports Icon* Alan & Barbara Engen (producers)

**\*CYBER AWARD - Presented for creating a Website that contributes substantially to the preservation, distribution, and expansion of skiing's historical record:** *Perisherhistory.org/au*, Perisher Historical Society

## FAR WEST TRAVEL

**FWSA 2024 NORTH AMERICAN MINI SKI WEEK:** **COPPER MOUNTAIN has ONE room at Cambria still available.** Go to: <https://fwsaminiCP.sat.tours> for further information. The dates of the trip are **March 17-22, 2024**. Noni Love, of Copper Mountain will be our representative host, while Sara Clemons, President of Sports America Tours will be the tour operator for this particular trip. For further information, contact Nancy Ellis: [fwsatravelnancy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fwsatravelnancy@sbcglobal.net)

**FWSA 2024 AFRICA ADVENTURE TRIP:** **TANZANIA & ZANZIBAR! September 27 – October 7, 2024**, are the dates set for the next Far West Adventure Trip. We will fly into Kilimanjaro Airport, then head off to our lodge in Arusha. From there, we will travel to Lake Manyara National Park, to see the famous tree-climbing lions. Ngorongoro Crater, considered to be the 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder of the World, is the next stop. We will have a 2-night stay in Ngorongoro, where we hope to see a spectacular concentration of wildlife and the “big five”, and then it's off to Serengeti National Park, where we will see herds of buffalo, elephants, giraffes, gazelles, and many other animals and birds. The golden-maned lions, cheetahs, and leopards will be on the prowl. We will stay 2 nights at the Serengeti Serena Lodge. An optional Hot Air Balloon safari will be available for an early morning flight over the beautiful landscape, followed by a bush breakfast, for a real “Out of Africa” experience. Then, just a flight away, is the island of Zanzibar, where we will be taking a tour to see and experience the highlights of the area. We will have a 1-night stay in the 5-star Hotel Zanzibar Stone Town, followed by 2 nights at the Star Neptune Pwani Beach Resort. For more information on this trip, contact **Debbie Stewart:** [fwsaintltrlv@prodigy.net](mailto:fwsaintltrlv@prodigy.net).

**FWSA 2024 DIVE TRIP TO THE PHILIPPINES:** We are going back to the **PHILIPPINES**! The 2024 FWSA dive trip will be **October 19 – November 2, 2024** to Marco Vincent Dive Resort in Puerto Galera and Buceo Anilao Beach & Dive Resort in Anilao! A 3-hour drive away from Manila, Anilao is one of the world's best macro photography destinations. It is literally heaven-on-earth for muck diving, blackwater diving, and macro photography. It is considered the Capital of Nudibranchs...colorful mollusks without shells. The Puerto Galera diving area stretches from White Beach right around to Coral Cove. It is part of the Verde Island Passage and named by some scientists as the center of the world's marine biodiversity. There are more than fifty dive sites that are an interesting mix of sloping reefs, coral gardens deep pinnacles, shipwrecks, channel dives, muck diving, drift dives and sea grass beds. The divers who joined us on the 2019 Philippines dive trip not only called it *"the best dive trip ever"*, but many said, *"my best trip ever"*. *For more information, contact Randy Lew at: [fwsa13randy@telis.net](mailto:fwsa13randy@telis.net).*

## **FAR WEST SKI ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION**

**SAVE THE DATE:** **Thursday June 6, through Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024.** These are the dates set for the 91<sup>st</sup> Annual Far West Ski Association Convention. The convention will be held at the beautiful *Atlantis Casino Resort Spa*, In Reno, Nevada....co-hosted by *Bay Area Snow Sport Council* and *Sierra League & Council*. Watch for registration documentation to come your way in mid-February, 2024. Please make a note NOW that hotel registration will close **MAY 13, 2024**. We have a number of activities planned for you: a Tahoe Adventure on Thursday, followed by the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Pub Crawl. On Friday, we will have our 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Michael German Memorial Golf Tournament. Something fun and different this year. Come see what it's all about. We will also have a tour of the National Auto Museum, so if you are interested in old cars, hot-rods, classics, this is the one for you! Registration materials will be out in mid-February, with on-line registration following the first part of March. For further information, contact your regional council president.

## **FAR WEST CHARITIES AND OUR COMMUNITY**

**FWSA CHARITIES RECOGNITION PROGRAM:** FWSA encourages all clubs and councils to get involved with charities and community service. Clubs are encouraged to take photos and videos of their Charity activities all year. This makes it easy to put together their club charity presentation to be included in the 2024 CHARITIES VIDEO. Action photos, with club members and short videos are the best, but any photos and logos are acceptable and very welcome. Deadline for this year's entries is March 18<sup>th</sup>. For further information, **CONTACT:** Sigrid Noack at [charities@fwsa.org](mailto:charities@fwsa.org).

## **FAR WEST SKI COUNCILS**

**NORTHWEST SKI CLUB COUNCIL:** **Northwest Ski Club Council** (NWSCC) is asking for your support in getting the word out to your club members to come join us for the best Bachelor Blast trip - a trip for ALL CLUB members. This is your chance to meet club members from all over! Mark your calendar now for **March 13-17, 2024!** The trip dates have been selected to coordinate with NWSCC Seattle club members and to offer a Wednesday-Sunday trip, with more midweek skiing days at *Mt. Bachelor*. Lodging will be at the *Element* (a Marriott hotel). The hotel is located close to downtown Bend and offers large suite rooms, including all the usual amenities, plus a fully equipped kitchen. A complimentary breakfast is included each morning, and complimentary appetizers, wine, and beer are available Monday through Thursday 5pm – 6:30pm. A special happy hour for just our group is included on Friday evening. **For those with Ikon passes, skiing at Mt. Bachelor is included!** For those needing lift tickets, we are able to offer a special 3-out-of-4 day pass (better than the 3-of-3 offered online). We will continue to offer flexible lodging dates (choice of 2, 3, or 4 nights) for those who may only be able to ski on the weekend. Please get this information out to your fellow club members ASAP. Spots are limited! Our special group rate at the hotel will expire after **February 10**, and the price will be increased, so please help us get the word out and sign up EARLY!

**INTERMOUNTAIN SKI COUNCIL:** On August 7, 2023, the Far West Ski Association (FWSA) was notified that after years of notable success, the leadership of the *Intermountain Ski Council* (ISC) had determined its search for new leadership was no longer possible. ISC leaders were taking steps to dissolve the Council. In light of the timing of the dissolution of the ISC, the FWSA board voted to offer FWSA benefits through calendar year 2024 to all individual members of clubs in the former council. This enables individuals to participate fully in FWSA 2024 trips, the 2024 convention and other FWSA activities. We are, of course, sad to see the ISC go away because we appreciate the commitment individual leaders exhibited over the years to keep the Council strong. ISC member clubs are invited to consider joining another FWSA Council or joining the FWSA as a Direct Club. Club leaders can contact Todd Hood [vpCouncilservices@fwsa.org](mailto:vpCouncilservices@fwsa.org) for information.

**ALL COUNCILS:** You have heard that the Far West Ski Association (FWSA) is the "*Voice of the Western Skier*". NOW is a great time to hear from you! We're listening! As a club or council leader, you have opportunities and challenges to move your organization forward. The Vice President of Council Services is collecting input from club and council leaders as to what is important to you, and how the FWSA can help you achieve your goals for your club and overcome barriers.

Please email: [vpCouncilservices@fwsa.org](mailto:vpCouncilservices@fwsa.org) with your thoughts of services, programs, and activities the FWSA should Start, Stop, or Continue. Input will be compiled and reported to the FWSA board.

## **FAR WEST SKIER'S GUIDE**

**36<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL EDITION OF THE SKIER'S GUIDE AVAILABLE:** Leigh Gieringer, Publisher and Jane Wyckoff, Editor, are pleased to announce that the *36<sup>th</sup> Annual Edition of the Far West Skier's Guide* has been published, with another 100-page edition, jam-packed with information regarding Far West Ski Association programs and a council section featuring each of our regional councils, with ski club listings. Your picture might even be included in this edition – check it out! Also included are industry news with updated initiatives, and feature articles you will enjoy reading. Guest author Jimmy Petterson, renowned author of *Skiing around the World*, wrote an article on Madonna di Campiglio, site of the Far West Ski Association's 2024 International Ski Week. You can link directly into the publisher's link <https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/farwestskiersguide/2023-24/index.php>. If you are a member of a snowsports organization, we encourage you to post our publication on your website. Your webmaster would need the following Curl Ikon in addition to the Publisher's site link: <https://pages.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/farwestskiersguide/2023-24/assets/pagecurl.gif>

This invitation to post the publication includes members of organizations throughout the US. This year's edition includes articles on the National Ski Council Federation. You can also link directly into the publication on our website located at [www.fwsa.org](http://www.fwsa.org). If you need additional information or would like to submit pictures or an article for next year's edition, please contact us at [skiersguide@fwsa.org](mailto:skiersguide@fwsa.org).

*Stay healthy! Stay Safe!*