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# Your Own Olympics

The Salt Lake Games are gone, but the gold-medal runs remain. Here's where to ski, board, soar, and slide like a hopeful.

**I**F THE HALFPIPE at Park City is good enough for Ross Powers, it should be plenty good for the rest of us. Ditto the downhill course at Snowbasin, Nordic ski jumps at Olympic Park, and cross-country ski trails at Soldier Hollow, all of which were part of a \$260 million upgrade in the Salt Lake City area in preparation for the 2002 Winter Games. This sea-



**FRESH TRACKS:** Above, a civilian downhill at Snowbasin. Left: An Olympian launches from the 120-meter ski jump.

son presents the first chance for noncompetitors to take advantage of Utah's new winter nirvana — a collection of facilities that forms the world's top snow-sports center. Nevertheless, locals aren't expecting an immediate influx of wannabe Olympians. "History has shown it's not an overnight-success story," says Ski Utah's Nathan Rafferty of post-Olympics bonanzas. "It's more of a long-term plan." Which means that everything from the biathlon course to the downhill slopes

## DOWNHILL SKIING

Although three billion people watched the Winter Games on television, the Snowbasin Resort — the site of the downhill and super-G events, 40 miles north of Salt Lake — is still the best-kept secret in snow country. When Snowbasin got the nod to hold the marquee Olympic ski events, its owner dumped more than \$100 million into the place — without adding any overnight lodging. The result? A little-touristed locals' mountain with three new day lodges, two

should be blissfully crowd-free.

high-speed eight-passenger gondolas, one high-speed quad, and, best of all, a minitram that opens trails formerly reachable only on foot. Better still, the terrain is some of the lower 48's finest. It's steep (2,940 vertical feet from summit to base), gladed with pines and aspens, and furrowed with gullies that collect as much as 400 inches of powder each year.

The official downhill run is no longer in place as one demarcated course, and bombing the slope where Switzerland's Hans Burn won gold will get you into trouble with the ski patrol. But you can still get a taste of Burn-esque

speed by launching down the first stretch, a 64 percent grade, skis flapping, throat tightening, ears roaring with wind.

## NORDIC SKI JUMPING

Remarkably, speeding down an Olympic ski jump, hucking yourself into the thin Utah air, and nailing the landing is entirely possible — and all on your own skis. Sign up for the Public Jump Sessions at Park City's Utah Olympic Park and coaches will coax you from the ten-meter jump to the 20-meter (which hurls you as far as 50 feet down the course). Depending on your skills and your



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daring, you can move up to the 40-meter jump, the limit for newbies (as opposed to gold-medalist Simon Amman and company, who launched from 90 and 120 meters).

#### LUGE, SKELETON, BOBSLED

Also for the ballsy: the luge and skeleton runs at the Olympic Park track. Although you'll start from a third of the way down the track instead of at the original line at the top, you can still expect to hit 50 miles per hour in the course of a four-hour lesson (\$175). If that's not fast enough, hire a professional driver to take you and two pals in a four-man bobsled down the full-length Olympic course (\$200 per person), hitting 80 miles per hour and pulling three G's.

#### MOGUL SKIING

Deer Valley is famous for high-end service (hosts remove the skis from your car rack when you arrive at the base lodge), but it's also home to one of the steepest mogul runs in the United States. Intermediate skiers can sample a few of the Mini Cooper-size bumps and bail out onto adjacent groomed slopes

when the need arises. Experts can ski the entire course, then rest their knees by slipping into glades or hitting the ungroomed Empire Canyon area.

#### SNOWBOARDING

Ironically, before it was chosen as the site of the snowboarding events, Park City was off-limits to snowboarders. Fast-forward a few years and a few million bucks and the resort has what's widely regarded as the world's top halfpipe, the site of the American men's sweep. Beware, though: If you haven't put in ample practice on the smaller halfpipe or in the three terrain parks, the Eagle Superpipe (400 feet long, with 17-foot walls and a consistent 17-degree pitch) will spank you hard enough to warrant an introduction to Salt Lake's new and improved medical facilities.

#### OLYMPIC DEBUT:

Crossing the line on the new skeleton track outside Park City, Utah.

#### CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING/BIATHLON

At Soldier Hollow, 20 minutes east of Park City, 31 kilometers of brand-new trails cut through 600 acres of terrain that ranges from novice-friendly flats to Olympic-level climbs and downhills. To sample the fringe sport of biathlon (target shooting on cross-country skis), take a lesson for \$25 and hope for the best. "Women almost always shoot better than men," warns Soldier Hollow executive director Howard Peterson. Not that anyone's keeping score. **Q**

#### NOTES

**Snowbasin Resort:** 888-437-5488 or snowbasin.com; adult lift ticket, \$52. **Utah Olympic Park:** 435-858-4200 or utaholympicpark.com; Nordic jumping, 435-645-7660; luge, 435-647-3800; skeleton, 435-658-4241; bobsled, 435-658-4200. **Deer Valley:** 800-424-3337 or deervalley.com; adult lift ticket, \$67. **Park City Resort:** 800-222-7275 or parkcitymountain.com; adult lift ticket, \$65. **Soldier Hollow:** 435-654-2002 or soldierhollow.org; trail fee, \$15.