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2025-2026**

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**Sitzmarker
Winter 2026**

President's Message



In my first message to the club, I reflected about my history with the club. In my 2nd message I reflected on how the club has evolved in the last 20 years. In this message, I would like to reflect on how the ski industry has evolved.

The ski industry has undergone major transformations over the past two decades, driven by consolidation, technology, climate change, and shifting demographics.

Consolidation and the mega-pass era have been perhaps the most dramatic shifts. Vail Resorts' Epic Pass and Alterra's Ikon Pass now dominate the market, offering access to dozens of resorts for less than the cost of a few daily lift tickets. Starting with the first Vail Epic pass launched in 2008, this has fundamentally changed how people ski—many now plan trips around their pass rather than buying it for their home mountain. Vail and Alterra have a duopoly and own over 50 major ski resorts controlling over half of the US ski market. By diversifying their ownership all over the country, they are less dependent on whether certain areas receive less snow. Many times, other areas can make up for it. Independent resorts face intense pressure to either join these pass networks or find niche markets. The business model has shifted from maximizing day ticket revenue to driving volume through passes and capturing ancillary spending on lodging, food, and retail. By having pre-season sales on season lift tickets, resorts are guaranteed consistent revenue that used to vary based on a season's snowfall. Vail has a goal to achieve 75% of their

earnings from advanced commitment sales. As a result, daily attendance is of less importance.

Climate change has forced the industry to adapt. Snowmaking systems are now far more extensive and sophisticated, with many resorts investing hundreds of millions in snowmaking infrastructure. Season opening dates have become less predictable, and lower-elevation resorts face existential threats. Some European resorts below 1,500 meters have already closed permanently.

Technology has transformed the on-mountain experience. RFID lift tickets eliminate lines at ticket windows, apps provide real-time lift wait times and snow reports, and some resorts use dynamic pricing similar to airlines. Ski equipment has improved dramatically—shaped skis have been refined, and rocker profiles have made powder skiing accessible to average skiers.

The demographics are concerning for the industry. Skiing has become increasingly expensive, pricing out many middle-class families. Participation has remained relatively flat despite population growth, and the sport skews older and whiter than the general population. Resorts are investing heavily in beginner programs and diver-

sity initiatives to address this. With Vail now owning many small ski resorts, they hope to make these feeder resorts where, after new skiers learn to ski at the small resorts, they will venture west to ski at their big resorts.

Real estate development has accelerated at major resorts, with luxury condos and hotels reshaping mountain towns, often pricing out seasonal workers and long-time locals. This has created housing crises in places like Vail, Park City, and Tahoe. In order to attract workers, ski resorts must build dorm-style accommodations for their seasonal staff

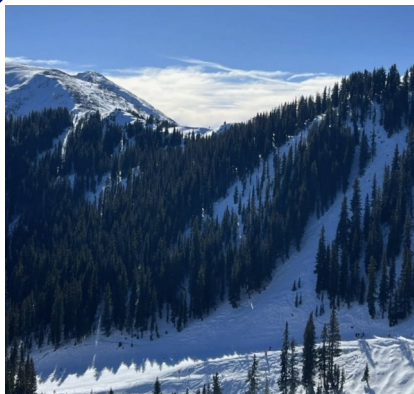
There has been much vertical integration. Not only does Vail own ski resorts, it owns a slew of other ancillary services: transportation to and from the airport using Epic Mountain Express, hotels, independently-owned apartment and hour rentals managed by Vail-owned Legendary Lodging, and ski rental and franchise stores. Want to own property in Vail? The largest Real Estate company is Vail owned Slifer Smith & Frampton. Finally, in addition to owning all of the restaurants on the mountain, they own many restaurants in town. All of the Vail resort operations offer discounts to season pass holders, thus giving them a market advantage over smaller local businesses.

Interestingly, the one thing Vail does not own: The mountain you ski on. The ski mountain is public land owned by the government. Vail sells you access to their lifts. Actually, anyone can ski down the mountain without a lift ticket, if they can only get themselves up the mountain without using the Vail-owned lifts!

This is the state the ski industry is at in 2026!

See the Taos trip article and photos starting on Page 2

Taos



The club's first trip of 2026 started out early in the year and early in the day! On Saturday, January 3, most of the group gathered at the airport in St. Louis for an early flight (5:16 am) to Dallas that would then connect us to Albuquerque. After enduring the chaos in the airport, most of us (some just barely) made it on the flight, while one person had to catch a later flight. Another member met us when we got to Albuquerque, and three others met us at our destination in Taos. Beside the trip captain, Paul Snyder, the trip included Frank Atkinson, Doug Bender, Kathleen Blosser, Alma Delmonte, Jim Delmonte, Jim Duzan, John Garcia, Sean Garcia, Candy Girth, Cindy Girth, Scott Harter, Steve Hahn, David Howard, Joey Kavanaugh, Dan Krack, Ricky Lutz (from the KC Ski Club), Annie Merriott, Dan Rath, Janet Rottler, Lori Rottler, Joan Scholz, Chris Schnieders, Bob Schnieders, Roger Schnelten, Erni Wood, and Ann Wrightstone.

When we arrived in Albuquerque we were met by Roger Mariani, from The Snakedance where we'd be staying, and we loaded up the bus for our 3-hour trip to the resort. We were pleasantly surprised to find sandwiches, chips, and beverages provided for lunch on the bus, and we also had time to stop in the town of Taos for groceries. Upon arrival at The Snakedance we got our condos and settled in. Later that evening they hosted a welcome party for us with pizza, veggies, chips, and beverages. Representatives from the mountain and the lodging were there to provide information and answer questions.

Like much of the southwest, the snowfall (and snowpack) at Taos was well below normal, meaning a number of areas, especially the more advanced runs, weren't open. But we were pleased that the re-

sort was doing all they could to make snow when possible, and maintain the snow that was on the ground to keep it all as skiable as possible. (We were excited the last two days when, over a 24-hour period, the mountain got about 10" of new snow!) So, as necessary at many ski areas, we made the best of it and had some great days on the mountain! (Some of the group who hadn't planned skiing that last day ended up buying an extra day, at our discount rate, just to take advantage of the new snow.)

Another option some of the group took advantage of was the mountain's "Ski Week" discount on 5 days of morning group lessons. Those who took advantage of this seemed to get a lot out of it to really help their skiing technique.

One of the highlights of the trip was the club dinner hosted by the General Manager of the Snakedance, Roger Mariani and his wife, Diane, who have been hosting ski clubs at their home for 20 years. It started as a "one time" event in 2006 when the restaurant at the Snakedance wasn't open, and it has turned into a tradition for ski clubs staying at The Snakedance. So, our club enjoyed appetizers, a "margarita fountain" and other beverages including some very good whiskey, and a fantastic meal. They were hosting a smaller ski group from New York at the same time, so some of us enjoyed getting to know them, too. It was a wonderful night in their beautiful home!

Another night we enjoyed our club dinner in The Hondo, the on-site restaurant at the condos, where people could choose from many wonderful dishes from a special limited menu put together for our club. It was a fun time, with large and small groups scattered around tables in a section of the restaurant. (And for those who like Mexican food, it was good!)



When not skiing, some people wandered around the resort in the shops and restaurants available. One of the downsides of staying on the mountain was limited transportation between the ski resort and the town of Taos. So, we had to work around bus and shuttle schedules that weren't the most convenient. But, if we'd have stayed in town, there would have been two days with no transportation up to the mountain to ski! One evening when later transportation was available, a number of people did head into Taos to shop and for dinner. Other evenings people got together in small groups to check out some of the on-mountain dining, or impromptu gatherings in condos for food sharing, games, and the like. Others enjoyed quiet evenings in front of their fireplaces with a good book after a tiring day of skiing!

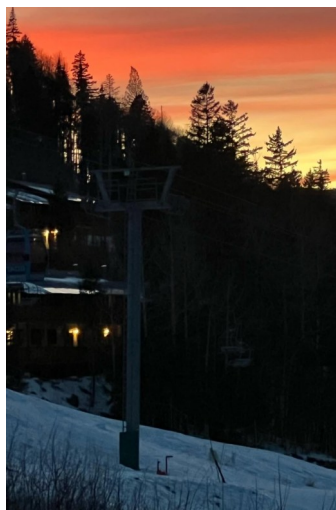
And, like many trips, there were some ski-related injuries with strained backs, knees, or legs. That does put a damper on the trip for those participants unfortunately, and we hope everyone recovers quickly!

The journey home was almost as early as the journey out, since we had to start boarding the bus at 5:30 in the morning for the 3-hour drive back to Albuquerque. Complicating the return was the new snow (and ice) on the roads, keeping the bus to a slower pace until we were more than halfway back. But we did make our flights, getting back to St. Louis late in the afternoon on the 10th.

So, despite the less than stellar snow conditions and transportation issues, it was overall still a great trip and many people said they'd like to try skiing New Mexico again in the future!

Taos Photos





Social Events

Holiday Party at Pietro's



Hike at Powder Valley



Help Our Club Flourish!

St. Louis Ski Club Board of Directors

Elections to our Board of Directors are coming up in April. Once again, we ask all our members to consider stepping up and contributing their time and talent to help lead our club. All of the current board members are willing to continue serving in their respective roles, but we would also welcome the chance to see new faces on the board. We have detailed the duties of each board member

below and you may see that you have more of the skills necessary for a role than you realized.

There is compensation for this work. Board members receive 800 trip credits for serving a full year. Beyond this, though, you have the chance to shape the club for the future and help ensure it can continue.

At the very least, even if you cannot contribute to our leadership, please pay your membership fee in a timely manner, even if you do not plan on any trips

in the coming ski season. Club membership fees may seem like small amounts but taken together they form a significant part of our operating funds. Also, please encourage others to join our club and participate in trips. Beyond the immediate benefits of the Refer-A-Friend program (*see below*), this is another important element of helping our club grow and prosper.

If you have any interest in running for a board position, contact Pat Pender at financial@stlouisskiclub.com to have your name placed on the ballot.

Board Position Descriptions

President

- Presides over all meetings of the board of directors and the general membership. The board meets monthly

Vice-President

- In the absence of or at the request of the President, presides at all meetings and perform the duties of the President.
- Supervises the publicity and promotion of the St. Louis Ski Club through printed club material and the news media.
- Prepares and arranges the general membership schedule and meeting places

Communications Director

- Drafts and edits the St. Louis Ski Club newsletter, the Sitzmarker.
- Arranges for timely delivery of the Sitzmarker to the membership 4 times a year.
- Monitors and updates the St. Louis Ski Club website
- Records minutes for board meetings

Trip Director

- Produces the trip schedule, secures trip contracts and executes the scheduled ski trips for the St. Louis Ski Club.
- Creates and updates the trip grid and payment schedules posted in the Sitzmarker.
- Recruits and supervises the trip captains.
- Maintains and updates the trip captain manual.

Annual Meeting and Elections

When:

Thursday, April 23rd, 2026

Social Hour and Voting at 6 PM

Election Results and Meeting at 7 PM

Where:

Schnucks Des Peres
12332 Manchester Road
St. Louis, MO 63131

Electronic ballots will be emailed to members in late March with instructions for voting. They will need to be completed and returned by April 23rd at 6 pm.

Club memberships expire on April 30th 2026. Current members save \$5 by renewing by May 15th. Membership applications are available on our website at <https://www.stlouisskiclub.com/>

Refer A Friend: Remember that if you refer a brand new member to the club and they go on a ski trip in 2027, you are a eligible for a \$25 referral check. There is a place on the membership application where they can indicate your name.

Mark Your Calendars Now!

Please use our Meetup page at <http://www.meetup.com/St-Louis-Ski-Club/>
or RSVP to activities@stlouisskiclub.com

See stlouisskiclub.com for the latest updates!

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Location</u>
Saturday February 21st 10 AM	Opening Day Cardinals Spring Training	Busch Stadium 700 Clark Ave. St. Louis, MO 63102
Tuesday February 24th 6 PM	Thirsty Tuesday Happy Hour	Heavy Riff Brewery 6413 Clayton Ave. St. Louis, MO 63139
Thursday March 5th 6 PM	Thirsty Thursday Happy Hour	Blue Jay Brewing Company at Midtown 2710 Locust St. St. Louis, MO 63103
Saturday March 21st 10 AM	Tour of the Cathedral Basilica	4431 Lindell Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63108
Thursday April 23rd 6 PM	Annual Meeting and Elections <i>(See Details Page 6)</i>	Schnucks Des Peres 12332 Manchester Road St. Louis, MO 63131



A final photo from Taos!