



My First Time: Kirkwood

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By: **Julie Dugdale**

There's something about Kirkwood Mountain Resort that gets into your soul.

It's not the biggest ski area, nor the flashiest. Celebrities don't flock to the tucked-away resort 50 minutes south of Heavenly and South Lake Tahoe, and there's nary a Ritz or Hyatt to be found. But the terrain is unrivaled. The powder is magic. And the people? Well, the people give Kirkwood its character.

“It’s quaint, in a feel-good, local kind of way,” says Coloradan Jesse Ambrogi-Yanson, who made her first turns at Kirkwood last season. “It’s not surrounded by a city or by a town. It’s a little mountain community, sitting below an amazing mountain. There’s a good local vibe. Some people who live there have been skiing there their whole lives.”



Eyeing the drop-in at Kirkwood. Photo by Corey Rich.

Ambrogi-Yanson, who works in North American marketing for [Faction Skis](#) in [Breckenridge](#), hopped a plane to Reno last February for her first taste of the rugged promised land that Vail Resorts had just acquired. Together with her two travel companions, the avid skier arrived at the mountain to fresh powder, hot coffee, and to-die-for breakfast burritos that fueled them up for

the impending days of filming and cat skiing with [Expedition Kirkwood](#).

The trio had been carving the Colorado slopes together for seven or so years. They knew the Rocky Mountains, the best stashes in Summit County, the big-mountain quirks of their home resorts. But Kirkwood? New frontier—and Ambrogi-Yanson made it her mission to discover it all.



Left to right: Cat skiing with Kirkwood Expeditions; Kirkwood by moonlight; choosing their line; ripping it up in the powder; airborne off of Kirkwood's rugged terrain (photo by Corey Rich).

The verdict: Kirkwood is a place for skiers and riders who like to charge hard for the sheer love of



the game; for locals who know how to find the best lines but don't mind sharing with the new guy; for hungry après-goers who like to relive their knee-deep turns in a place where the bartender knows your drink—and probably did a few laps with you early in the day. “At a lot of big resorts, people get a little jaded with the tourists,” Ambrogi-Yanson says. “But everyone there was happy we were there, happy to show it to us.”

Closing day at Kirkwood is April 27. That's two full weeks left to sample the legendary terrain and get your turns in at the place where everybody knows your name—the place where highways don't mar your view from the lift and traffic doesn't thwart your



The historic Kirkwood Inn: a locals' and visitors' haunt alike for epic après-ski.

time on the slopes. Check out

Ambrogi-Yanson's video above for a firsthand account. "It's just breathtaking to be there," she says. "It's sort of in the middle of nowhere. It definitely feels like you're walking into something special."

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