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Breckenridge Ski Trip on a Budget

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POSTED ON [SEPTEMBER 16, 2013](#) BY [LANCE WIEDOWER](#)

By Eric Smith

"The mountains are calling and I must go."

— John Muir

As the leaves change and temperatures drop, my thoughts turn to winter and my travel planning shifts westward to Colorado, where the high country awaits the season's first snow and the mountains begin calling. Autumn means it's time to start thinking about our annual ski trip to Breckenridge, Colorado, a place that has beckoned us back again and again for 15 years.

My wife, Sandy, and I have been partial to Breckenridge – or simply Breck, as the locals call it – ever since we spent a winter there as ski bums in our 20s. Now living in Memphis, we escape the flatlands when we can for the 1,100-mile drive west to enjoy everything the town and the mountains that rise above it have to offer.

The allure of Breck is strong for us. On one road trip, in 2006, we braved a massive winter blizzard that blanketed the Midwest and stymied numerous ski vacations. We navigated around the storm and eventually arrived, although what should have taken 18 hours along interstates took more than 40 as we detoured farther south on back roads to avoid highway closures in Kansas and Colorado.

Welcome to the adventure!



We're Lance and Stacey Wiedower, writers who enjoy exploring the world as much as our home city of Memphis. Lance is a journalist and Stacey is a bestselling fiction writer. Together, Trips by Lance and Stacey is where we share stories of our adventures as we inspire other families to discover this great world.

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It was worth it then, and it's worth it every time we point the car toward the Rocky Mountains. Ski trips aren't cheap, with lodging, lift tickets and travel being the biggest budget items, but finding ways to reduce those makes them affordable. Here's how we do a week in Breck for \$2,500.

Breckenridge Budget:

\$636: Seven nights lodging Breck

\$150: Additional lodging on trip

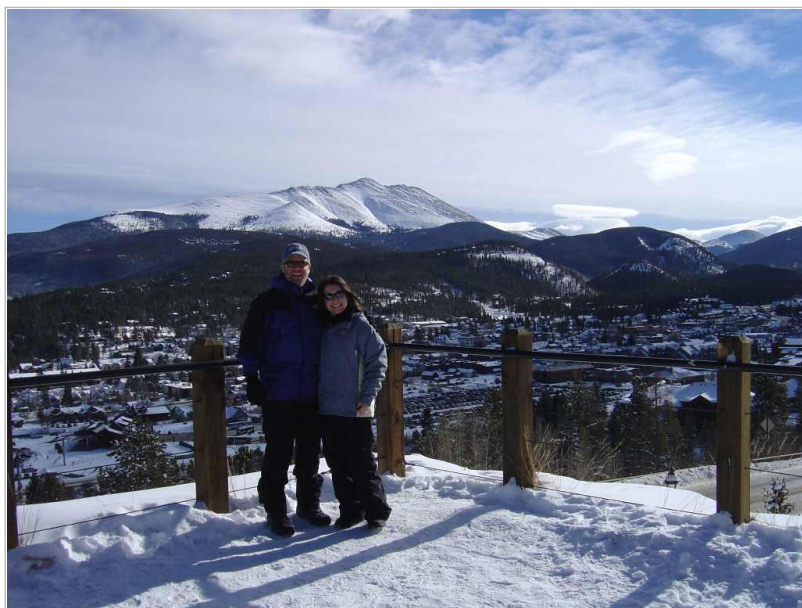
\$450: Gas

\$700: Four days of skiing

\$114: One week ski rental

\$450: Food and beverage

Total: \$2,500



Eric and Sandy overlooking the town of Breckenridge.

When to Go:

Ski season runs from mid-November to mid-April, depending on snowfall. We typically hit Breck toward the end of January and beginning of February, when most, if not all, of the lifts and trails are open. Ski weekdays to avoid crowds, and be wary of the holidays: crowds and prices increase dramatically during Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day and Spring Break. Resorts like Breck place restrictions and blackout dates on certain lift tickets.

Getting There and Around:

We always drive to Colorado so we can bring our dogs but also because it cuts down on cost. Airfare could almost double a ski trip budget, but if you do fly into Denver and want to avoid renting a car, shuttles like the Colorado Mountain Express can bring you right to your hotel or condo. Also, Breck has free parking lots and buses to bring you to the chairlifts, and Summit County has a free bus line called the [Summit Stage](#) to get you around.

Where to Stay:

[Breckenridge](#) has hundreds of lodging choices at all price points, most of them at the higher end, but we have stayed at the [Breckenridge Wayside Inn](#) for years because it is cheap and pet-friendly. At less than \$100 a night, the Wayside is the best bargain in town. It's a few miles north of town, so having a car is key, but the value far exceeds the inconvenience. The Wayside offers free breakfast and après ski snacks, an outdoor hot tub and a lobby with a

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fireplace. And they let our two dogs, Rainey and Cosmo, stay in the room while we're skiing.



Breckenridge Wayside Inn

What to Do:

In winter, the Breck lifestyle revolves around downhill skiing and snowboarding. When looking for lift tickets, check websites like [Liftoptia](#) for bargains, and [Breckenridge Ski Resort](#) for deals on multi-day ski passes. The earlier you buy, the better the deal. If you wait until arriving in Colorado, buy lift tickets at a grocery store in Denver en route to Breck, which is cheaper than buying at the resort's ticket window. As for ski gear, Sandy has her own snowboard and I rent skis at [Carvers Ski Shop](#); book online in advance for a 10 percent discount.

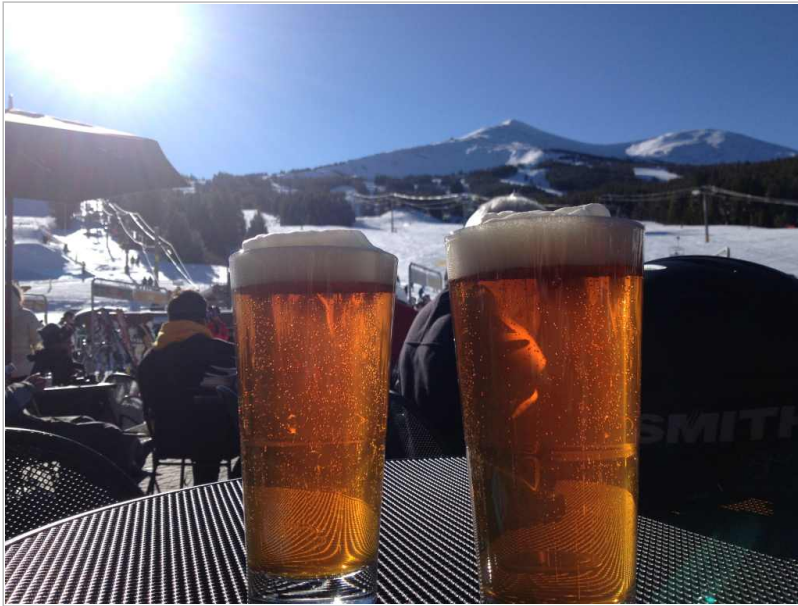


Sandy is ready to shred Peak 8.

"Go that way, really fast. If something gets in your way ... turn."
— "Better Off Dead"

Après Ski:

Après ski (French for "after skiing") is the second biggest pastime in Breck. Most bars and restaurants have Happy Hour drink and food specials waiting for skiers coming off the mountain. We have a beer on the [T-Bar](#) patio at the base of Peak 8 before heading back to the hotel hot tub with a six-pack of Colorado brew from the liquor store. Solid après places in town are [Breckenridge Brewery](#), [Rita's](#) and [Quandary Grille](#).



Après ski: the second most popular activity in Breck.

Where to Eat/Drink:

The other essential activity in Breck is walking Main Street, which has shops, restaurants and bars along the main drag and on its side streets. You'll find every kind of culinary offering imaginable, but here are some affordable places we visit most trips.

Breakfast

We take advantage of the free breakfast at the Wayside, but when we do eat in town, we head to [Cool River Coffee House](#) or the [Park & Main Quality Food](#).

Lunch/Dinner

To save money, lunch is usually a peanut butter sandwich and Clif bar on the chairlift – get your ski snacks at [City Market](#). Our favorite cheap eats in town are [Downstairs at Eric's](#), [Ollie's Pub & Grub](#), [Northside Pizza & Wings](#) and [Lucha Colorado Cantina](#).

Late Night

If you're in the mood for a cold beer, some free tacos and a game of air hockey – and, really, who isn't? – the [Historic Brown Hotel](#) is a must visit to end the day. The Victorian home is allegedly haunted by former “lady of the night” Ms. Whitney and is certainly a regular haunt for Breck's ski bums. Sandy and I spent many nights here with our friends back in the day, and we always venture back for a laid-back nightcap.

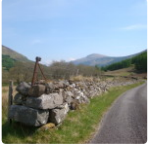


Be on the lookout for Ms. Whitney at the Brown.

Thanks to Lance for letting me contribute a guest blog about skiing Breckenridge on a budget. If you go, perhaps you'll find, like we have, that the place works its way into your soul and never leaves.

Eric Smith (@editorericsmith) is an editor at The Daily News in Memphis. His favorite travel experiences include backpacking Europe after college, spending four days in a cabin on the side of Mount McKinley in Denali National Park and anytime he visits a new place with his wife, Sandy Smith (@alaskansmith).

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19 THOUGHTS ON "BRECKENRIDGE SKI TRIP ON A BUDGET"



Charu

SEPTEMBER 18, 2013 AT 12:01 AM

These are good tips! But \$2,500 is pretty steep for a week! I'm not a skier but it's much more economical to go wind surfing 😊

Charu recently posted... [The World's Most Beautiful Candles are Crafted Near Ubud, Indonesia](#) ❤️



Lance Wiedower

SEPTEMBER 18, 2013 AT 12:10 AM

Yes, that can be pricey, but all those costs can add up quickly especially equipment and the actual skiing.



Eric Smith

SEPTEMBER 18, 2013 AT 9:39 AM

Believe me, \$2,500 for a weeklong ski trip anywhere is cheap considering that the cost includes travel, lift tickets, lodging, and food and beverage.



Jonathan

SEPTEMBER 22, 2013 AT 5:32 PM

Great info! I've never been skiing but it looks like lots of fun. 😊

Jonathan recently posted... [Tips for Adjusting to High Altitude](#) ❤️



Lance Wiedower

SEPTEMBER 22, 2013 AT 10:22 PM

Jonathan, I personally like the idea of all that beer the best!



the lazy travelers

JANUARY 29, 2014 AT 4:39 AM

i've been to breckenridge twice and ONLY in the summer! which i think should probably be illegal, right? but it's such a cute little town, it must be beautiful in the snow.

the lazy travelers recently posted...[no travel required: #traveltuesday](#) ❤️



@mrsoararoundworld

JANUARY 29, 2014 AT 7:40 AM

This is so interesting – for this money (or a bit less), you could go on a luxury ski week in the French Alps...

@mrsoararoundworld recently posted...[A luxury weekend in Madrid, Spain](#) ❤️



Lance Wiedower

JANUARY 29, 2014 AT 11:33 AM

A summer trip is still great, it's just a different experience.



Lance Wiedower

JANUARY 29, 2014 AT 11:36 AM

Mrs. O, I've heard this a lot, actually.



Francesca (@WorkMomTravels)

JANUARY 29, 2014 AT 4:20 PM

I say it all the time: I don't ski. Now I'm really glad I don't. I agree with Charu and I can't really afford another expensive hobby anyway. I do love the mountains, however, at any time of year. My one and only trip to Breck was in January, in the height of ski season. I just had après ski all day 😊

Francesca (@WorkMomTravels) recently posted...[About turning 40...](#) ❤️



Lance Wiedower

JANUARY 30, 2014 AT 9:39 AM

Francesca, price is why I don't play golf. I'm not a fan of hobbies that are crazy expensive. It is nice to experience something like this on occasion.



Traveling Ted

JANUARY 31, 2014 AT 7:39 PM

This is why I like cross-country skiing. I don't think I have paid \$2,500 in my life cross-country skiing. Alpine is a blast though and if you have the extra dinero, it is definitely worth it. Breckenridge sounds wonderful and looks beautiful.

Traveling Ted recently posted...[Five tips to #Turnitgreen while traveling or at home](#) ❤️



Ken

FEBRUARY 1, 2014 AT 12:46 AM

I was able to do 4 Nights in Beck and Ski Beaver Creek for just about \$1400

Lift Tickets : 300 – (3)days

Air Fare – 357 – Southwest

Lodging (Right off of four o clock) – 450 – 4 nights 3 days

Drinking & Dinning – 200

4 Day Car Rental – 57

I had my own gear



lola

FEBRUARY 1, 2014 AT 11:38 AM

this makes me want to go skiing right now!! i learned how to ski in Breckenridge HAHA

lola recently posted...[One Day Stay: Montreal, Canada](#) ❤️



Lance Wiedower

FEBRUARY 2, 2014 AT 3:54 PM

It's hard to have hobbies with expensive gear and fees. That's why I don't golf.



Lance Wiedower

FEBRUARY 2, 2014 AT 3:59 PM

Ken, that is very comparable to what we're presenting as \$2,000. We are looking at the price for two people. And a four-day car rental for \$57, I assume you did a name your own price on Priceline? I know that amount is doable, but that's really cheap. And gear rental certainly adds to the amount.



Lance Wiedower

FEBRUARY 2, 2014 AT 3:59 PM

Lola, it seems like a perfect place to get started.



Henry Ranger

FEBRUARY 4, 2014 AT 6:52 PM

Do you have any idea how much \$2500 of beer is? I can put a cap on my melon, stand out in the butt freezing cold and have Moonshine drag me behind the car, which I'm certain is the same as skiing, all for under \$2500. Ya'll are out of your minds!

Henry Ranger recently posted...[Chubby bunnies?](#) ❤️



Lance Wiedower

FEBRUARY 4, 2014 AT 10:25 PM

Henry, I hear ya. We all have our things to spend our money on. As long as it makes you happy, right?

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