



a long weekend at
**Moonlight
Basin Resort**

written by **Emily McCluhan** • photos courtesy of **Moonlight Basin Resort**

Thursday

Forty-seven miles past Bozeman and about a mile up the road from Big Sky Resort, is the entrance to Moonlight Basin. You've arrived at one of Montana's newest and best kept secrets when it comes to a variety of skiing and finely appointed lodging. Check in at the majestic Moonlight Lodge, which opened in 2000 and has been the heart of the resort ever since. After getting the key to your Saddlebridge Townhome, a three-story, three-bedroom slopeside residence run by East/West Big Sky Resorts, you will be drawn into the rest of the Lodge. The three-sided fireplace is the centerpiece, adorned with stuffed mountain goats, perched on the slate façade. The overstuffed furniture beckons after your drive and you can't resist. Unwind and enjoy the aesthetics of the Lodge that blend seamlessly with the wilderness outside.

Before heading to your ski-in/ski-out townhome (rustic slopeside cabins and full houses are also available for rent), grab a bite to eat at the Timbers Bar in the Lodge. Brothers Monte and Quinn Johnsen, and their wives, run the Bar, Deli and the Timbers Restaurant, all offering a wide array of dining options. At Timbers, choose a table by the window and gaze at Lone Mountain, where you'll be spending the day tomorrow.

On your way out of the Lodge, visit the Mountain Concierge to purchase lift tickets for Friday, make dinner reservations, and schedule ski instruction or spa appointments. Finally, make your way to your residence and settle in for a good night's rest.

Friday

You're up early and enjoying the breathtaking views from the private deck of your lodging. The Spanish Peaks and Lee Metcalf Wilderness are covered in sunlight and the crisp mountain air energizes you. Grab a bite to eat in your fully equipped kitchen, or make your way back to the Lodge and the Timbers Deli for hearty morning fare.

If you're already outfitted for your weekend, ski down to the Pony Express lift or Iron Horse Quad to start your day. Otherwise, visit Willow in the Lodge to rent your equipment, a new feature at Moonlight this year.

For the beginners, a ski instructor will meet you anywhere on the mountain, including your front door, to begin your private or semi-private lesson through Moonlight's new Alpine Program. If the kids are in tow, sign them up for the Little Wranglers Daycare program where they can get a one-hour ski lesson and a full day in the playroom at the Pony Express Lodge.

For those more comfortable on the sticks and boards, be sure to take advantage of the complimentary Mountain Tour, courtesy of a Moonlight Ski Ambassador. As you ski, you'll learn about other activities at Moonlight and their award-winning conservation program.

After the tour, end up at the Six-Shooter at the base of the mountain, Montana's only six-person lift. At the top, head to the left to take a long cruiser down the green Lazy Jack and other beginner and intermediate runs. Or turn right to ski down to the Lone Tree Lift which leads to a variety of blues and blacks, ranging from the wide winding blue Horseshoe that follows the boundary line, to Broken Heart, Big Tree Cutout, black tree runs that Moonlight is becoming known for.

Slide back to the Moonlight Lodge and the Timbers Deli for lunch and a cup of homemade soup and a substantial sandwich, such as Monte's Ruben or the Mighty Quinn.

After lunch, the thrill-seekers take the Six-Shooter to the new Headwaters Lift, which ascends to trails that were previously only accessible by a 30-minute hike. Considered by some to be the steepest and most challenging in-bounds runs in the Rockies, the eleven double black runs of the Headwaters will get your blood and endorphins pumping.

If you've finished your ski clinic, or are just plain pooped, it's time for your spa appointment. Downstairs from the Deli is the luxurious Moonlight Spa. Your stay with East/West Big Sky automatically gives you access to the state-of-the-art fitness center, finely appointed locker rooms, indoor-access heated pool and the outdoor hot tub that curves around a rock

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Top: Guests can enjoy a variety of winter sports, including ice skating under the moonlight. **Above:** The lodge features a beautifully appointed Great Room, complete with 3-sided slate fireplace and intimate seating areas.

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waterfall. But no trip to Moonlight is complete without a treatment in the Spa. Before meeting your therapist in one of the six treatment rooms, relax in the Sanctuary, a room designed to induce relaxation. After your treatment, soak in the hot tub or take a steam to complete the decompression process.

Meet up with the skiers and boarders for an après ski drink at the Timbers Bar to swap stories from your day; then head back to Saddleridge to get cleaned up because you have reservations for dinner and live entertainment at

the Jackass Creek Saloon.

From the outside, Madison Lodge looks like a temporary structure that might house a standard mountain cafeteria, meant for mid-day lunch breaks. But step inside, and you've stepped back in time to Old West Montana and the fun-filled dinner theater environment of the Jackass Creek Saloon. The first two seasons the Resort was open, the Saloon has been snowbound. This year, Moonlight introduces live entertainment Wednesday through Saturday nights including the Vigilante Theater Company, performing a family-oriented comedy/drama, and the Equinox Theater Company, a sketch comedy team that is geared towards an older crowd. Check with the Mountain Concierge to find out who is performing the night of your reservation. The two-act play is served up with a four-course Montana grill and is guaranteed to entertain. Moonlight plans to mix up the entertainment throughout the season with members of the Blue Bird Café, a group of singers and songwriters from Nashville and other live acts.

Saturday

Today you will experience the largest skiable area in the country through the new Lone Peak Pass, an interconnect between Big Sky Resort and Moonlight Basin. With over 220 runs and 5300 acres, your day will be filled. One of the most exciting things about this ticket is how few people you'll see on the slopes.

While on the Big Sky side, take the Lone Peak Tram to the summit of Lone Mountain. The experienced skier will want to hop off here and face the North Summit Snow Field, in its first year of access. If the sight of the steep drops makes your stomach drop, you can still get off the tram and enjoy the views from about 11,100 feet and take



Left: The Cowboy Suite is one of several luxury condominiums available onsite. **Below left:** Guests can take advantage of many fine amenities, including a full service spa. **Below:** After skiing, relax to the sound of a rock waterfall in the heated pool or hot tub.





Aerial view of Moonlight Basin ski area.

the Tram back down. On a clear day, you may be able to see the Tetons to the South and Billings to the East.

If one day of skiing was enough, or sliding down a mountain on two sticks isn't your thing, spend the morning ice skating at Moonlight Lodge or enjoy the Spa amenities again. Then drive or take a shuttle to Big Sky resort to explore an assortment of boutiques and restaurants.

At the end of the day, get together at your townhome for a soak in your private hot tub before heading over to the Timbers at Moonlight Lodge for a fine dining experience.

Executive Chef, Scott Mechura, creates casual dining with a sophisticated edge by combining French and Asian flavors with Montana flair such as beef, elk and buffalo. Sample the award-winning wine list and enjoy the views from your table in this elegant setting.

Sunday

It's your last day at Moonlight, and there's still another unique activity you must try. Arrange a dog sledding adventure through the Mountain Concierge and get ready to "mush." A well-trained instructor gives you hands-on training at one of the few places in the country where you can still run your own dog sled team. The trip glides through a winter wonderland of mountains and tree-lined trails and is the perfect cap to your weekend voyage. ■

Getting there

From Bozeman (off of I-90) take US-191 South for approx. 43 miles. Turn right on Big Sky Spur Rd. and follow for approx. 12 miles.

Moonlight Basin Resort Info: 877-822-0430

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