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Travel Writing – Final Feature Article
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Synopsis

In this article, I write about my experience with snowbiking at the Breckenridge Ski Resort in Breckenridge, Colorado. I share how I got to enjoy this brand new experience with my dad and his coworker.

Snow Biking Travel Article

I stood at the top of the mountain, feeling the crisp air blowing hard into my face. The glint from the still-rising sun made me squint as I surveyed the landscape. My fingers curled around the handlebars of the snowbike I was straddling. I glanced to my left and exchanged a look with my dad. A nervous smile played on his face, probably due to the fear of heights he and I shared. We had flown nearly 1,500 miles to be here, and I couldn't wait to push off.

We had been planning on heading up to Breckenridge for a few weeks by then. My dad had some work trip to Denver and I happened to be out of school at the time, he happily invited me to come along with him. His conference was in Denver but he wanted to take me to Breckenridge, a Colorado town famous for its pristine snow-covered slopes and massive ski resort. Skiing, and really snow in general, was something that I had never really interacted with before, having grown up in Georgia. Because of that, I had never tried my hand at anything like skiing or snowboarding, and neither had my dad. Being a confident man, however, he expected us to be able to waltz on up to those mountains and give it our best shot.

We were staying at his coworker's house, a tiny woman named Dr. Learner who had two of the cutest dogs I've ever seen. My dad and I, alongside Dr. Learner who decided to come with us, left her house way too early in the morning and drove through the rocky outskirts of Denver. We passed through beautiful mountainous countryside and practically scaled cliffs in our rented Nissan Rogue. Upon arriving at the Breckenridge Ski Resort and finding our way to the lawn of the main lodge, we were greeted by an annoyingly cheerful employee (considering how early it

was) who, much to our disappointment, told us that a one-day skiing or snowboarding trip with no previous experience would only end poorly. Anyone would need at least two or three days just to learn how to ski or snowboard, let alone have any fun at it, he told us. Not wanting to have come all this way for nothing, we asked him to come up with some way we could still have fun on the slopes. He smiled and drew our attention to what looked like bicycles. There was a small collection of them, unceremoniously pushed together in a pile against the outside wall of a small building. He told us they were snowbikes.

He stood one up and let us examine it. It sure looked like a bike, except instead of wheels, there were individual skis mounted below the frame. We could see that the front ski was connected to the handlebars, and the back one was mounted solid. He let us sit on the bikes to practice turning the handlebars back and forth and told us that snowbikes made much more sense for someone here for only a day with no prior snowsport experience. They were easier to learn, he said, and harder to hurt yourself on. It certainly made sense to us.

We each picked out a bike, not that they were different from each other, and spent way too little time learning the mechanics and getting used to the feel of the turning system. Dr. Learner did speak up at one point, asking about brakes, and whether or not they even existed on this bike. Our instructor laughed and promptly said no. He told us that if we needed to break, we should either drag our feet in the snow or simply jump off.

Before any of us could object, he was picking out helmets and goggles for us and steering us in the direction of the lift that would take us to the top of the seemingly never-ending mountain that stretched up into the sky before us. As we waited in this long line, we were greeted by a lift attendant, who explained to us that the lift would come up behind us without stopping, and it was up to us to get on and secure our bikes in our arms before the lift scooped us up on the

journey to the top. The bikes also made it that we had to go alone, since two people and two bikes would not have fit on those tiny floating benches.

My dad went first, I watched him standing there and wait for the bench to hit the back of his knees. Upon feeling the lift bump him lightly, he sunk backwards into the chair and cradled the bike in his arms. I was up next. I took my place where my dad had been a few seconds before and waited for the contact. When it came, I hopped slightly and landed hard into the seat. I quickly hoisted the bike up into my arms, and it was thankfully a lot lighter than any normal bike, and the lift carried me up the mountain.

Getting off at the top was a much less graceful experience, but the three of us were reunited at the top within a few minutes. After a quick photoshoot per request of my mom, who was very adamant about wanting pictures before we left for the airport a day prior, we each mounted our bikes and perched, precariously, at the top of the slope. None of us particularly wanted to go first, so we lingered for a while at the top and admired the sights until my dad gave in and pushed off.

Dr. Learner and I watched as he slid downhill, slowly at first, but then picked up speed very quickly. We watched as he made it 10, 20, then 30 feet down before he attempted to turn. He pulled on his handlebar, perhaps a little too roughly, and immediately his bike flipped sideways. He landed on his side and slid maybe another 10 feet before coming to an abrupt stop in the snow. We watched as he gave us a shaky thumbs up before remounting his bike and motioning for the two of us to follow him down.

I gladly pushed off after him and started my decent. The cold wind and snowflakes felt like whips against the exposed lower half of my face as my stomach dropped and my speed picked up. I started racing downhill, passed my dad and sped farther down the hill. I gently

added some steering to my ride, coasting left and right as I zoomed down the mountain. I risked a look behind me and I managed to see my dad and Dr. Learner not too far behind. I zipped by kids falling off their snowboards and teens on skis. My beginner's luck could only last so long, though, as a sharp turn sent me sprawling just like my dad. I sat up and spat the snow out of my mouth while I waited for my dad to catch up. He had a huge grin on his face, and I couldn't help but mirror it. This was fun.

We spent hours zooming down the mountain and riding the lift back up. We tried all sorts of tricks, like dodging in and out of the trees that lined the path, and I remember my dad at one point trying to go down backwards. Time flew by on that mountain, and before we knew it, we were cold, sore, and the sun was going down. But our smiles hadn't faded one bit. Snow biking was one of the most unique experiences I have ever had. Being able to try something I had never even heard of, and certainly haven't heard about since, made it all the more special. Who knows if snow biking is something I'll ever be able to experience again, but if I somehow do, my dad is definitely getting an invitation.

