

Break!'s Guide to Geek-Free Skiing and Snowboarding

How to Blend In with Resort Town Locals by Eugene Buchanan and Dana Birke

Whether you're sneaking into a party or trying to be inconspicuous in a classroom (often done to avoid a professor's questioning), blending into one's surroundings is an important art to master in college. But it's just as important on spring break as it is in school — especially if your annual reprieve involves heading to a ski area.

There, surrounded by locals who have long since abandoned scholastic pursuits for the mountain life, you'll either stick out like a sore thumb and be branded a "touron," or you'll be accepted by the locals as one of their own. And if the latter holds true, you'll be Big Man On Campus all over again, privy to such inside knowledge as local parties to crash and which happy hours offer the best freebies.

But blending in with locals doesn't come naturally — especially if you're from a town that hasn't seen snow in a few millennia. You're not going to look like an Aspenite if you show up in your Georgia Tech sweatshirt. That's why we've come up with the following "geek-free" guide to what not to do when you visit a ski town. Whether your spring break plans take you to Steamboat, Vail, Stowe, or Squaw Valley, unless you're a lost cause, the following guidelines will enable you to blend in anywhere, making your trip both more affordable and more enjoyable.

ON THE SLOPES

- If it's a powder day, get up early. The coolest locals will all be at the front of the line.
- Never blow off skiing or boarding because you're hung over. Or to watch football. And if you blow off skiing to have brunch, we'll kill you.

- Never pay for parking. There are usually plenty of spots if you're willing to walk a little. Supermarket lots are always a good bet.
- Find a ticket deal so you don't have to pay full fare. If possible, buy a multiday pass; this way you eliminate waiting in one more line. Better yet, ski or snowboard in the backcountry, away from the lifts; that's where the real



locals make their turns.

- Don't carry your skis on your hips or with both hands holding them across your chest. Throw them over your shoulders (and make sure not to scratch anyone's cornea with your tails). Also, don't use the old slip-your-skis-through-your-pole-straps-and-carry-them-like-a-briefcase trick. That went out with the K2 Cheeseburger Deluxe.
- Never buy lunch in the cafeteria. Brown bag it, or bag-eating lunch altogether. Another good bet is to pack a microwaveable burrito in your pocket, then ask the local behind the counter to nuke it for you.
- If you're tucking to make speed, do not snowplow.
- Snowboarders should avoid "cleaning the hole." This means heel-side slipping an entire run and scraping it clean of fresh snow. If you can't ride it, get out.
- Don't use hard boots and plate bindings in half pipes, especially in California.
- Don't fake the lingo. Be safe; say "rad" a lot, making sure to draw it out as long as possible.

- Don't arrange to meet people at the top of a lift; the bottom is usually more comfortable. And if you set a meeting time, allow no more than a ten-minute "window." On powder days, the two-minute rule should take effect.
- Don't push your way through lift lines without alternating.
- Think quickly when approaching a lift line "maze." Pick the shortest line, even if it means crossing to the other side of the lift. If all lines are equal, go to the one on the inside, closest to where people are boarding.
- Don't cause the lift to stop. And don't drop anything once you're in the air — gloves, goggles, or garbage.
- Don't put the footrest (a.k.a. "geekbar") down. This is a dead giveaway.
- Boarders: don't stop in front of a chairlift exit ramp to strap into your bindings.
- Ski and snowboard in control. You don't see too many locals skiing in toboggans.

OFF THE SLOPES

- Tip your wait staff generously. They probably have college loans to pay off.
- Don't be caught in ski boots after 8 p.m.
- Don't pee in the hot tub.
- Cook in your condo. That's what the kitchens are for.
- Chug a huge glass of water before going to bed (you can even turn it upside down over your head when you're all done). Not only does this prevent hangovers, but it can also curb the "cottonmouth" that comes with high altitude.
- Make sure the flue is open if you try to light a fire.
- Don't leave your boots or gloves in the car overnight.

APPEARANCE

- Make sure your skis are longer than you are tall. Your relative "geek

- factor" is inversely proportional to the length of your skis.
- Never tie a bandana around your leg.
- The 'do will be just fine. Wear a hat on cold or snowy days.
- Use sunscreen. Raccoon eyes are uncool, as are cancerous melanomas. But don't use that multicolored spooze with zinc in it.
- Never ski or snowboard in a fraternity, sorority, or college sweat shirt.
- Leave the scarf at home.
- Unless you're telemarking, forget the gaiters — especially the big puffy ones that just go over the tops of your boots. Don't wear jeans, or worse yet, those stretch pants that tuck inside your boots.
- Bota bags are out. Bring a few beers in a pack, but stash them until the end of the day (under the snow; they won't freeze that way).
- If your skis have safety straps, take them off (but you'd better have ski brakes).
- Don't rent skis or a board if you



can demo some for close to the same price. Better yet, buy them in the fall at your local "ski swap."

- Nuke the Stetson, cowboy.
- Stick a piece of duct tape on your clothes somewhere — even if you don't need it.

Eugene and Dana know their shit. Eugene lives in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, where he skis all day and writes all night. Before entering grad school at the University of Colorado, Dana lived just outside of Vail — in a well-insulated tool shed.