

## Sun Valley, ID



Bald Mountain from Sun Valley Lake

“I came for the winter and stayed for the summer.”

Visit any ski town from coast to coast or beyond. You’ll hear the same mantra from the locals. Telluride to Taos, Lake Placid or Lake Louise, Killington to Kitzbuhel, Squaw Valley, Deer Valley, Sun Valley.

Speaking of that last one, Director of Marketing and Public Relations Jack Sibbach explains that despite the reputation of the glamorous ski

lifestyle of yesteryear popularized by bold-faced names such as Ernest Hemingway, Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe and Gary Cooper, Sun Valley's busiest months are actually July and August.

"For an active person it's a paradise," states Sibbach, who has nearly forty years of tenure at the resort. "Winter and summer, we are a four season resort, and the original 'destination' ski resort in the US, dating from 1936. We are very family oriented, tons of kid's activities, our service element is of utmost importance, and we are proud of the fact that 75% of our guests return again at a later time. We are more than just a ski mountain and a hotel. Coming to Sun Valley is an experience."



White Clouds Golf Course

So are their 45 holes of golf. The **White Clouds** nine is their newest offering. The first and final holes are traditional looking par-4s in the flatland adjacent to the resort. But the middle seven ascend upwards into the surrounding hillsides, each hole climbing higher than the last, affording majestic views of the entire valley, including the lively adjacent town of Ketchum, and the magnificence of Bald Mountain, the iconic ski hill that provided the resort with its initial fame.

This alpine links style nine high on the hill elicits reactions from love to disdain, opinions can be as severe as the terrain itself. Blind shots, awkward lies, and titled landing areas bouncing towards impenetrable fescue limit the opportunity to use driver. Another problem is the course isn't quite walker friendly, owing to the extreme terrain.

However there are some fun and sporty holes, repeated plays mitigate

the “puzzlement factor,” and the eighth, tumbling drastically downhill from whence the journey began is one of the most delightful (and benign) 500-yard par-4s a golfer will ever play.



Elkhorn Golf Course

Delightful from start to finish is [Elkhorn](#), formerly a private facility, at one time sporting a six-figure initiation fee, but now available to guests of the resort. Elkhorn offers a great quality and variety of golf holes, with capacious landing areas, beautiful views of the nearby mountains, and a number of early holes that, because they play downhill, get a golfer’s pulse racing in advance of the tee shot. “We have such a diversity of golf now,” continues Sibbach. “When I first came here years ago all we had was Trail Creek. But now we have these 45 holes available to resort guests, and they love the variety. They can come for a long weekend and never play the same hole twice.”

Elkhorn is unique for a few reasons. First, it is one of the final design collaborations between Robert Trent Jones Sr. and Jr. The inward nine, nestled in a valley close to the Elkhorn Mountains, is flatter than the front, and rife with fescue grasses, wetlands and streams. Finally, due to an unfortunate case of winter kill in 2013, has different grasses on the front and back nine greens, the former bent grass, and the latter poa annua.



Trail Creek Golf Course

Serenity is the watchword at **Trail Creek**, the original Sun Valley golf course. Despite numerous reconfigurations since its 1930s debut it is undoubtedly one of the finest tracks in the Intermountain West. The Trail Creek River offers much of the challenge at this petite parkland confection, meandering as it does from side to side and perpendicular to the line of play. Holes alternate between wide and narrow, several downhill, while sprinkled through the inward nine a pair playing directly uphill. Some are curvaceous, while others are straightforward like the par-5 opener and the par-4 ninth, the latter seemingly playing directly to the base area of Bald Mountain, the shadow of which appears to be looming over the green.



Bigwood Golf Course

Lastly, [Bigwood at Thunder Springs](#) offers nine pleasant holes in a serene setting surrounded by fine mountain views. Located just north of Ketchum, this is a kid-friendly and very affordable golf diversion. It's a scant twelve mile drive in your National Rental Car from the nearby airport in Hailey. But if the twenty minute ride to the resort leaves you famished, myriad dining options abound in Ketchum. Try the Pioneer for massive steaks in a rustic atmosphere, or Desperado's for fresh, authentic Mexican. Since breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day, be sure to check out the Kneadery or Perry's for pre-round sustenance.