

MONARCH MOUNTAIN:

Easy access to all-natural mountain snow



COURTESY OF MONARCH MOUNTAIN

A snowboarder at Monarch Mountain makes use of the terrain park. The ski area also has 53 lift-served trails and 130 acres of hike-to terrain.

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Tucked into the Sawatch Range in the San Isabel National Forest, Monarch Mountain offers what Rocky Mountain skiers and snowboarders are looking for — all-natural snow, and in great abundance.

An average 350 inches of snow falls each season on this Continental Divide ski area, giving way to 1,162 feet of vertical drop on 800 skiable acres. Visitors can expect to find a mix of green and blue beginner and intermediate runs, plus a bounty of black and double-black diamond terrain awaiting thrill-seekers.

Monarch this season has improved many of its guest services, including upgrades to the cafeteria kitchen, an added acre of parking and a replaced drive terminal on its oldest lift. Offerings for ski school and a children's center remain and make it a welcoming place for families.

Most of all, though, skiers come back for the snow.

"We are most known for great, all-natural snow," Richard Moorhead, Monarch CEO, said.

Monarch lets nature take care of the snow making and does not supplement with any artificial snow makers.

In addition to its 53 trails served by its six lifts, Monarch also offers 130 acres of hike-to terrain — recommended for experts only. Twelve percent of hike-to terrain in Mirkwood Basic is rated "most difficult" and the remaining 88 percent is

Leading up to the 2014-15 ski season, the Daily Press will present weekly preview articles featuring regional ski destinations and other winter activities.

Monarch Mountain

Skiable acreage: 800
Vertical drop: 1,162 feet
Summit: 11,952 feet
Trail classification: 27 percent easiest, 30 percent more difficult, 43 percent most difficult
Ski season: late November through early April
Lift hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

rated "extreme."

For those looking for an even more natural skiing experience, Moorhead said Monarch has something special in store. "We even have a backcountry Cat skiing operation rated as one of the best in the state," he said.

With its ease of use and high-quality mountain terrain on natural snow, Monarch is a destination to be added to any skier or snowboarder's 2014-15 tour list.

What sets it apart from others, Moorhead said, is Monarch's customer service and simplicity of use while still providing big mountain services.



COURTESY OF MONARCH MOUNTAIN

A skier digs deep turns in some of Monarch Mountain's pure terrain. The ski area offers 800 acres of terrain, including 130 of hike-to expert skiing.

Staying ahead of altitude problems

I had picked up my old friend "Randy" at the Montrose Airport around 1 p.m. on a Friday. We immediately drove to the Hunting Lodge, well above Norwood. The lodge is located at an altitude of 8,500 feet, which was quite a change for Randy, who just arrived from Florida. The place in the Florida Keys where he lives is about 5 feet above sea level, depending on the tides. But no matter as we were going to hunt the third rifle season for elk and all was right with the world, or so it seemed.



Mark Rackay

Tips from the Posse

When you live in a place like Montrose, with all the mountains and natural beauty, you will quickly hear from friends and relatives you might have forgotten about, wanting to come for a visit. They seem to arrive in hordes wanting to go skiing, fishing, hunting, hiking and just about everything else we enjoy on a regular basis. After all, it is why we live here, isn't it? Many of these folks live at much lower altitudes and

without a period of acclimation, they too could suffer with altitude sickness. This malady can bring on a myriad of symptoms, which can include headache, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath, weakness, mental confusion, coughing, rapid pulse, coma and even death. If not acted upon quickly the person can develop one of two forms of a much more serious altitude sickness. The first being high altitude pulmonary edema characterized by breathlessness, fatigue, dry cough and blue lips and nails. The second form is called high altitude cerebral edema, which typically comes with a severe headache, loss of coordination, and confusion. Both of these onset very quickly and are potentially deadly.

The cure is usually quite simple, descend several thousand feet and quickly. From there it is a good idea to get them to a medical facility even though they

might be feeling better upon the descent. Many times these symptoms disappear quickly.

Other useful steps include replacing fluids they might have lost, restrict salt intake and administer oxygen if available.

What is probably a much better idea is to try and take steps to avoid the illness in the first place. The best thing is to try and give your body some time to acclimate. It would be a good idea to spend a day or two in Montrose. Take a few walks each day, nothing vigorous, drink plenty of water or sports drinks with electrolytes if you are perspiring. Avoiding alcohol and drinks with caffeine are essential.

After a day or two here in town it is a safer bet to move on up to that higher altitude. Again, once there, give the old body some time to acclimate. At least 24 hours without strenuous activity and the same rules of water and no booze should leave you in pretty good shape. All of that being said, being aware of the symptoms of altitude sickness would still be in your best interest as it can be quite serious in a very short time.

Just look at the bright side, you will have your friends and relatives underfoot several days longer if they follow these suggestions for a healthy visit to the altitudes. Until next time, see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

IN BRIEF

Comment reopened on possible cuckoo listing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will re-open the public comment period on its proposal to designate 546,335 acres of critical habitat for the western population of yellow-billed cuckoo in 80 separate units in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

On Aug. 14, the Service announced a 60-day comment period on the proposal, but decided to re-open the comment period for an additional 60 days after receiving requests from members of Congress in the affected states to allow additional time for public review and comment. The USFWS is now drafting a new notice for publication in the Federal Register with the additional information about the proposal and comment period extension. Once that occurs, information is to be made available concerning how to comment.

Members of the public who have already submitted comments during the first 60-day comment period do not need to resubmit their comments.

On Oct. 3, 2014, the Service published a final rule to list the western population

of yellow-billed cuckoo as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

Burn planned today

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests plans to burn a large pile that resulted from a forest health demonstration project within the ski area on Friday.

The pile is located on the "Double Cabins" trail just west of Lift 10 and below "Run Away Train" ski trail on the National Forest System lands and south of Mountain Village town limits.

Fire officials, working with the National Weather Service have identified a burn "window" where weather, smoke dispersal and ground conditions will be within prescribed parameters to safely burn the pile. Extensive planning for this project has occurred. Forest staff developed a "detailed burn plan" to provide for safe and effective operations.

Firefighter and public safety is of primary concern. Conditions must be consistent with the prescribed burn plans and meet the requirements of smoke permits issued by the State of Colorado. Burning will occur only if weather, staffing and smoke dispersal conditions are compliant.