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Skibikes open downhill possibilities

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Skibikes open downhill
possibilities

If gliding down a ski slope while in a seated position piques your interest or the prospect of biking during winter without peddling fat tires causes a craving, then consider skibiking. Imagine a bike with skis where the wheels should be. Skibikes offer a range of options for riders of all abilities. If you can ski, snowboard or ride a bike, you're already ahead of the gentle learning curve.



Matt Hanson exploring on his skibike.

“Learning to skibike is so easy that people progress really fast and sometimes go a little crazy,” says Jeff Butcher, head of research and development at Koski Snowsports.

Butcher has been skibiking Tahoe terrain since 1971 and is a representative for the American Ski Bike Association. This season, all Vail resorts are allowing skibikers access to their runs, but not the terrain parks. Sierra-at-Tahoe is extremely skibike friendly and is one of the only resorts in the Tahoe area to allow skibikes in the terrain park.

“Anything you can do on a bike or a pair of skis, you can do on a skibike. The possibilities are endless.” –Jeff Butcher

“Anything you can do on a bike or a pair of skis, you can do on a skibike. The possibilities are endless,” says Butcher, who adds that most skibiking is done in the back country, Matt Hanson, the founder of Alpine Skibikes Inc., designs and manufactures snowbike conversion kits, allowing bikers to replace the wheels with skis. Hanson, who has been skibiking for 36 years, was the first to skibike what Tahoe locals call The Minden Mile. The side-country run begins at the top of Monument Peak at Heavenly Ski Resort and ends at the bottom of Kingsbury Grade

in Minden, Nev. Hanson also claims to have been the first to descend Mount Tallac on a skibike in 2004.



Jeff Butcher at Sierra-at-Tahoe.

“It took three hours to snowshoe up with the frame strapped to my back, then about 20 minutes to ride down,” says Hanson.

Ski biking has been a lifesaver to individuals who struggle with physical limitations. Knee and hip replacement patients, who were told they would never ski again, are back in the saddle and shredding the slopes. Skibiking offers amputees and wounded veterans the opportunity to experience the thrill of riding big mountains.

Recently, Butcher was involved in the Hartford Ski Spectacular in Breckenridge, Colo. The event is one of the nation’s largest winter sports festivals for people with disabilities and has more than 800 registered participants annually. Butcher was partnered with a veteran who suffered from brain damage and posttraumatic stress disorder.

“I got him on the bike and the smile never left his face the entire weekend,” say Butcher. The veteran now travels the U.S. skibiking.



Austrian Engelbert Brentner invented the modern version of the Ski-Ski in 1949.

Internationally known as skibobs, skibikes, of one sort or another can be traced as far back as 1850. But the birth of modern skibiking is forever linked to Austrian Engelbert Brentner. In 1949, Brentner patented the Sit-Ski. The new Sit-Ski replaced wooden or metal runners with actual skis. Brentner also added foot skis, which provided stability. Suddenly, skibikers could go everywhere skiers went.

Skibiking is well established in Europe. Members of the Federation Internationale de Skibob, compete in slalom, giant slalom and even skibob cross races. It seems speed is what attracts European riders. On April 17, 2003, in Les Arcs, France, the skibob world speed record was set by Romuald Bonvin of Switzerland. His skibob, equipped with a windshield and a bobsled-type nose, was clocked at more than 125 mph.

These days, the skibiking community in Lake Tahoe is a small but welcoming group. People approach Butcher almost every time he rides at Sierra-at-Tahoe. He is asked: Is that as fun as it looks or is that hard to learn? Butcher jumps off his bike and offers a ride to the curious person. Some folks take him up on his offer.

“Not one person hasn’t liked it,” says Butcher.

Currently, Tahoe area resorts do not offer skibike rentals or lessons. If you’re interested

in trying a skibike, Butcher recommends contacting him through his Web site snowbiker.net or the American Skibike Association's Web site at americanskibike.org. You can also purchase a do-it-yourself conversion kit and watch instructional videos. Facebook is an excellent place to connect with fellow skibikers.

"I wish I could let everyone ride. I just love the sport and want to spread the word," says Butcher. Most skibikers will go out of their way to be friendly and practice the customary code of etiquette. Odds are good they would be happy to help get you on a skibike.



By The Weekly

On March 22, 2017

FEATURES



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	Lifts	REPORT	Snow Depth
<u>Kirkwood</u>	11 / 15		230"
<u>Diamond Peak</u>	5 / 7		144"
<u>Northstar California</u>	14 / 20		174"
<u>Squaw Valley -</u>	20 / 42		237"
<u>Mt. Rose - Ski Tahoe</u>	4 / 8		212"
<u>Heavenly Mountain</u>	24 / 28		183"
<u>Homewood Mountain</u>	6 / 8		216"
<u>Sugar Bowl</u>	8 / 13		202"
<u>Sierra-at-Tahoe</u>	8 / 14		194"
<u>Boreal Mountain</u>	8 / 8		180"

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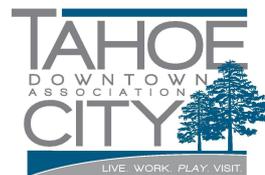
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