



GOING FOR BROKE

The marriage of adrenaline-raising slopes to 24-hour gambling and clubs in South Lake Tahoe creates the perfect environment for a bachelor-party weekend. In this ski town you're more likely to get burned by the glare off freshly groomed slopes than by some tatted-up chick, and there's nary an Ed Hardy shirt in sight.

By Liane Yvkoff

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AS VEGAS MAY GET ALL THE PRESS WHEN IT COMES TO ROWDY BACHELOR PARTIES, especially since *The Hangover* ruled the box office. But after throwing down for \$10 beers, \$50 clubs, and \$40 lap dances before you can get the girl to smile, you kind of get the feeling that you just might be a chump. And by the fifth time a friend decides to tie the knot, the Las Vegas routine is a little played out.

But 453 miles north of Sin City lies South Lake Tahoe, a tiny ski town sandwiched between a crystal-clear blue lake and a towering mountain snow park, with casinos lining the short strip.

The ski season runs from Thanksgiving through April, weather permitting, and in 2010 there was snow on the slopes well into May. Any weekend except a holiday is a good time to go, but even if you find yourself in Tahoe in the middle of spring break, Heavenly Mountain—a stone's throw from the strip—is enormous, with plenty of runs and back-mountain trails where you can escape the crowds.

[bachelor party patrol: south lake tahoe]

VEGAS "LITE" WITH SNOW SPORTS

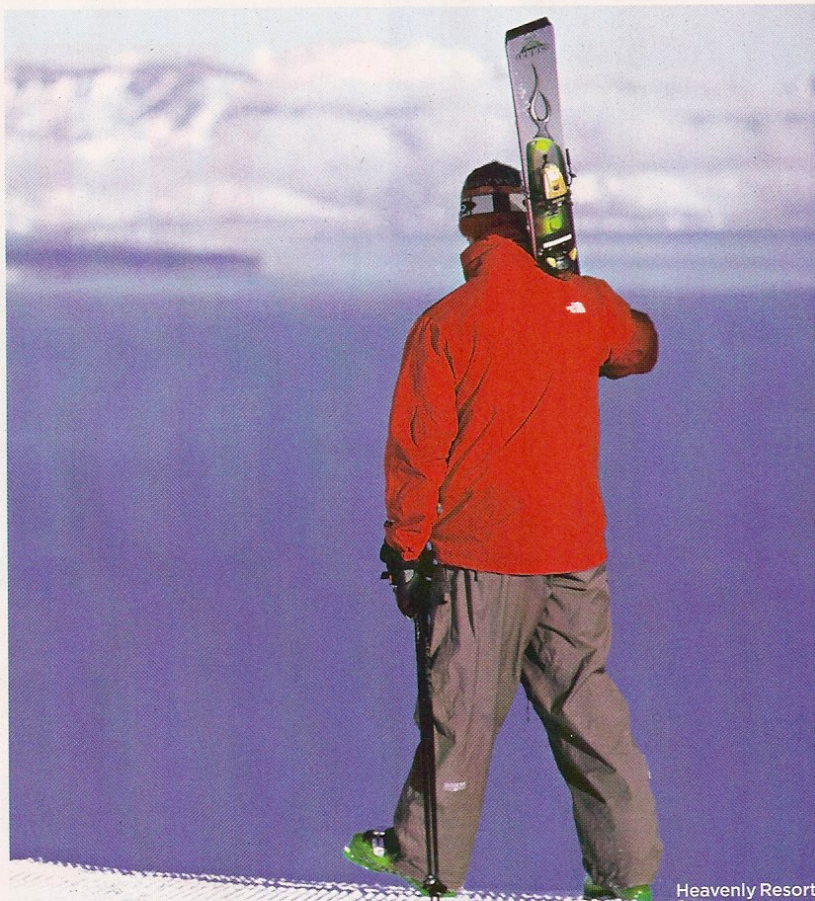
In most ski resorts, the town rolls up the sidewalks after dark. But in SLT, nighttime is when the party is just getting started. Partiers move indoors to the casinos surrounding the mountain for gambling, dancing, and general revelry, and the absence of an open-container law means you can carry the party with you everywhere you go. Each weekend the casinos host a number of bands, famous deejays, and live acts to keep the punters entertained, but with gaming tables, cheap drinks, and snow babes, you'll be plenty distracted.

■ Going Vertical

Heavenly Resort

With an average annual snowfall of 360 inches, 20 miles of ski runs, and the advantage of being situated smack in the middle of South Lake Tahoe's casino strip, it's easy to see why bachelors choose this mountain for a last binge. Even with a hangover, you can stumble out of bed and within five minutes walk from the casino to the gondola that takes you up 6,565 vertical feet to Base Camp. From there, the entire mountain is your playground.

Heavenly has a reputation for being an expansive intermediate's



Heavenly Resort

MontBleu

Opal Ultra Lounge

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paradise. "Serious" skiers swear by the California-side mountains, such as Squaw or Northstar. But besides the fact that there are fewer things more lame than professing the seriousness of one's skiing hobby, size does matter. Heavenly is the biggest resort on the lake, covering more than 4,800 acres along the California-Nevada border. Its 94 trails, 30 lifts, 3 terrain parks, and miles of backcountry runs mean there's something for everyone.

Approximately 45 percent of the runs are for intermediate skiers and snowboarders, 35 percent are advanced, and what's left are bunny slopes. To crank it up a notch, extreme skiers can hire a guide to take them into the canyons and the North Bowl woods and show them some of the mountain's secret stash.

Time the party right and you can attempt to ski 1,800 vertical feet of moguls at Glen Plake's Gunbarrel 25, and mixing it up are three progressive snow parks for freestylers with jibs,

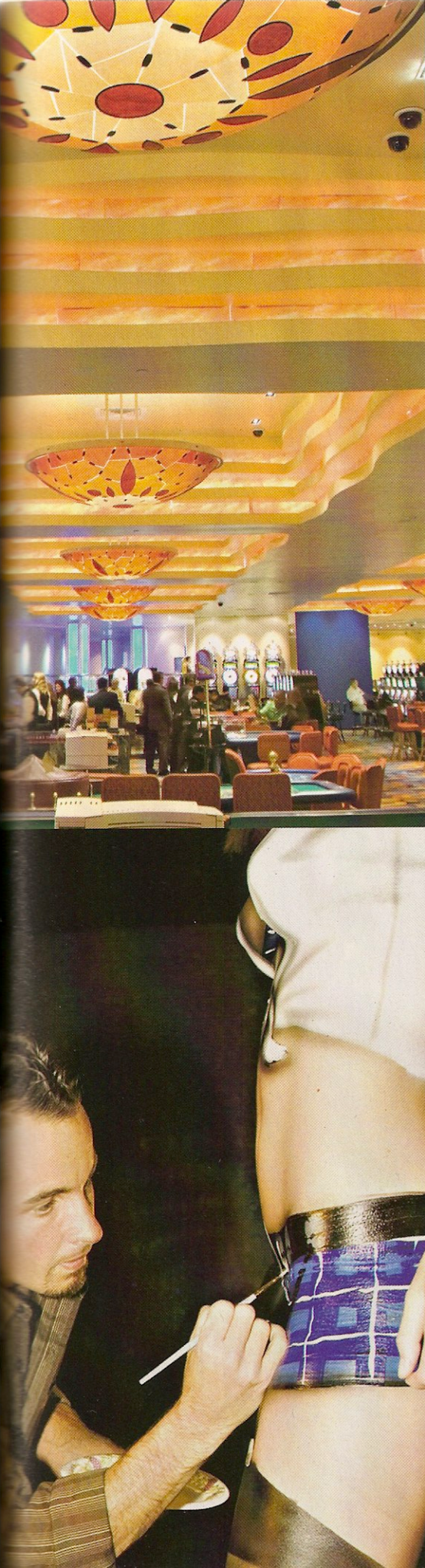
jumps, and rails (but no pipe) to keep everyone on their toes. If you want to take a break from your skis or board, visit Adventure Peak in the resort for tubing, sledding, or snow biking. The multilane tubing hill will probably attract mainly parents and kids, but why should they have all the fun? There's also a zip line that may or may not be open, depending on the weather.

But the mountain's main attraction has to be the view from the peak. From the top of the Sky Express, elevation 10,047 feet, you'll take in a panoramic view of Lake Tahoe tucked into the snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountain range. Take a deep breath and one last look—it's a 5.5-mile run to the bottom that'll have you practically skiing into the lake. You can't do *that* in Vegas. SkiHeavenly.com

■ Getting Horizontal

MontBleu Resort Casino

There are five casino resorts all within walking distance of Heavenly Village, and each offers attractive pricing on hotel rooms and lift tickets, especially for midweek stays. The MontBleu casino and hotel is just a five-minute walk down the strip from the gondola and features two clubs, two restaurants, a few bars, and a novelty sex shop featuring the *Penthouse* lingerie line and books. The casino is a little tired, the decor decidedly cheesy, but the clubs, bars, and restaurant have been recently renovated. The partiers attracted by the cheap drinks and cool bars more than make up for the lack of action in the pit. Rooms still bear the eighties chintz of the previous operator, Caesar's Palace, and a few fun eccentricities remain, such as an exposed tub/shower in the center of the room. It's not the newest or fanciest casino on the strip, but given the



low price of rooms, for a rowdy bachelor party on a budget, that's probably a good thing. [MontBleuResort.com](#)

Harvey's Lake Tahoe

Harvey's Lake Tahoe is the closest casino and hotel to Heavenly's gondola. It brushes right up against the mountain and boasts 740 recently renovated rooms and suites. Some are outfitted with kitchenettes that are perfect for hosting in-room parties. The casino covers 52,000 square feet and offers slots, sports betting, and table games, as well as a dedicated poker room that hosts nightly tournaments. On the lower level, across from the Cabo Wabo Cantina, blackjack tables are staffed by the hottest dealers in South Lake Tahoe, dressed in plunging halter tops. Their hefty cleavage will motivate you to ante up big time. [HarveysTahoe.com](#)

■ Paint the Town Red

Smokehouse Grill at Adventure Peak

A ski resort at 6,500 feet elevation isn't the most obvious location for an outdoor barbecue restaurant, but with 50-degree temperatures on the mountain and a hungry crowd, an open-air grill is a great way to cook a meal while enjoying the sun and some people-watching. Late in the season, there are days when it's hard to tell if you're on the mountain or at the lake, and a handful of the hard-core boarder chicks can always be counted on to shed their gear and strip down to bikini tops—another reason the Grill is the most popular place for lunch. On the menu are barbecue ribs, pulled pork, grilled burgers, and other Smokehouse specials. Sure, you'll pay \$7 for a 16-ounce beer, but you're at a ski resort—what do you expect? [Heavenly Mountain; 775-586-2353](#)

Fire + Ice

After a day on the slopes, Fire + Ice is the place to regroup, rehash the day's highlights, and plan for the night. The crowd around the outdoor fireplaces will be a sea of Gore-tex, so belly up to the bar and order the ICE Bowl (\$24). It's made with nine shots of five different kinds of alcohol and served in a 40-ounce fish bowl with a bunch of straws, making it good for sharing and better for getting drunk. And if your eating preference is for quantity

over quality, stay for the do-it-yourself Mongolian grill. Gorge on cuts of meat and seafood of all kinds that you cook to your liking on a giant hibachi. It's all you can eat, making it a solid place to fill up after a hard day's play. It's not dirt cheap, but it is convenient and good. [Fire-Ice.com](#)

19 Kitchen-Bar

For the finest man-food, head to this 19th-floor restaurant in Harvey's, which has an upscale bar serving proper drinks and signature cocktails, including the Tahotini. It's kind of girlyie and will turn your tongue blue, but you might want to try one just to pay homage to the lake the restaurant overlooks. The view is fantastic and the food is classic, well-executed, high-end steak-house fare. We're talking Kobe steaks, Kurobuta pork chops, and fresh abalone when they can get it. Can't choose? How about a little taste of everything? The surf and turf is over-the-top with a broiled petit filet, short ribs, seared diver scallops, and Australian lobster tails. Harvey's Lake Tahoe; 775-586-6777

Cabo Wabo Cantina Lounge

The Mexican food seems about as authentic as the plastic palm trees and cactus decorating the bar, but the joint does serve up some of the best, if not the strongest, Margaritas in town. Girls and guys flock to this theme bar for the more than 50 brands of tequila, live bands, and spring-break atmosphere—not for its cuisine. A bonus is the club's policy of encouraging female patrons to take off their bras and throw them on the bar to score a free drink. After 11, the live music kicks in and it's only a matter of time until the snow bunnies start shaking their tail feathers on the bar's stripper pole. Tell the bartender that you're with a bachelor party and the lucky man will get a free shot, possibly off the belly of a buxom bartender. The not-so-lucky bachelors get to do a body shot off the bus boy. Harvey's Lake Tahoe; 775-586-6648

Lake Tahoe Cigar Company

No bachelor party is complete without a celebratory cigar. After dinner, retire to the Lake Tahoe Cigar Company in the MontBleu Casino. The retail shop features a walk-in humidor stocked with a wide selection of premium brands, such as Padrons and Arturo Fuente. If you're no connoisseur, there are also flavored and novelty cigars, such as "the Chief"