Vail Resorts Newsroom

Letter from Vail Resorts CEO on 2020/21 Winter Operating Plan

Dear Guests,

There is nothing I am looking forward to more than being back on the mountain, back on snow, back on skis – and I know I am not alone. Each summer, we all wait patiently for the return of winter, and this year more than ever, we need it. We need to reconnect with the outdoors, we need to feel normal and energized as we carve down the mountain with crisp alpine air in our faces.

That has always been our mission as a company: to provide guests with an*Experience of a Lifetime* at our resorts. And we have always known that safety needs to be the underpinning of how we provide that experience. **This year, our commitment to safety takes on more importance than ever.** We are fortunate that our core experience of skiing and riding takes place outdoors, across huge mountains, offering fresh air and wide-open spaces for our guests. However, to help protect our guests, our employees and our communities amid this pandemic, some changes will be required this season.

Today I want to share with you as much detail available on our approach to prioritizing your safety this winter. But first, I want to give you a sense of the principles guiding our decisions. It goes without saying that operations at our 34 North American resorts will abide by all local regulations, but for us, that's just where safety begins. Since the beginning of this crisis, we have made a commitment to all of our stakeholders that we will operate in a way that puts safety first and uses the insights we have gleaned from operating so many resorts around the world. This often means choosing to go above and beyond what is required in order to do our very best to provide you peace of mind. Given how fluid and ever-changing the situation with COVID-19 is, it has also been our goal to design an approach that can remain in place for all of this season. We do not want to be caught off guard or find ourselves needing to make reactive changes. **Striving for consistency will provide our guests, employees and communities with as much predictability as possible this season, which we believe is worth the extra effort.**

I realize not everyone will agree with our approach – some feeling we are being too conservative or aggressive. And I recognize the changes we are implementing will be an inconvenience. But I ask for your understanding and patience. In return, you can count on us to try and do everything we can to help keep you safe and make skiing and riding a reality this entire winter. While it will be a little different than we are used to, we are very optimistic it will be a great season and the welcome respite we all need right now. We hope you will join us on this journey.

Now, on to the details of our 2020-21 winter operating plan, as it currently stands. For your safety, we will be requiring face coverings, promoting physical distancing, and enforcing health screenings when physical distancing may not be possible, such as in ski and ride school. The following outlines further details:

Face Coverings

As we have all summer, we will be requiring guests to wear face coverings in every part of our operations, which includes loading and riding in chairlifts and gondolas; when inside all buildings; and during all ski and snowboard lessons. **No one will be permitted on the mountain without a face covering.**We will also strongly recommend that guests wear face coverings in all indoor and outdoor public spaces throughout our resort towns and will continue to encourage our communities to make this a requirement. Being safe and successful this season will require everyone's cooperation and we believe face coverings are foundational to make that possible.

Physical Distancing on Our Mountains

As outlined below, we will be promoting physical distancing throughout our operations, including on our chairlifts and gondolas, to help ensure a safe experience. In order to make this a reality and also make it an enjoyable experience, we must manage the

number of people on our mountains. The good news is that we operate many of the largest mountain resorts in North America, and for the vast majority of days during the season, we believe everyone who wants to get on our mountains will be able to. However, we are not planning for the majority of days, **we are planning for every day of the season**.
We want to provide assurance to our guests that we will do our very best to minimize crowds at all times – be it a holiday weekend or the unpredictable powder day.

As such, this season we will be implementing a reservation system across each of our mountains. It is possible that at some point in the season, as we evaluate the dynamics of our operations, we may decide that we no longer need the reservation system at certain resorts. However, with so many uncertainties, we believe it is only prudent to have this system in place now. Full details and FAQs on how the reservation system will work can be found here, but this overview should answer some of your questions:

- Pass holders will be required to make a reservation before arriving at the mountain.
- Throughout the season, **pass holders will be able to make as many week-of reservations as their pass type and availability allow.**
- **The early season will be reserved for pass holders only.** We will not sell lift tickets until Dec. 8.
- In addition to week-of reservations, **we will also be providing pass holders with the opportunity to book up to seven Priority Reservation Days** for the core season (Dec. 8-April 4), or as many days of access as they have on their pass if less than seven. The booking window for Priority Reservation Days will open Nov. 6 and will be exclusive to pass holders until Dec. 7.
- As pass holders use their Priority Reservation Days, they can book new ones, maintaining up to seven (or however many days of access are remaining on their pass) at any time. In addition, pass holders can always make as many week-of reservations as they choose (or however many days of access are remaining on their pass).
- Families will be able to book reservations together if they are in the same pass holder account.
- While still subject to change, at this time we do not believe pass holders will need a reservation to access our partner resorts (Telluride, Sun Valley, Snowbasin, Resorts of the Canadian Rockies, Hakuba or Rusutsu).
- Lift tickets (including Buddy and SWAF tickets) will go on sale on Dec. 8, with sales limited based on the number of spaces available for any given day after our exclusive pass holder reservation period. This season, lift tickets will be sold with a reservation for a specific resort on a specific date.
- Given the need to manage lift tickets sales, they will only be sold on our websites and through our call centers. No lift tickets will be sold at the ticket window in resort – you may only pickup your pre-purchased lift ticket at our ticket windows. We will be encouraging guests to purchase in advance – though guests can purchase a same day lift ticket online or through our call centers, subject to availability, and then pick up the lift ticket at the ticket window.

We believe this approach will help ensure a safe experience for everyone, while prioritizing access for our pass holders. **To make the reservation system as easy to use as possible, pass holders will be able to book reservations to any of our resorts, and for all dates, on EpicPass.com.** Booking a reservation will turn on pass access for that day, so there will be no need for pass holders to bring anything but their pass and access the mountain as usual.

To provide additional peace of mind, we have also updated our Epic Coverage program. Epic Coverage is new and free for all pass holders. It will provide refunds:

- If pass holders are unable to book their preferred Priority Reservation Days during the initial booking window (Nov. 6-Dec. 7) and if they have not used their pass yet.
- If there is a resort closure due to certain events such as COVID-19 during a pass holders' initial Priority Reservation Days selected by Dec. 7. (There will still be an option for pass holders to choose to cover the core season instead.)
- If pass holders experience an eligible personal event that prevents them from using their pass, such as job loss, injury or illness.

We know this reservation system is a change to our normal approach and we want to give you time to review and understand it. As such, **we are extending our Labor Day deadline to Sept. 17 for our Buddy/SWAF benefits and utilization of all pass credits.** If you purchased a 2020-21 pass product prior to Aug. 27 and no longer want to move forward with your pass, we will provide you a refund of the amount paid if your request is made by Sept. 17 through our call center or an online form that will be available by Sept. 1.

Again, we recognize that most days of the season it will not be necessary to manage the number of people on our

mountains, and that our pass holders may view the reservation system as a hassle. However, with this program, we are planning for as many contingencies as possible to strive to give you peace of mind knowing you will have the space you need to physically distance and enjoy your time on the slopes.

We are planning to kick off the season with Keystone opening on Nov. 6, weather permitting. You can find our targeted opening and closing dates for all of our resorts here. Regardless of how many people are skiing and riding this season, we will follow our historical practice to open as many lifts and as much terrain as soon as possible to allow for the amazing mountain experience our guests have come to expect.

Physical Distancing on Chairlifts and Gondolas

To maintain physical distancing on our chairlifts and gondolas, we will only be seating related parties (guests skiing or riding together) or: two singles on opposite sides of a four-person lift; two singles or two doubles on opposite sides of a six-person lift; or two singles on opposite sides of our larger gondola cabins.

Riding a chairlift is an outdoor experience, while moving quickly and taking a relatively short amount of time, and many of you have inquired why we need distancing at all, given the requirement for guests to wear face coverings. While all of this is true, in the current environment, we do not believe it is appropriate to seat guests from different parties directly next to each other, given the dynamics during loading and unloading, during chair stoppages and due the proximity between guests as they ride the lift, speak to each other, speak on the phone, eat and adjust their clothing. We believe a conservative approach is the best way to protect our guests.

Physical Distancing in On-Mountain Restaurants

We are committed to opening all of our on-mountain restaurants this season. To allow for physical distancing, we will be managing the number of people in our restaurants in accordance with public health requirements and will monitor guests coming in and out of restaurants at the entrances. Our approach to each restaurant will be a little different, depending on the layout and flow of each facility. Our full-service, sit down restaurants will operate with reduced seating, spaced to enable physical distancing. At most of our large, quick-service restaurants, such as Two Elk in Vail, Miner's Camp in Park City and Pioneer Crossing in Breckenridge, we intend to reconfigure our "scramble areas" to have a cafeteria-style approach, where guest come in, go through a single line, and pass all the food options until they get to the cashier.

Food options in quick-service restaurants will be more limited this season, with just a handful of ready-to-go hot and cold options and no ability for any custom or special orders. We will be spacing tables in seating areas as well to allow for physical distancing while eating. We will also be maintaining as much outdoor seating as we can. Given these limitations, we will recommend that guests adjust their schedules and try to dine earlier or later to avoid the peak lunch rush. Since stopping by one of our restaurants will not be as easy as in years' past, **we will also encourage guests to bring water, snacks and other food with them on the mountain to ensure they stay hydrated and have the energy needed for their ski day.**

We will still sell packaged beer and wine at most of our locations, but we will not operate any full-service bars, on or off the mountain, as we do not believe convening in a traditional bar setting, anywhere in resort or throughout our communities, is safe amid COVID-19. Finally, all transactions in our restaurants, and elsewhere at our resorts, will be cashless (unless required by local regulations). As the season approaches, each of our resorts will be sharing specific details on the operations of each of their restaurants.

Physical Distancing in Ski & Snowboard Rental Locations

We are striving to provide a safe experience throughout each part of our resorts, and that includes at our owned and operated ski and snowboard rental locations – which we plan to have open this winter. We will be managing the number of people inside each location, in accordance with local regulations, and setting them up to allow for physical distancing and appropriate guest flow. **Guests and employees will be required to wear face coverings, and for the portions of the**

process that require close interactions with our technicians, our employees will take additional precautions, including wearing eye protection and gloves. Equipment will be fully sanitized between each guest use and we intend to expand our rental delivery service to provide enhanced options for guests to rent equipment outside of the store locations.

Health Screenings within Ski and Ride School

All of our employees will be required to undergo health screenings before they arrive at work, given their interaction with guests and other employees at our resorts. We are taking this same precaution with our ski and ride school participants, given that physical distancing may not always be possible during a lesson such as when the group rides lifts and gondolas or eats lunch together. **With this in mind, all participants will be required to undergo and confirm an online self-health screening prior to arriving at the mountain for their lesson.**

We will also be limiting the class size of all of group and private lessons to a maximum six people. Specific details and procedures for certain class types for children are still being determined and will be announced as they are finalized, taking into account safety considerations. While we plan to continue many of our season-long youth programs offered at many of our resorts, we will be suspending most other smaller specialty programs this winter. As the season approaches, each of our resorts will announce additional details on their programs and any changes that will be required.

Lessons will need to be purchased in advance – no walk-up, day-of lessons will be available. A mountain access reservation will be included with the purchase of a ski school lesson. A lift ticket or eligible pass product will be required if the student will be riding a lift.

Next Steps

Each of our resorts will continue to work closely with all of our local community stakeholders to review the details of our winter plans and to ensure we remain aligned in our collective approach to the season. **Success for this season can only happen with close collaboration and partnership in each community.** While we have designed our winter operating plan to comply with and at times exceed all known applicable laws, our operations will remain subject to the local regulations in each of our resort locations. Please understand that these may change at any time, either ahead of or during the ski season. We will endeavor to communicate any changes – and how they might impact our operations – as soon as we are made aware of them. Our resorts will have a dedicated page on each of their websites that will provide the most up-to-date information on COVID-19 impacts.

While it's not possible to know every detail yet, I hope this update gives you a better sense of what you can expect when you visit our resorts this winter. We highly recommend purchasing one of our pass products ahead of the season to ensure you get the best value and the best access to our resorts this season. Even if you just plan to ski or ride just a few days, you should consider our Epic Day Pass products which offer up to a 50% discount off lift tickets. You can find more details on our various pass products, our reservation system, Epic Coverage and our new Epic Mountain Rewards program here. As a reminder, we will not begin selling daily lift tickets until Dec. 8 and we have extended our Labor Day pass deadline, including the deadline to use credits from last season, to Sept. 17.

There is no doubt this season will be different, but we are committed to what matters most: working to protect your safety and wellbeing and providing you with great skiing and riding this winter. I hope to see you on the mountain.

Thank you,

Rob Katz
Chief Executive Officer
Vail Resorts

https://news.vailresorts.com/2020-08-27-Letter-from-Vail-Resorts-CEO-on-2020-21-Winter-Operating-Plan