



SADDLEBACK: MAINE'S HIDDEN TREASURE



REVIEW AND PHOTOS BY KENT RAINVILLE

THE BRUNSWICKIAN

This is The Brunswickian's fourth annual ski resort review. Over the past four years, we've visited resorts in Maine and Vermont to try and provide skiers/snowboarders in the Fredericton area a look at some of the bigger resorts in the East. This year fate led us to Saddleback, Maine.

It seemed that, as I asked around a lot of people had heard about Saddleback, but no one had been there. The main reason for this is that Saddleback lies in the shadow of the big-daddy of Maine resorts, Sugarloaf USA. In contrast to Sugarloaf, which attracts winter enthusiasts from all over the East coast and the central states, Saddleback relies on Maine and Massachusetts for over 70% of their business.

After a last minute driver change (sorry Mike, I had to say it), the four of us packed up our boards, crammed into the VW, and headed out in the bitter cold and wind. With necessary stops at important historical sites, such as Dysarts Truck Stop, the trip will take you 6 hours. This is about a half hour longer than it takes to go to Sugarloaf, but well worth it. As we climbed towards our destination, it was evident that the snowbanks along the roadside were getting bigger and bigger, and all worries

getting bigger and of surfing along on fresh ice disappeared. We arrived at the mountain fairly late, and although it was too dark to make out any of the trails, we were surprised and excited to see a snow-capped peak that rose just above the tree-line. Our condo was far be-

yond our expectations, and the first thing we noticed upon entering was a faint smell of chlorine...Yahoo! Hot tub! With three floors, big beds, all the amenities, and enough room for about 16 people, it was evident that, for a few days, we'd be living the "high life." Saddleback has 42 condominiums, some are smaller than the palace that we stayed in, but most have a hot tub and all are very nice. All of the condo's are slope side, so there's no walking or bussing like at the bigger mountains.

The next morning we got our first look at the mountain, and we were all surprised to see how big it was. Although Saddleback only has 41 trails, they are long runs spread out over a large area. Unlike big mountains, Saddleback does not count all of the cat-tracks as trails, so they actually have 41 trails! The summit is at an elevation of 4120 feet, and runs vary in length up to 4500 feet, with vertical drops of up to 1200 feet. The terrain is evenly divided into beginner, intermediate and advanced level trails, and can best be described as "old terrain". The trails are, for the most part, narrow and winding, with frequent rolls, drops, and sharp corners that keep you awake and smiling. There was a snowboard park

in the works when we were there, but it was not yet open.

Saddleback boasts as being "the last uncrowded big mountain skiing experience left in New England". We couldn't agree more. There are only five lifts (two chairs and three T-bars), but we never had to wait in a lift line. As we rode up the lifts, even late in the day, many of the runs had barely been touched. We could criss-cross our way down the mountain, and hardly encounter a single soul. Having read that the mountain receives up to 15 ft. of snow each year, visions of untracked powder all day long are not entirely inconceivable. Saddleback also has snowmaking facilities

top to bottom to bail them out when mother nature doesn't provide. The mountain has all of the usual conveniences, such as a cafeteria, lounge, ski shop, rental shop, nursery and ski school. There isn't a grocery store on site, but the town of Rangeley is only seven miles away, and offers a full range of accommodations, restaurants, and shops.

The Rangeley Lakes region is a mecca for cross-country skiers and skidoers, and there were more skidoos on the Main Street than there were cars. The grocery store in Rangeley has a liquor section, and they also sell sour cream & clam flavored chips! You'll need both, because there isn't much in the way of après-ski activities. This wasn't a big problem for us, at least I don't think so.

If it sounds like I'm saying a lot of good things about Saddleback, it's because I am. We were all very impressed with the place. The only things we didn't like were the long T-bar rides and the lack of things to do at the end of the day. So here's the best part. Mid-week rates at Saddleback are incredible. You can stay in a condo, with a minimum of six people, lift tickets included, for \$36 (American) per person/night. Any Question? Call the friendly folk at the Rangeley Reservation Center, at 1-800-Mt. Lakes.

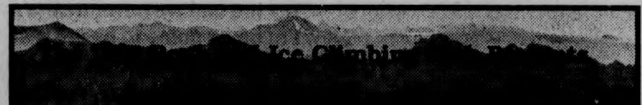


The Crew: Kent, Joel, Chris and Jord

MOUNTAIN STATS	
Trails	41
Lifts	5
Elevation	4120 ft.
Vertical Drop	1200 ft.
Annual Snowfall	200+ inches
Driving time from Fredericton	6 hrs.



Saddleback's Main Lodge provides a warm and comfortable rest stop on a cold day.



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Saddleback 283

How to get there:

- Take your favorite route to Bangor (probably the I-95)
- Follow the I-95 south to Exit 39
- Take route 2 west to Farmington
- Take route 4 north to Rangeley and Saddleback



Jordan Lutes...stylin' it at Saddleback

Tips for the Traveller in Maine

Do:

- Get the 18 Wheeler at Dysarts
- Try on some Long-Haul Jeans while waiting for your 18 Wheeler
- Use a map to get there.

Don't:

- Mess with the Border Guards
- Mess with the Ladies at Dysarts
- Try the Aerosol Cheese

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