



Ski areas to open on time, students break for Rockies

By Jim Hunt

Skiing and turkey might be just what the doctor orders to get out of that mid-semester rut.

Students wanting to ski the Rockies during Thanksgiving should be treated to adequate skiing as all major ski areas in Colorado are expected to open on schedule.

Eldora and Loveland ski areas are open on a limited basis, thanks mostly to snow-making machines. Eldora reports a 36-inch base of man-made snow and Loveland reports a two- to four-foot base of man-made snow. Both report good snow conditions.

Keystone plans to open Friday on a limited basis with two of nine chairlifts in operation. Keystone reports 24 inches of man-made snow and good snow conditions.

Vail is planning a Nov. 23 opening, Fran Villa, a public relations representative for Vail Associates, said Tuesday.

"We are expecting a normal season," Villa said. "Operations are running like they have in the past. We are hoping that last year was just an odd year."

In 1976, Colorado was hit by a drought which caused poor skiing conditions early in the season and forced some ski areas to open later than planned.

The drought caused several areas to add snow-making equipment to avoid a repeat of last year's skiing conditions.

Villa said Vail has had quite a few snowfalls this fall and has about six inches of snow on top of the mountain which is normal for this time of year. Vail currently is making snow at Lionshead on the Born Free run and at Golden Peak at the snow school training area, she said.

Vail had about the same amount of snow this time last year, but the typically heavy snows did not come, she said.

Villa said she has conducted a survey of some of the bigger lodges in the Vail area and said reservations are holding at about the same rate as last year.

"Some lodges are booked full for the holiday peak periods," Villa said. "A lot of the soft periods are starting to fill up too."

Many skiers cancelled reservations last year after hearing rumors of poor skiing in Colorado, she said.

"We were hurt by rumors last year saying that skiing was bad at Vail and Vail was closing early," Villa said. "In all actuality we had good skiing last year."

Although Steamboat Springs is not planning to open until Dec. 3, it also is trying to guarantee its skiers the best possible conditions, Rod Hanna, director of Advertising and Media Relations for Steamboat Springs, said.

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