



CHRISTINE PETERSON FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Changes make Sugarbush a resort for all seasons

By Kari J. Bodnarchuk

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

WARREN, Vt. — Three typical Vermont-style “barns” stand in the shadow of a mountain overlooking the Mad River Valley. One has overhanging eaves, rough-hewn timbers, and big sliding doors. Another is shaped like a horse-shoe with a fieldstone base and a silo. The third is a round post-and-beam structure with a conical roof topped by a cupola. All blend perfectly with the rural Vermont landscape.

Instead of storing livestock or grain, these barns house skiers, snowboarders, and fine cuisine. They’re part of Sugarbush Resort’s new \$60 million Lincoln Peak Village, which opened last month and includes a lodge (the Gate House), a fine-dining restaurant (Timbers), and a building with 61 luxury condo units (Clay Brook).

“Our concept is to really develop a community here,” says Win Smith, the resort’s president.

The new buildings are part of a multiphase development project that, over the next several years, will add slope-side accommodations and a guest services center for ticket sales, day care, rentals, and the Adventure Learning Center. Eventually, Lincoln Peak will connect with the old Sugarbush Village to create a new mountain community.

“When Timbers went up, it was like a barn-raising,” says JJ Toland, Sugarbush’s communications director. “They lifted up the frame and there were people everywhere pounding it into place with rubber mallets and wooden pegs.”

“You should have seen the line of cars parked along the road” during construction, adds Susan Hansen, a local resident

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With the new Lincoln Peak Village, outdoor amenities aren’t all on the slopes.

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Fine dining, biking trails, and 110 rooms to rent

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and longtime Sugarbush skier. "People were just wide-eyed with amazement. It was better than TV?"

Few changes had ever been made to the ski area's original base lodge and buildings, which were constructed 46 years ago to serve winter visitors. The new village not only adds the upscale, casual restaurant, an après-ski bar, and 110 rooms for rent, it also helps the resort reinvent itself as a four-season destination.

"The whole idea was to create vitality year round, not just in the winter," says Smith. "Next summer, we'll start up mountain biking again for the first time in 12 years."

By summer, Sugarbush will have more than a dozen miles of mountain bike trails, a Frisbee (or disc) golf course, and a zip line, and it will offer chairlift rides on weekends throughout the summer and foliage season. In the meantime, it's drawing winter enthusiasts.

"People have always said, 'Sugarbush — great terrain, lousy lodge,'" says Toland. "Now, we have the facilities to match our terrain," which includes 111 trails, one of the only snow bowls in the East, and a 2,000-acre backcountry basin called Slide Brook.

At 23,000 square feet, the new Gate House lodge is more than twice the size of the old lodge and is the only place in the Mad River Valley that can hold more than 200 people — its upstairs alone seats 420.

Numbers aside, the lodge has a variety of new features: special nonslip floors designed to shed water from snowmelt, flat-screen TVs that display up-to-the-minute information on trails, lifts, and



Sugarbush Resort

1840 Sugarbush Access Road
Warren, Vt.
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sugarbush.com

Adult full-day lift tickets \$66 midseason, \$70 holidays; children 7-18 \$59/\$65. Holiday periods are Jan. 13-15, Feb. 17-25.

Clay Brook offers standard hotel-style rooms for \$279 (midseason) up to a five-bedroom suite for \$1,699 (peak season); reservations 802-583-6300. Nearby **Sugarbush Inn** has 42 guest

rooms for \$99-\$179 per person, per night, including lift ticket; reservations 802-583-6100.

Directions: Sugarbush is about 180 miles or 3½ hours from Boston. Take Interstate 93 north through New Hampshire, then I-89 north into Vermont, past Montpelier to exit 9. Follow Route 100B to Route 100 south through Waitsfield. In several miles, look for Sugarbush Access Road.

conditions, and bathrooms with extra-large stalls.

Downstairs, next to the guest services desk and lockers, is the resort's first retail shop and its first après-ski bar, Castlerock Pub, which doubles as a breakfast and lunch deli by day. Two large rooms upstairs serve as the main eating area and can be sectioned off by closing the barn doors between them.

The old Sugarbush cafeteria, built in 1961 to serve 200 people a day, dished out rubbery pizza from under heat lamps and prepack-

aged salads stored in a corner fridge. The new second-floor cafeteria now serves 1,600 people a day in an interactive way. Choose what you would like on your freshly tossed salad, homemade pizza, or hand-crafted burger and your meal is prepared on the spot.

"We're working with about 50 local farmers, not as a marketing gimmick, but because this is how we live and how we want to present the area," says Peter Nohl, vice president of resort hospitality. Even vegetarians will have choices: "We're trying to give them



PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE PETERSON/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

New construction includes Clay Brook Residences and Timbers restaurant, right. John Rocers, Noreen Carroll, Greg Shupe, and Suzanne Szermer enjoy Castlerock Pub.

as many options as meat-eaters, instead of just serving veggie burgers," Nohl says.

In the Gate House's main eating area, vaulted ceilings make way for three tiers of south-facing windows, which offer views of a fieldstone barbecue pit below — with room for a band come summertime — and Lincoln Peak above.

Timbers, the new restaurant, sits across a main plaza and is open for three meals a day, 365 days a year. This round building — technically an octadecagon, with 18 sides — has a 45-foot-high ceiling from which hang round, wrought-iron chandeliers with candle-shaped lights. Between the slate entryway and stone arches is a long, scalloped bar. Timbers seats 155 people, at tables overlooking the Gate House and slopes, and in a lounge that's situated around a big stone fireplace. "The idea was to create an extended living room for the people in Clay Brook [which is attached by a hallway] and for outside visitors," says Smith.

The menu offers American fare with an adventurous twist. In Timbers' U-shaped kitchen, executive chef Sebastian Carosi prepares entrees such as chicken breast roasted in cider syrup, fire-grilled, grass-fed Vermont beef tenderloin, and Long Trail Ale-braised country rabbit. You won't find much seafood on the menu since "people come here to eat local foods, to taste what this area is truly about," says Carosi, who grew up in East Providence, R.I., and launched his own five-star restaurant in Los Angeles.

Clay Brook, the imposing red "barn" with the silver silo, houses



SOURCES: ESRI; TeleAtlas; USGS GLOBE STAFF

condominiums that range from studios to a five-bedroom penthouse, and are available for rent by the night, week, or month. All offer Western- or European-style luxury. Along with the ski valet service, covered parking lot, and dog-friendly wing, Clay Brook has a heated outdoor pool and two outdoor hot tubs, all surrounded by heated walkways.

Inside, each of the sound-

proofed units blends high-end modern amenities with a simple, minimalist Shaker-style decor. Picture tasteful country decorating (beautiful stonework in the bathrooms, four-poster beds made from solid timbers, and wrought-iron hardware throughout) with a modern touch (each unit has a gas fireplace, flat-screen TVs, stainless steel appliances, granite countertops, and slate kitchen floors).

What will continue to draw winter visitors are the resort's terrain and outdoor amenities. Over the past four years, Sugarbush has added two lifts, two groomers, and more energy-efficient snowmaking equipment. This year, it also is adding several terrain parks at the base of Mount Ellen, with 22 fabricated features — rails, boxes, and wall rides — and, if Mother Nature cooperates, more than 50 snow features by the middle of this month.

"I've decided to make the switch," says John Wilson, 42, of Waitsfield, who grew up skiing at Mad River Glen, a nearby area that has a devoted following and is known as a purist's mountain — it typically doesn't groom its trails or make snow. "If there's a lot of snow, it's a really fun place to ski, but the conditions were so bad last year, I only skied once all season."

Wilson and his son, Tabor, have decided to make Sugarbush their local mountain this year, wooed by the consistently good conditions and the new village. "It's going to be quite a coup," says Wilson. "One of our relatives is the general manager at Mad River Glen."

Contact Kari Bodnarchuk, a Portland, Maine-based freelancer, at travelwriter@karib.us.

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