

Join the Club!

An Annual Telluride Gathering

BY ELIZABETH GUEST

THEY COME BY THE BUSLOAD and make Telluride their weekend home throughout the winter season, courtesy of Alpine Ski Club & Adventure Tours. The club, based out of Phoenix, Arizona, offers ski and snowboard packages for around 2,800 people each year, sending a whopping 900 skiers to Telluride for “Alpine Daze” each January. The 45-year-old organization also has a presence on the mountain, town and village sidewalks, and the local hang-outs with regularly scheduled trips all winter long. “We look at Telluride as our main mountain, and we were one of the first clubs to bring groups there,” says John Henson, who runs Alpine with his partner, Lee Shapiro. “We love the ambiance, the mountain and the way that we’re treated in Telluride.” Almost every weekend, the club has between one and 17 buses traveling here.

Henson and Shapiro actually met on an Alpine Ski Trip in 2004. On discovering the former owner’s plans to sell, they made the commitment—to each other and the business—and purchased the club in 2006. “Since our passions include skiing, travel, adventure, trying new things and helping people, owning Alpine Ski Club is ideal,” says Shapiro. “Our motto is to provide fun, affordable and hassle-free ski and snowboard trips.”

As a wholesaler, Alpine Ski Club offers corporate trips for companies, schools, religious organizations, ski clubs, groups of friends and wedding packages. Besides Telluride, the club has trips to Durango, Wolf Creek, Vail, Taos and more. Now in its ninth year, it also does an August trip to Chile, the most recent in collaboration with the Telluride Adaptive Sports Program. “With one wheelchair, a few amputees, a blind individual and our other members, it was a most memorable trip for all involved,” says Shapiro.

Trip packages are priced reasonably and include transportation, lodging, lift tickets and a sandwich on the way home. In addition, trip captains can guide members on where to ski, eat and shop. The popular “Alpine Daze” trip to Telluride in January is a fun-filled ski and snowboard weekend that also includes a party with a disc jockey, a barbecue on the slopes, and a commemorative t-shirt. “We generally have members ranging from teenagers to seniors on the trips,” says Shapiro. “We have some buses comprised of friends and colleagues as well as people who come by themselves and often match up with other singles.”

Shapiro and Henson love Telluride and enjoy sending their members here as much as they do running a business together. When booking, you’re encouraged to talk directly to either Shapiro or Henson to customize your trip. “That way,” Shapiro advises, “we can make sure they get exactly what they want.” ☺

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