

The Rookies Guide to Ski Instructing at NDVWSC for Canadians

Contents

- Contents..... 1
- Background 2
- Where is it? 2
- When to Travel? 2
- What to Pack? 3
- Getting there and back - Flights..... 4
- Getting there and back – Airport to Condo 4
- Where will you be staying? 5
- Your Schedule for the week..... 5
- Your Schedule Each Day (Monday to Thursday) 6
- How do I know who I am skiing with? 7
- Where to eat 8
- Buying Groceries 9
- Getting Around 9
- The Layout of the Village 10
- Personal Skiing 11
- Teaching Terrain 12
- Opening and Closing Ceremonies 13
- Checking out Equipment..... 13
- Important People 14
- Acronyms to Know 14
- What is a “Boot Loader”?..... 15
- Other Tips..... 15

Background

This document is a collaboration between multiple Canadians who have instructed at the NDVWSC. It explains things we wish we had known the first time we went. Some of them were in the official materials (but not very noticeable), some I was told by old hands before I went, some I wasn't.

Why "For Canadians"? Some of the comments relate to international travel or Canadian weather, most are probably equally applicable to Americans.

Caveat: this document was last updated in 2019. The things described here don't change much from year to year, but any of them could change I guess.

Where is it?

The Village and the Mountain are called Snowmass, Colorado. It's about 10 miles from Aspen, and is on the same Aspen Valley lift pass as 3 other mountains in the area. The four ski areas are Snowmass, Aspen Ajax, Aspen Highlands and Buttermilk. (<https://www.aspensnowmass.com/>)

When to Travel?

You are required to be there Sunday through Friday. So most of the veterans travel in on the first Saturday, and out on the second Saturday.

Many of the Instructors choose to lengthen their stay, flying in on the Friday and out on the Sunday. This allows for some personal skiing on the first & last Saturdays, it also gives extra time to acclimatize to the altitude. This village is at 8,000 ft.; the skiing goes up to 12,000 ft. so altitude adjustment is a real issue.

The WSC only covers accommodation from Saturday night through Friday night, so if you fly in early or leave later you will have to pay for the extra nights. Typically, you can arrange to stay at the same condo complex (or even the same condo) you will be in for the week. You need to arrange this before arriving. Typically, the extra night on the way in will be about \$100.00 per person and we are sometimes given a complementary room on the way out. The Canadians usually try to stay at Top of the Village because they have always looked out for us and the condos are quite nice.

What to Pack?

- You certainly can bring your skis and boots, if you travel with United Airlines your excess baggage fees will be waived.
- Print out and carry a copy of the letter from United saying that baggage fees are waived. Sometimes the check in staff are aware, sometimes not.
- Obviously bring your passport, since you are going to the USA.
- The temperatures are warmer than we are used to in Ontario with daytime highs anywhere from 0C (30F) to +20C (70F). You won't need a 2nd set of long underwear. You should bring any lightweight jackets, pants, gloves etc.
- If you have a portable boot dryer, bring it. With the warm temperatures your feet will sweat more than usual, plus the boots can get wet inside from slush, and you are wearing them 6 days straight.
- Bring a swimming suit and sandals/flip-flops, ending the day in the hot tub is both traditional and therapeutic.
- Bring normal ski wear: jacket, pants, helmet, gloves, goggles, sun glasses.
- Bring sunscreen or plan to get some there (actually there is sufficient free sunscreen if you know where) and use it. SPF infused lip balm should be used as the sun is very intense and sunburned lips hurt.
- Bring a mobile phone, with a plan that allows you to make calls and send text messages. You will receive automated text messages confirming your skier assignment. Text messages are the main way groups in different condos arrange to meet and eat. Phone calls are the best way to contact ski patrol if you need to, and to call your condo's shuttle bus. As of 2019 there is also a NDVWSC app (apple & android) which you can use with mobile data or Wi-Fi. The condos provide free Wi-Fi as does the Westin conference centre.
- You don't need to bring tethers or other adaptive equipment; it is all provided (through some people bring their own favourite tethers & reflective "Guide" jackets anyway).
- If you usually carry tools for adjusting outriggers etc., then do that.
- Whisky? Its nice to end the day with a glass of scotch, but if you buy a bottle duty free on the way out it's tricky to bring the remanding half back a week later. Planning to drink a whole bottle in a week is one solution, another is sharing it with friends. But when everybody has a whole bottle they are trying to share it can get messy ☺.
- A backpack or something similar to keep at the instructors' room.
- At least 2 pairs of shoes, other than ski boots. One to keep at the condo, one to keep at the instructors' room.

Getting there and back - Flights

United Airlines is a major sponsor, they provide us with discounted air fare and waive all baggage fees and limits number of bags that you can bring. The price of air fare will vary by location & year. From Ottawa or Toronto expect to pay \$700 - \$800.

United is a STAR Alliance member so if you are an Aeroplan member you can collect points.

You will fly in and out of Aspen Airport. It's a cool airport with 1 runway cut into the mountains and more private jets than commercial flights.

If you are coming from anywhere in the North East this probably means a connection in Chicago.

A first flight around 6 AM will get you into Snowmass around 3 PM.

When you arrive at the airport you will be greeted by the local Order of the Elks, they give out free sandwiches and drinks

Flying back, you probably have a choice of a 9 AM flight getting home around 3 PM, or a 2PM flight getting home around 10PM. I prefer the later one, and having one lazy morning.

Getting there and back – Airport to Condo

There are at least 3 solutions:

- There are big busses to transport the veterans from the airport to Snowmass. But their mandate is to transport veterans, not ski instructors. If there is at least 1 veteran they will take you for free, but if you land on Friday you might be waiting an hour for 1 veteran to show up. If you take this option, you will probably end up in Snowmass at the Westin.
- There are "shuttle busses", these are really just local taxis. They will take you directly to your condo, but it will cost ~ \$60. If you could put 4 or 5 people in the van that's not too much, but they probably can't take all the skis and luggage for 5 instructors.
- You can take the local bus, the RFTA (Roaring Folks Transit Authority). The airport is on the road between Snowmass and Aspen, busses travel back and forth frequently and are FREE. To catch the bus, you walk through the car park, use the underpass to get to the other side of the road and catch a bus heading east that says Snowmass. They are used to people getting on with big ski bags, it's fine. If you do this, you will end up in Snowmass at the bus station.

There is an alternate option for your bags. There is a shuttle truck for bags from the airport to the WSC. You can give your bags to them at the airport, and catch the bus without your bags. If you do this your bags end up at the WSC baggage room at the Westin (which doubles as the Instructor room) and from there they will be collected by the Condo shuttles and delivered to your Condo a few hours later.

If you took a transportation option which got you to Snowmass, but only as far as the Westin or the bus station you still have to get a few hundred yards uphill to your condo. Walking uphill with your bags is an option, and will certainly make you aware of the effects of altitude. Another is to phone your condo complex and ask them to send a shuttle bus to pick you up, they all have one. (Make sure you have the phone number with you)

Where will you be staying?

The veterans stay at the Westin Hotel. Presumably because it is wheelchair accessible. The ski instructors stay in Condos, typically further up the hill. Usually we end up with 3 instructors in a 2 bedroom condo or 4 ski instructors in a 3-bedroom condo, so there is some room sharing (or someone uses the sofa-bed in the lounge). Some groups decide room allocations based on calling dibs as soon as you arrive, some draw straws, some make the rookies share.

The condo has what you would expect in a condo: kitchen, lounge, coffee maker, fridge... they do have washers and dryers, so you could plan to use those and pack lighter.

Most of the Canadians like The Top of Village Condos, which are the top of the road. In good snow conditions these have ski-in / ski out access to the main slope, so you can ski downhill to your first appointment in the morning.

Most (if not all) of the condo complexes have a hot tub, a pool, a sauna. The hot tub is usually the place to meet other instructors from other cities, through there are some ordinary vacationers too.

Your Schedule for the week

On Sunday there is a mandatory instructors meeting (there may be a choice of attending one in the morning or one in the afternoon). This is usually on the deck outside the instructors' room (called "Alpine Springs") at the Westin.

Rookie instructors get an extended version the briefing, and also a guided tour of the village and the mountain.

Monday to Thursday you teach a 3-hour session in the morning, and a 3-hour session in the afternoon. Then you have an instructors' meeting to close the day.

Friday is a little different, Friday is race day. Each skier gets one run on a race course (there are 2 race courses, one in the village for beginners and one higher up for better skiers). This is expected to be wrapped up by lunch time.

Your Schedule Each Day (Monday to Thursday)

It goes something like this:

6:30 alarm

7:00 outside on skis, skiing downhill to the instructors' room

7:10 check skier assignments & review medical history & previous ski lesson evaluations, using computers in the Instructor room or the IT room. If necessary reserve the sit ski you need for your morning lesson by attaching your bib to it.

7:20 go for breakfast

8:30 first lesson begins

11:30 morning lesson ends. Each student must be checked in and out with their group leader so being back by the end of each session is very important unless arrangements have been specifically made.

11:35 Lunch followed by typing morning skier evaluation into the computer (or vice versa). Only one evaluation is needed per lesson and is usually entered by the "Primary" Instructor.

12:30 afternoon lesson starts

3:30 afternoon lesson ends. Each student must be checked in and out with their group leader so being back by the end of each session is very important unless arrangements have been specifically made

Around 3:30 all the sit skis used that day need to be pushed up the hill from the sit ski Loading Docks to the patio of the Alpine springs room. Many hands make light work.

If you are finished on time an option is to:

- ski down to the main chair,
- get the main lift to mid station,
- ski down to the condo.
- Get the skis & boots off
- change into jeans,
- put a can of beer in your pocket
- walk down to the instructors meeting.

4:00 instructor meeting in the instructor room. Inconspicuous drinking of beer or whisky while listening at the meeting is acceptable. Followed by typing afternoon skier evaluation into the computer (or vice versa). Only one evaluation is needed per lesson and is usually entered by the "Primary" Instructor.

5:00 Hot tub

7:00 go for dinner

10:00 bed

How do I know who I am skiing with?

The veterans are divided into 4 “teams” with names like “Buckskin”, but I’ll just call them A, B, C & D. Only 1 team does downhill skiing at any time, they have a wide variety of other activities during the week like scuba, kayaking, sledge hockey, tours of Aspen and Glenwood Springs, cross country skiing, snowmobiling etc.

So on Monday morning you will be skiing with someone from Team A, Monday afternoon Team B, Tuesday morning Team C and Tuesday afternoon Team D. Then it repeats, except that the morning people get an afternoon session and vice versa, so Wednesday morning is Team B, Wednesday afternoon is Team A etc.

There are computers in the instructor room where you can see your assignments, and also add lesson evaluations. There are additional computers available in the IT room on the mid level of the Conference centre.

You log into to the computers by scanning the bar code your ID badge. If the scanner isn’t working you can also type in the ID number printed in tiny letters on your ID badge next to the barcode.

Every skier and every instructor wear a bib with a number. The instructor color is different from the participant color but they change from year to year. Bib numbers are the easiest way to find your skier and your co-instructor.

Because the computer information contains medical details you are not supposed to write anything other than name & number down and take it out of the room (you may also have to pass an online training course related to data privacy because of this). As of 2019 you can print out a schedule (and carry it around) that has bib & first name + other instructor. But not last name or medical history.

For each lesson (at least each sit ski lesson) there is a primary and a secondary instructor. The primary is expected to make all the decisions, the secondary is a gofer, lifter and may do some tethering to give the primary a rest. As a rookie you will probably be a “second” on most of your lessons. That’s the system, don’t try to fight it.

NB: The assignments on the computer may not appear in chronological order, look carefully which skier is on which days.

NB: Assignments do change, for various reasons. So it’s best to check the computers once a day. Plus, there is a tent with a big whiteboard which does last minute reassignments and has the final say. This tent also tends to have free sun screen if you need some.

If you do not have an assignment for a session you are expected to turn up, let the tent know you are there as a spare, there are always veterans looking get in extra skiing, so you will get assigned.

Where to eat

You get a book of tickets from Sunday to Saturday morning with a ticket for breakfast, one for lunch and one for dinner. Each ticket is for a specific day and time, they aren't interchangeable. They have a list of restaurants on each ticket who will honor them. These are not replaceable if lost because they are as good as cash, many instructors leave the book in their room and only carry their tickets for 1 day at a time.

Sunday afternoon and Friday afternoon we get "A taste of Snowmass", which is a little different. Each of the restaurants in the mall set up an outside table with 1 or 2 dishes. You get 3 tickets, 2 for entrée and 1 for dessert, which are valid at any of the tables. Remember that this is your food for lunch and dinner, so many instructors get their second entrée as something like a Philly cheesesteak hoagie, to go, and reheat it later.

Some of my favourite places (which are on the tickets)

- Breakfast – Snowmass Kitchen. This is the name of the main restaurant at the Westin. They serve a standard hotel bacon and eggs buffet. As a buffet it's quicker than some of the alternatives, and it is all you can eat.
- Lunch – The Stew pot – This is located on the main mall level; the name is pretty self explanatory. This is also quick, because the soups and stews are pre-cooked.
- Lunch – The Elks Camp. Not to be confused with "Elk Camp" which is an area of the mountain, The Elk's Camp is an outdoor barbecue set up by the local order of the elks (the same people who met you at the airport). It is set up right at the top of the road, just above the Top of Village Condos. It is the start & end point for the cross country skiing and snow shoeing activities, but it is also accessible from the main run to the village. This is a great outdoor location on a nice day and it's free (no ticket needed). Your schedule can be to drop off your morning skier, ski down to the main chair, up to mid station, and down the blues to the elk camp, then eat, then ski down to pick up the afternoon lesson. If you eat here, you end up with an unused lunch ticket. That can be used for an afternoon snack at somewhere like The Ranger Station (best variety of craft beers). Sometimes they will take tickets for beer, sometimes not, but they will take them for nachos.
- Dinner – The Edge. This is the Restaurant at the Timberline Condos, one step downhill from The Top of the Village. The tickets have a nominal value around \$20, most places will give you a main course. The Edge will give you a full 3 course meal, I think they see it is their contribution to supporting the WSC. It's a small restaurant so reservations are usually needed, at least 3 hours in advance.
- Dinner – Venga Venga – at the ski run end of the mall, surprisingly good Mexican food. Better than anything I've had in Canada

Buying Groceries

How much will you need? Remember you will have food tickets Sunday – Saturday morning. But I like to have some chips, cheese, ham etc. to snack on. Plus, if you do arrive a day early or leave late a frozen pizza could save you a lot of money vs eating out.

Where to go: The main mall is useless, it's aimed at tourists and just has ski wear shops and restaurants. There is another mall further downhill called "The Market Mall" That has a supermarket and a beer/wine/liquor store.

How to get there: You could ask the condo shuttle bus to take you there. Or you could get a local bus. All the little blue short busses are free. Number 5 goes from Top of Village all the way to the Market Mall, and back.

What to get: If you're buying beer, I would recommend buying it in cans rather than bottles. The condos have a no-glass policy around the pool and hot tub, but they are fine with you drinking beer from cans in the hot tub. Plus, if you are putting a beer in your pocket to take to the instructors' meeting then a can is safer than bottle.

If you are buying coffee check whether the condo has provided filters or buy some. You will probably not finish a packet of coffee or a packet of filters in a week, but having a coffee at 6:30 is priceless.

Getting Around

You can get up and down the village on foot, nothing is very far, but it is tiring.

The condos have shuttle buses which you can ask to take you somewhere and you can call to pick you up and take you back. It's good to pick up a card with their phone number on it when you arrive, or even google it and put it in your phone before you go.

Remember the local blue busses are also free. Some go higher than others, route 5 goes to the Top of village.

The Layout of the Village

The village is built along the side of the main ski run, with one road that goes up the hill. As you look up the hill the hotels and condos are to the left of the road, with the ski run to their left. To the right of the road is a series of car parks. So it makes sense to talk about the locations like the steps of a ladder.

The most important level is the Mall; this is a pedestrianised short street running from the ski hill to the road. Most of the restaurants are here. The entrance to the ski run at this level is where the stand up ski lessons start & end.

At the road end of the mall is the bus station, but this is also split into two levels. The upper level is the longer distance busses, to the airport, Aspen etc. The lower level has the local blue busses which go the market mall, the condos etc. Note that both the local and longer distance busses are free. Many instructors use this to check out the town of Aspen or one of the other Aspen ski hills on Saturday or Sunday.

But the mall is not at the bottom of the skiing, the run continues a few hundred yards further down. Right at the bottom is another pedestrianised area with more bars and restaurants, but the WSC doesn't use it much. There is a small bubble lift called Skittles which runs from the base up to the mall, you can ride it with or without skis, in either direction.

The basement of the Westin is at the mall level, and contains the Snowmass Kitchen. But the main entrance to the Westin is one level up. This is where the conference centre is for the opening & closing ceremonies (and events in between like the Volunteer appreciation night). The WSC check in is also here. This is on Elbert lane if you are walking in from the road.

Next to the Westin entrance is "the Breezeway" which allows access through the Westin complex to the ski slopes. This is where the sit ski lesson start & end, using a set of boards & carpet laid on the snow called The Loading Docks.

Two levels above that is the instructors' room (officially the "Alpine Springs" room) where the daily meetings are held and where the computers are. This is on Fall Lane if you are walking in from the road. Outside this room is a patio where the sit skis are kept overnight. Also on this level is the big truck where things like tethers & outriggers can be checked out.

Above that are the condos, with the Top of the Village at the end of the road.

Below the lower mall it gets more complex, with roads going in different directions, but there is 1 main road going down the valley to meet the highway, and the Market Mall is just off that road, near the town hall. & behind a Conoco gas station.

Personal Skiing

By which I mean skiing for fun, without giving a lesson.

There is really no time for this Monday-Thursday. You could ski Friday afternoon, but usually the instructors are feeling weary and prefer to hang out at a Taste of Snowmass eating and drinking.

You will be given an electronic lift pass loaded with 6 days, to cover Sunday through Friday. So if you go personal skiing on either Saturday you may have to pay for it. The Aspen ski company has a location on the mall, next to Venga Venga, where they sell tickets and can check a pass and tell you how many days are left on it.

Your pass is valid at all 4 Aspen Hills. They are within about half an hour by Bus. So trying one of them, or all of them, on the first or last Saturday is an option.

- Aspen Highlands. This is mostly black and double black, for experts only, and the chair lift doesn't go all the way up, you are expected to "Hike the Bowl" before skiing it. I don't have the strength for that after a week of tethering.
- Buttermilk. Known for the X games with lots of pipes and parks. Typically, this is the first to close for the season, it may already be closed before you arrive
- Aspen Ajax. This is the original Aspen ski area which has lifts right in Aspen town. It's not as big as Snowmass but is pretty good and varied.

Snowmass itself has a big area and wide variety

(https://www.aspensnowmass.com/~media/aspensnowmass/trail-maps/2015_snowmass_winter_high.ashx)

Most people want to get to the top. This takes 2 chairs and a poma from the village. You go up the village chair to the top, ski down through Max Park to the Big Burn chair and take that up. The Cirque Poma (which is the last step) doesn't open till 10 am, and usually has lines until 10:15. Once you get there everyone gets a picture next to the sign which shows the altitude. You can come down via 1 blue run "Rocky Mountain High" which is amazing, above the tree line and wide open. Alternatively, you can go past the fence & sign which says "Experts only" and come down a double black somewhere else. Actually there is an escape route, if you just keep following the high alpine traverse run, without diving off left or right, it comes around to the High Alpine area and you can come down a single black, or even a blue.

One area worth talking about is Elk Camp. This is an area of the mountain on the far left of the ski map, the far side from the Snowmass village. It has its own chair lift, with beautiful views from the top of the "Maroon Bells". And a choice of half a dozen blue runs. These are big open cruisers with a few trees. They are usually well groomed and you can scream down them at full speed, carving big wide turns, feeling like a ski god. At least that's what I do.

Teaching Terrain

This should be covered in your mountain tour, but repetition can't hurt. You can use any area of the mountain to teach, but most of the veterans are beginners, so most teaching takes place on green runs.

But still there are choices:

- The mostly obvious loop is to use the main Village Express chair to mid station and then come down the easiest trail, called Lunch Line, then Dawdler. Dawdler itself splits in two, you can take Dawdler Cat Track, which is quite flat, but narrow; or you can take Dawdler Headwall. If you've tethered at Edelweiss on "the pitch" or at Calabogie on the steep part of K & P then Dawdler headwall isn't steeper than you are used to, and ridiculously wide. Dawdler is very sunny and can get slushy in the afternoon, an alternative is to take the next run over, called Scooper, which is a bit narrower and more shaded. The downside of Scooper is that there is a kid's day camp area near the bottom that you might not want to plough through. An alternate to that is to take the top half of Scooper then go right along the road and down the bottom half of Hal's Hollow, officially blue but hugely wide and open.
- An option for stand up lessons is Assay Hill. It's a short green run with its own lift half way along the Elk Camp Gondola ride. It exists mainly to give access to the hill from an area of hotels and condos, it's not used much during the day
- A third option is the Elk Camp Meadows area. This is an official bunny hill area with 2 magic carpet rides, a slow chair lift, and very flat terrain. It takes a while to get there, but is the best place for a "never ever" first lesson.

Opening and Closing Ceremonies

There are Opening Ceremonies on Sunday night and Closing Ceremonies on Friday night. These take place at the Conference Center attached to the Westin. The ceremonies last about an hour, but you probably need to arrive half an hour before to get decent seat and it will take half an hour to get out.

The speeches are pretty short and sometimes quite moving. There is some flag waving, pledging allegiance etc., which is a little odd as a Canadian (since the flag in question is the Stars & Stripes), usually we choose to stand and be respectful but not recite the words, everyone seems OK with that.

Overall we would recommend going, it's a good chance to see the scale of the overall event, and to meet both veterans and non ski instructor volunteers. Every attendee gets a fleece vest; they are color coded by role. Ski Instructor is grey, find out what the others are.

The closing ceremonies are more emotional. They always include a summary video (something like <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsD-ZU3y0iY> but longer, and with a blooper section), and awards including best ski instructor.

Checking out Equipment

Every skier and instructor must wear a helmet. You can check out a Helmet for your skier at a tent where the lessons start (one in the stand up area, one in the sit ski loading docks area). You can also check out small things like VI Guide bibs and goggles here. They will take your bib number and you must bring them back yourself (not your skier or your co-instructor)

There is a big truck trailer parked outside the instructor room. This is where you can check out bigger items, like tethers and outriggers. They will take your bib number and you must bring them back yourself (not your skier or your co-instructor).

The exception to this is sit skis. The sit skis live overnight on the patio outside the instructor room There are lots of them, and the system is that you just grab one and use it. But if you need something specific, like a Mountain Man with an XL seat, or a specific brand of monoski you might want to reserve it. Much like loungers on a beach, you reserve it by putting something obvious on it. But things change a little over the day.

- This starts around 7 AM, where people reserve a sit ski while they are on the patio outside the instructors room by putting their bib or their skis on it.
- Around 8AM instructors push the sit skis they want down to the loading docks, at this time any sit ski down at the docks area has been reserved because somebody just pushed it down.
- After the morning lesson the used sit skis are left at the docks level and are open to all for afternoon use. Again you can reserve them by putting your skis or bib on them.
- At the end of the day the skit skis are pushed uphill to the patio and locked together overnight. It's a breach of etiquette to reserve a sit ski for more than a day.

The exception to the exception is that every year Matt has some new equipment which is special to him, and you have to have a conversation directly with him to get it. This year it was Monique Monoskis.

Important People

People are often referred to by their first name. In principle this is really about roles and the people in these roles could change. But they don't seem to change much.

- Teresa – Teresa Park (of the VA) is the director of the NDVWSC, and hence is the central point of the whole thing. You will see her name mostly in emails about applying as a volunteer instructor.
- Trina – Trina Higgins (of United Airlines) is the manager of the team which organizes our flights. If your flight booking is simple you may not deal with her directly. If there are problems she will get involved.
- Wayne – Wayne Grapes chairs the daily instructor meetings. He has a title like Instructor Coordinator.
- Chris – Chris Werhane (of Adaptive Adventures) is the safety officer, and generally regarded as the silverback / alpha instructor. If you have any kind of medical issue yourself or with your skier you need to call him. Outside the WSC he runs a company called Adaptive Adventures and is always doing some adaptive sports event somewhere.
- Matt – Matt Lucas (of the VA) is in charge of all the equipment, including the equipment you can check out and back in. If you don't check it back in, or mistreat it, he will hound you.
- Kim – Kim Goodrich is in charge of all their skier – instructor scheduling. You won't see her much at the assignment boards though because she has to worry about stand up & sit ski assignments. She has assistants who manage each of those boards.

Acronyms to Know

What would the military be without acronyms? Here are some you might hear.

- VA – Veterans Affairs. A branch of the US government responsible for looking after military veterans. Because of the US system of private health care, the VA runs hospitals and is one of the biggest providers of health care in the US.
- DAV – Disabled American Veterans. This is not a government organization, it is a pressure group formed by veterans to lobby for better treatment for disabled veterans. The VA & the DAV don't always get along, but they do as the WSC
- HIPAA - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. From the VA's perspective the WSC is essentially a therapy session for the veterans, and as ski instructors our role is similar to something like a physiotherapist. As such the information on our participants is subject to HIPAA privacy rules which are very stringent. Essentially you can't have personal identification information or medial information on any non secure device, which includes pieces of paper and your phone. In 2019 it was clarified that photos, bib numbers and first names are OK. But not surnames, medical information or skiing history.
- RFTA – Roaring Forks Transport Authority. They run the busses between Snowmass, Aspen and the airport, which are free.
- WSC – see NDVWSC
- NDVWSC – National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. This event. There is also a summer equivalent.

What is a “Boot Loader”?

At the end of a tethering run you arrive at the chair lift, and there is a bunch of stuff that needs to be done to get ready to go up the chair. You need to:

- Put away the tethers
- Remove a pin or flip a switch and lift the sit ski into the loading position (depending on the sit ski model)
- Check if your skier needs a drink or sun screen
- Possibly get a drink or some sun screen yourself
- Push the sit ski around to get in position for the chair lift
- Get the safety strap ready.
- Possibly remove the fixed outriggers.

Wouldn't it be nice if someone else did all that stuff for you? That's what “Boot Loaders” do. They are called boot loaders because they wear boots (rather than skis) and they help load. They are volunteers and wonderful people, show them some love.

There are always Boot Loaders at the main village chair. Depending on weather and other things there might be Boot Loaders stationed at other lifts, this will be discussed at the daily instructors meeting.

Other Tips

Race day has a fancy dress theme. Its usually mentioned very briefly in the official instructions. Last year the theme was super heroes, the year before Rock Stars. Some people participate, some don't. If you want to participate remember that your costume has to fit over your ski wear including your helmet & boots.

You can leave a bag at the instructor's room during the day and overnight. It can be a good place to leave an extra layer of clothes, a spare pair of gloves, sunscreen etc. I usually leave a pair of shoes there so I can ski down in the morning, and change into shoes to go for breakfast, or lunch.