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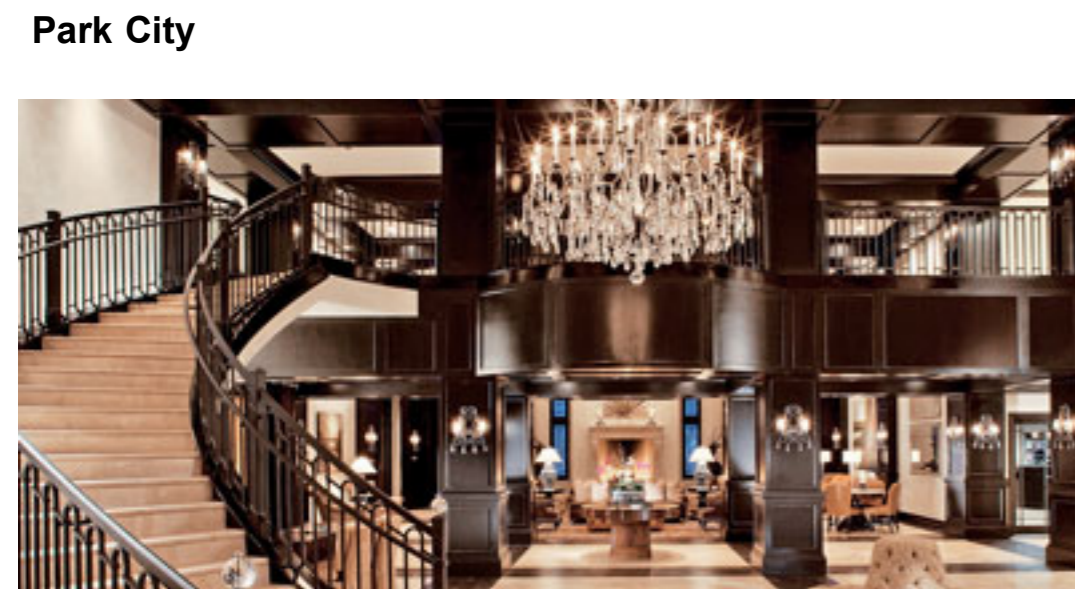
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Lifestyle Feature Head 2 Head

Forbes Life Staff, 12.03.10, 06:00 PM EST ForbesLife Magazine dated December 20, 2010

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Park City



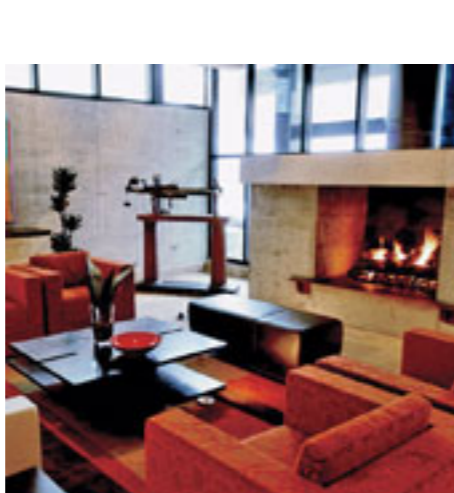
The lobby of the new Waldorf.

Here's what Park City does not have: the cowboy vibe of Jackson Hole, the attitude of Aspen, or the slickness of Vail. What this former 19th-century mining town, spectacularly set at 7,000 feet, does have is a genuine, family-welcoming feel--this may be the friendliest ski town in the United States. Also one of the easiest: Stay downtown and you can walk to several dozen restaurants and to the lifts of Park City Mountain Resort, a vast mountain with seven peaks and nine bowls (test your mettle against hard-core locals and tackle the backcountry-style Pinecone Ridge). And Park City offers what neighboring Deer Valley does not allow: snowboarding. The half-pipes and jumps on this beast are where local pros like Olympian Shaun White--and your moody 15-year-old--can throw down some serious fun.

Main Street can seem something like an upscale mall, but this is also the artsy heart of the legendary Sundance Film Festival, centered on the funky Art Deco Egyptian Theatre. For ten days every January (the 20th to 30th in 2011), the PIBs--People in Black, as the locals tag them--arrive from New York and L.A. for the schmoozing, the films, and the deals. Unless you're in the industry, these are precisely the pricey and crowded days to avoid.

The rest of the year, the appeal is that Park City is not a wealth cocoon like Deer Valley but a real living, breathing town, and one with the area's best array of dining and nightlife. Grab a table at Shabu, boisterous as an après-ski bar and serving inventive Pan-Asian fare like a Death Roll of soft-shell crab, or Black Angus rib eye given the Thai treatment. Or try the newly opened High West Distillery and Saloon, housed in a former stable and a Victorian home--you can thank Utah's recently relaxed liquor laws for allowing High West to produce small-batch whiskeys like Rendezvous Rye, which it pairs with smoked dry-rubbed tri-tip steak.

The coolest beds in Park City can be found at the 33-suite Sky Lodge, ground zero for the hip set and just a block from the main chairlift. Rooms here have a loftlike feel, and there's a panoramic bar and the best spa in town, with Japanese wooden soaking tubs. The more traditional crowd sleeps at the Washington School Inn, a handsome 19th-century limestone schoolhouse. There are 15 rooms of Victoriana updated with 21st-century creature comforts.



Comfortably clubby, the Hotel Park City lies just outside the historic center and has a heated outdoor pool, an eight-room spa, and 100 suites with leather chairs and dark wood paneling--the ski-lodge look upgraded. More of a "scene" is the recently opened 175-room Waldorf Astoria Park City, four miles from town, with its Ralph Lauren--y interior and a Golden Door Spa.

At a time when flash, attitude, and coolness are in oversupply on and off the slopes, they don't matter much in Park City. Wear last year's Bogner, and ski on those sticks you've had for years. There's a different level of comfort here. --EVERETT POTTER

AT A GLANCE

- General Information: 800-222-7275, parkcitymountain.com
Main Street Information: righthonmain.org
The Sky Lodge: \$900-\$5,400. 888-876-2525, theskylodge.com
Washington School Inn: \$185-\$690. 800-824-1672, washingtonschoolinn.com
Hotel Park City: \$299-\$999. 888-999-0098, hotelparkcity.com
Waldorf Astoria Park City: \$299-\$3,049. 800-WALDORF, waldorfastoria.com/parkcity

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