

A skier in a bright orange jacket and red hat is skiing through a snowy forest of tall, thin trees. The skier is in the lower right quadrant, leaving a trail of snow behind them. The trees are light-colored and densely packed, creating a vertical pattern. The sky is bright and overcast.

THE COOL KIDS

**SUFFERING A GAY CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE,
TROY THOMSON MAKES A LIFE CHANGING
DECISION – BUT NOT BEFORE RECONNECTING WITH
HIS MOJO AT GAY SKI WEEK, ELEVATION, UTAH.**



What happens on a trip to New York City when you start crying in the middle of Saks Fifth Avenue? Well, you begin to feel better when the sexy man from the Tom Ford counter offers consolation and you start spilling your guts to him about how happy you are in New York. Then you realise what a complete fool you must look and you turn in your new YSL Johnny boots to run, but only after first buying the Tom Ford perfume in hopes the sexy man will ask you on a date. But why would he? He's properly thinking to himself, who is this crazy Aussie?

Walking back to my hotel, it dawns on me that I'm totally unhappy with my life back home in Sydney. Don't get me wrong, I have a great business, national radio show and bestselling books, but I'm missing something. That perfect man in my life - is there such a thing? Strutting down the street like John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*, I make the decision there and then that I've had enough. I'm going back home, selling everything and moving to New York City.

So the journey begins - trying to find happiness and that perfect someone. Or will it be like it is in Sydney? Most of my friends think I'm the most homophobic gay man around, and I don't get it. I'm so totally gay but I have few gay friends. Sure, I know a lot but very few I call friends. I need to find that place where I feel like I can be myself and fit in.

Here I am, one year on. I've sold everything, got a three-year O1 visa and I'm off. I need

to throw myself into the gay social scene, but how? I need to find something and somewhere I know I can hold my own. Found it - before I settle in New York, I'm going to Park City, Utah, to be part of the Gay Ski Week. I have all the gear and I'm pretty good on the slopes so why not start my journey towards becoming happy right here?

Park City takes your breath away. Although famous for the skiing, that's far from the total picture. The three distinct Park City resorts, the Utah Olympic Park and the Main Street district offer an astonishing array of activities for everyone. At any given time during your winter stay, you can experience major sporting events, see independent films at Sundance Film Festival, catch a play or take a gallery stroll on historic Main Street. Sounds cozy, doesn't it?

At the top of my list, however, is the First Welcome Party of Elevation Utah, the 3rd

annual Park City Gay Ski Week. The four-day event consists of daily après-ski and evening parties with both local and national DJs. I'm feeling very nervous about going on my own! Will I feel like I'm one of the cool guys, or will I end up in the corner talking to the straights? Oh hold on, I'll take a couple shots of my new favorite drink, a cinnamon infused whisky called *Fireball*.

I walk up the stairs and find myself looking at a hot guy with a tight bum and welcoming smile. I introduce myself and learn his name is Tom Whitman and his company produces Elevation Utah. He has been working in marketing, promotion and event production for almost 20 years and his background is in building brands within the gay community.

Damn, I thought he was going to be my conquest for the night, but this could cloud my judgment for the parties and I need to be available for the other gorgeous snow bunnies I see around the room. It's only 4pm and only the first party of the week. Steady on Troy, pace yourself.

I was surprised at the relaxed atmosphere and by such a diverse group of men. I could feel myself getting a little pissed with my new friends. This party was to finish at 7pm and the dance party was from 9pm to 2am, with this same schedule continuing over the next several days. There's also a bus trip to Salt Lake City on Friday night for a dance party with an influx of local (and may I say cute) boys.

After four days of sex, skiing, and far too many fireballs, I needed another holiday! It was bloody exhausting but so much fun and I really did feel like one of the cool kids. Oh, by the way, I'm feeling a little more gay...

Next stop, New York City. ★





JK Place, Capri – gorgeous pool and luxuriously appointed rooms capture the jet-set glamour of the '50s; local staples, stuffed olives and the island's speciality, limoncello.





TALKING TO THE SNOW KING ELEVATION BOSS, TOM WHITMAN



DNA: Why did you choose Park City Utah to be your 2nd venue for your Elevation Utah Gay Ski Week parties?

Tom Whitman: After Mammoth Gay Ski Week, I did quite a bit of research looking at what world class resorts did not have

a successful gay ski week, which resorts had venues able to support a ski week as it grows, and which resorts were easy to access from all over the country. Park City came out on top on all the criteria. Plus, everyone knows Utah has the best snow in the world.

This is your 3rd year now. What kind of feedback do you get and why do you feel it works?

Everyone has been really positive and we have people coming back year after year. Elevation Utah is successful because Park City is the epitome of what a ski town should be - great restaurants, quaint vibe, accommodations that range from budget to luxury, the best snow - and because I take producing my ski weeks seriously. I want Elevation Utah to be in the best venues; I want the best Djs; I want cute guys from all over the country, and I want everyone to rave about it when they go home.

Everyone was very welcoming. Do others tell you that? Is this something you try to encourage?

To me, that friendly, gregarious vibe is the most important element of my ski weeks. I write a welcome letter in the Elevation Guide and the one thing I say every year is that the reason we love gay ski weeks is that everyone loses the attitude. You meet tons of people and make new friends that will last a lifetime. I encourage people to introduce themselves to people they don't know and it works.

Utah is well-known as the Mormon state. Can you tell us how locals and businesses feel about having a gay event here?

When I first scouted Park City, I asked people what they thought of a gay ski week in their hometown. Without exception, everyone was excited and supportive. When I asked venue managers or owners, many of them either told me they were gay or that they couldn't wait to invite their gay friends. Park City is very liberal, even compared to places in much less conservative states.

What are your top five tips to having a great Elevation Utah?

1. Leave the big city attitude at sea level. Introduce yourself to new people.
2. Come with your friends, but be open to making new ones.
If you see someone hanging out on their own, say hello and buy them a drink.
3. Drink water and watch your alcohol intake. High altitudes make liquor hit your system much harder.
4. Show up at après-ski in your ski or snowboarding clothes. You don't need to primp and fix your hair until the nighttime party.
5. Say hello to me and my staff. We're here to make sure you have a great time.

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