



ESCAPE TO THE MOUNTAINS

By Mike Ciriaco

Ironically, people from all over the United States flock to SoCal for its temperate climate. Then, after a year of no snow, come January they kvetch, "It doesn't really feel like winter." Fortunately for these bellyachers, fresh powder is a mere road trip away. This season, escape to one of the many LGBT-friendly ski and snowboarding events close to Los Angeles.

Telluride Gay Ski Week

Feb. 22 - March 3
telluridegayskiweek.com

Produced by Dallas-based Straightout Media & Marketing, Telluride's Gay Ski Week has recently merited the distinction of "#1 Gay Ski Week in the U.S.A." by *gay.com*. In celebration of its 10th anniversary, the ski week has been extended for 10 full days of LGBT skiing and snowboarding. During the day, the 13,000-foot peaks of the San Juan Mountains provide vacationers with majestic slopes to conquer, while the quaint hamlets of Telluride and Mountain Village offer unpretentious hospitality. And once the sun sets over those snowcapped ridges, the real fun begins.

Mountain nights are always better with hot cocoa, and by that I mean fabulous drag darling Coco Peru, who performs in a special one-night engagement on Feb. 26. Other notables include Reichen Lehmkuhl, DJs Casey Alva and Brandon Moses and many other gay fan favorites.

Highlights of the 10-day celebration include an Oscar Watch Bar Party at Smak in Mountain Village on Feb. 24, the "10 Amazing Years" Shot Party hosted by Reichen on Feb. 25, the Annual White Night Party on Feb. 28, a Telluride AIDS Benefit event on March 2 and the Farewell Après Ski event on March 3.

Elevation: Mammoth

March 13-17
tomwhitmanpresents.com

Eleven years ago, gay nightlife maestro Tom Whitman conceived of Elevation: Mammoth as a fun winter alternative to the predictable WeHo club scene. Now, over a decade later, thousands of LGBT skiers and boarders flock to Mammoth Lake for this extended weekend to crush fresh powder on the slopes. While the peaks provide an exhilarating adrenaline rush during the day, Whitman has plenty planned to keep your heart racing all through the night. Elevation veteran DJs Josh Peace, Brynn Taylor and DJ Pornstar return to heat up those chilly winter evenings.

Not-to-be-missed events include the Welcome Après Ski event on March 13 and Snow Plow later that night, Secret Service North on March 14, "The Party @ 10,000 Feet" with DJ Drew G on March 15, Beach Party Bingo Après Ski and Avalanche on March 16 and a Mexican Leprechaun St. Patty's Day Brunch.

Elevation: Utah

Feb. 21-24
utahgayski.com

Eager for some Elevation ski action, but can't wait until March? Luckily there's Elevation: Utah, the baby brother to Whitman's Mammoth blowout. Back for its third year at Park City, renowned for hosting the annual Sundance Film Festival, this gay ski weekend is expected to draw the same casual, unpretentious, fun-loving crowd associated with the Tom Whitman brand. Fans of the Mammoth iteration can expect the familiar schedule of skiing/boarding all day and hardcore partying come nightfall, complete with Elevation's signature daily *après ski* gatherings. Whitman regular DJ Josh Peace returns to the turntables, setting the laidback vibe, and is joined by the talented Casey Alva, Harry Cross Jr. and Chris B.

Elevation: Utah events include a Welcome Après Ski with DJ Josh Peace on Feb. 21, a Friday night event with Peace and DJ Harry Cross Jr. at Jam Salt Lake City on Feb. 22 and Cherry Pop Park City with DJ Casey Alva on Feb. 23.