

Get Your Fix.



When the snow offerings are meager at the resort and you are tired of spending hours earning a few turns, one thing is sure to deliver: the cat trip. But with so many options here in Colorado, what's a powder hound to do? *Elevation Outdoors'* cat guide will help you sniff out the best guides and terrain.

by CASEY FLYNN

MONARCH SNOWCAT TOURS

skimonarch.com

Thanks to explosive-controlled steeps and topography that funnels snow from all directions, MST is built for the steep-and-deep skier.

VERT IN A DAY 9,000-10,800 feet

TERRAIN 1,000 acres

SNOW 350 inches

VIBE The expert terrain draws a loyal crowd of tenacious shredders back year after year.

GUIDES Lead guide and manager Gail Bindner has been guiding with MST for 20 years and is AIARE Level 3 certified.

COST \$210-\$275, Private Cat \$2,300-\$3,000.

BONUS With tree-covered, snow-catching slopes on all aspects, a wind event is as good as a storm for finding freshies.

ASPEN MOUNTAIN POWDER TOURS

aspensnowmass.com

The perfect-pitch slopes are ideal for strong skiers looking to hone their deep-snow turns.

VERT IN A DAY 10,000 feet

TERRAIN 1,200 acres

SNOW 300 inches

VIBE Relaxed and confident guides let you focus on what you're there for... fresh tracks.

GUIDES Guide and manager Bob Perlmutter has been skiing, patrolling and guiding the Aspen area for over 30 years.

COST Individual \$410, Private Cat (12 seats) \$4,320.

BONUS A deluxe lunch of hot soup, fresh salad, fruit and wine bring Aspen-caliber dining to the backcountry.

KEYSTONE ADVENTURE TOURS

keystoneresort.com

Explore trees, chutes and spacious faces in Independence, Bergman and Erickson Bowls above Keystone Resort.

VERT IN A DAY 8-13 runs, with a focus on enjoyment rather than vertical.

TERRAIN 832 acres

SNOW 235 inches

VIBE Internationals and Front Range locals alike congregate to take advantage of the easy access and low price.

GUIDES All guides have patrolling backgrounds, WFR/OEC and AIARE Level 1 training.

COST Individual \$240 (Half-day \$135), Private Cat (12 seats) \$2,640. Includes powder skis. The Stand-by Guided Tour Pass gives you 5 trips for \$500—call in the day before for openings.

BONUS Cat tours are sit-ski accessible.

POWDER ADDICTION

powderaddiction.com

Less than an hour from Denver, wide-open bowls and sub-alpine glades await on Jones Pass.

VERT IN A DAY 8,000-14,000 feet

TERRAIN 2,600 acres

SNOW 350 inches

VIBE Stoke is high for fresh snow—safety talks and lunch take place on the cat to maximize turns.

GUIDES "Ski Boss" Jamie Wolter is an American Avalanche Association certified instructor and has been teaching avalanche education for twenty years.

COST Individual \$350-400, Private Cat (12 seats) \$3,400-4,000. Includes powder skis.

BONUS Two beers on the house and a pro-shot slideshow await at the end of the day.

CHICAGO RIDGE SNOWCAT TOURS

skicooper.com

Rack up the most vertical in the state while diving into trees and glades that hold snow long after a storm has passed.

VERT IN A DAY 15,000-18,000 feet

TERRAIN 2,460 acres

SNOW 260 inches

VIBE A light-hearted atmosphere makes this a great area to take your friends and family on their first cat-skiing trip.

GUIDES All guides are OEC or EMT and AIARE Level 1, and several have 20+ years of experience with CRST.

COST Individual \$275. Private Cat (12 seats) \$2,800.

BONUS Ski off the Continental Divide at 12,600 feet where the 10th Mountain Division troops trained.

VAIL POWDER GUIDES

vailsnowcat.com

Link 200 turns down a 2,000-foot bowl, drop cliffs in the pillow-top area or ski steep trees on deep days atop Vail Pass.

VERT IN A DAY 9,800-14,700 feet

TERRAIN 3,500 acres

SNOW 400 inches

VIBE VPG provides empowered powder with confidence-boosting support and end-of-day hugs.

GUIDES Jenna and Ben Bartosz have been guiding at Vail Pass for a combined 28 years. They are both AIARE Level 3 certified and WFR trained.

COST Individual \$400, Private Cat (12 seats) \$4,400. Includes powder skis.

BONUS VPG has a high standard of backcountry etiquette and is super-involved in the backcountry skiing community.

PURRRRRR: VAIL POWDER GUIDES
WILL GET YOUR MOTOR RUNNING!



TOPHER DONAHUE

SILVERTON POWDERCATS

snowcat-powder.com

Above Molas Pass, seek out the wide-open love of 1,300-foot The Deviant, or 39-degree, sparsely-treed Big Mo.

VERT IN A DAY 10,000-14,000 feet

TERRAIN 4,000 acres

SNOW 400 inches

VIBE Catering to both green powderhounds and seasoned rippers, SP can split the group to tackle different lines and meet back up at the cat.

GUIDES Lead guides and owners Todd Brodbeck and Jon Krueger are both EMTs and have been in the cat-skiing industry for 16 years.

COST Individual \$335, Private Cat (10 seats) \$3,000.

BONUS Ski right down to the car on the final run.

STEAMBOAT POWDER CATS

steamboatpowdercats.com

Below-timberline spruce forests and long, gladed runs keep snow fluffy for weeks on Buffalo Pass.

VERT IN A DAY 8,000-14,000 feet

TERRAIN 10,000 acres

SNOW 500 inches

VIBE Three ability levels split between cats let you ski at your own pace without worry of waiting on or holding up others.

GUIDES All SPC guides are certified OEC and CPR, and many have ten years experience with SPC.

COST Individual \$375-450, Private Cat (12 seats) \$3,750-\$4,500. Includes powder skis or snowboard.

BONUS Go full-moon powder skiing in a private cat and enjoy a 3-course dinner afterward in SPC's mid-mountain cabin for \$3,000.

SAN JUAN SNOWCAT

sanjuansnowcat.com

If you're jonesing for big cornices and alpine ridges then SJS is your ticket to the high country, with cat access all the way up to 13,250 feet.

VERT IN A DAY 8,000-18,000 feet

TERRAIN 35,000 acres

SNOW 400 inches

VIBE Based out of Creede, an old mining town in the "Forgotten" San Juans, everything about SJS is remote. You're on the frontier when you ski here.

GUIDES All guides have CPR, basic first aid and AIARE Level 1 training.

COST Individual \$250, Private Cat (12 seats) \$2,500.

BONUS The owner, Bob Vita, makes a mean high-altitude pizza.

CS IRWIN

irwincolorado.com

Colorado's newest cat-ski operation launches you into the deep at Irwin—near Crested Butte - which rakes in more snow than any other operation in the Centennial state.

VERT IN A DAY 10,000-15,000 feet

TERRAIN 1,000 acres

SNOW 600 inches

VIBE One word: luxury. Leather seats, surround sound and a flatscreen TV... in the cat.

GUIDES Alan Bernholtz, Director of Mountain Operations, has been a AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guide for 13 years and is a AIARE Level 3 Avalanche Instructor.

COST Individual \$500, Private Cat (10 seats) \$4,500. Includes powder skis or snowboard.

BONUS Hit it after Crested Butte Ski Area closes when prices drop to \$350/3,000.

SAN JUAN SKI COMPANY

sanjuanski.com

Storms from the southwest regularly dump 20-30 inches onto SJSC's expansive terrain of 45-degree gullies, spines, trees and flutes.

VERT IN A DAY 10,000-15,000 feet

TERRAIN 36,000 acres

SNOW 300 inches

VIBE Catering to expert skiers, the cats are usually packed with hard-charging powder fiends looking for steep and extreme lines.

GUIDES Lead guide and owner Bob Rule has run SJSC for 15 years and is AIARE Level 3 certified.

COST Individual \$350, Private Cat (12 seats) \$3,500. Includes powder skis or snowboard. Ask about their "hot seat" e-mail list for last minute openings at \$175.

BONUS There are guaranteed fresh tracks or you get a full refund.

PARK CITY POWDER CATS (UTAH)

pccats.com

Enjoy 3,000-foot lines down wind-protected ridges and bowls in Utah's Uinta Mountains, which need less snow for good coverage than the nearby (and popular) Wasatch.

VERT IN A DAY 8,000-12,000 feet

TERRAIN 46,000 acres

SNOW 500 inches

VIBE: Exclusive access to the privately-owned land means sole rights to snow and seclusion.

GUIDES All guides have OEC or EMT training.

COST Individual \$399-\$475, Private Cat (10 seats) \$3,591-\$4,275. Discounts for multi-day bookings and for paying cash or check.

BONUS Want more vert on stuff the cat can't even reach? You need to book a private heli for \$6,900 (up to six people). •

MEET THE MINI CATS

You don't necessarily need to book a day away from the resort to enjoy cat skiing. Check out these options that begin in-bounds.

LOVELAND

Catch the cat at the top of Chair 9 for alpine chutes and steepes. Be sure to grab a Cat Access Pass at the Season Pass office first. Free. 800-736-3754; skiloveland.com

COPPER

The Tucker Mountain Snowcat operates Friday through Sunday and hauls you up to expansive bowls and steep trees. Watch for green flags at duty stations to signal the cat is ready and running. Free. 866-841-2481; coppercolorado.com

KEYSTONE

The easy-to-catch Outback Shuttle saves your legs for sweet turns down the bowls off Wapiti Peak. \$5 a ride (cash) or \$50 punch pass (15 rides, transferable). 970-496-4386; keystoneresort.com



LOVELAND SKI AREA

DOGS RIDE THE LIFT.