

Calendar

Learn to Stop

Ski & Snowboard Show

Are you or is someone you love thinking of taking up snowboarding? Bring your wallet. To outfit one person for snowboarding, even on the cheap, you need about \$400, says Tim Hackett, marketing director of SnowJam 2003. That is, it's about \$400 if you take advantage of discounts available from the vendors at the seventh annual trade show that attracted 16,000 attendees last year and is expected to attract 20,000 this year.

The list of cut-rate gear and the prices are these, according to Hackett's math: "A snowboard with bindings, \$200. Boots, \$60. Clothing — pants, jacket, another \$120. Goggles, \$10. Gloves, \$10."

But you also have to get to the slopes, Hackett is reminded. "Yes, and you have to buy a lift ticket. And lift-ticket prices do keep going up; they're going to be \$48 at Big Bear Mountain resorts this year. But at SnowJam, with the cost of admission comes a free lift ticket to Big Bear."

Okay. Add \$13 (cost of admission to SnowJam) to the total cut-rate outfit bill, and we're up to \$413.

But then there's the helmet that Hackett recommends. "You could get a helmet for \$30," he says.

In addition to the helmet, beginners should wear wrist guards, says Hackett. So add another \$10 for a pair, and the total now is \$475.

Just for comparison's sake, what's the upper limit that one might spend on gear? Hackett is asked. "You could spend \$400 to \$500 just for the board, with the bindings. That's for a super-duper high-performance snowboard. The boots don't tend to get that expensive, but you could spend more like \$150. As for the clothes, of course, you can always spend a lot on clothes. So you could double the price of all that stuff and be closer to a grand for all top-of-the-line stuff."

It's still probably cheaper than skiing, says the 45-year-old father of two boys. "I skied for years and years, but my kids are now 14 and 11, and three years ago, when it was time for them to go to the mountains, they didn't want to ski. They wanted to snowboard. So I decided that, if I was going to go with them, I should learn to do it, too."

Lots of comparisons are made between the two snow sports, even though the skills required for snowboarding are more akin to those



SnowJam scenes from years past.

required for surfing and skateboarding. ("The first thing you notice when you first try to snowboard, as opposed to ski," says Hackett, "is that you can't move your feet independently...") The federal government's Consumer Product Safety Commission has compared the injury rates. In its most recent study, it found that while overall hospital emergency-room-treated injuries associated with skiing declined substantially between 1993 and 1997, snowboarding injuries nearly tripled, and the number of head injuries from snowboarding increased fivefold. (The number of head injuries from skiing remained relatively constant.)

Bring wallet. Bring health-insurance card? Head injuries were only one cause of the more than 70 snowboarding deaths that have been reported to the commission between January 1991 through October 2003. Commission spokesperson Mark Ross reads from the list of causes by phone from his office in Maryland: "Struck from behind by a skier." "Hit a tree." "Fell face down into deep snow." "Fell into a tree well." "Multiple injuries received in a fall." "Avalanche"...

The ages of the accident victims are "what you would expect," says Ross. "Late teens, 20s, early 30s. But, wait, here's a man who was 74. 'Killed in a fall' — at Mammoth Lakes, California, in 1995."

The upper age limit of snowboarders is being extended as time goes by, says Hackett, because those who started the sport when they were younger don't seem to relinquish its thrills when they get older. It's also true that the age at which people start to snowboard is dropping. "You could put a four- or five-year-old on a snowboard," says Hackett, who adds that at the trade show there will be "kid-sized" boards, which are still "a little hard to find."

There will also be a snowboarding simulator ride — "a mechanical bull kind of thing, which you ride while somebody else controls it."

And a simulated medevac helicopter poised at the side?

"Like in any motion sport, the first thing you need to learn is to stop," says Hackett. "And if you stay within your ability level and don't do anything crazy, you're going to be fine."

Perhaps. In February professional snowboarder Jeffrey Anderson of Mammoth Lakes fell to his death in Japan, where he had gone to compete in a snowboarding championship. The fall occurred at 3:15 a.m., while Anderson was attempting to slide down the banister of the five-story spiral staircase in the hotel where he was staying. He was 24.

— Jeanne Schinto

SnowJam 2003: The San Diego Ski & Snowboard Show
Friday, November 14,
4:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, November 15 and 16,
10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Del Mar Fairgrounds
(Pat O'Brien Hall)
2260 Jimmy Durante Boulevard
Del Mar
\$13 (includes a lift ticket good at Big Bear Mountain resorts); children 12 and younger, free with paid adult (no lift-ticket bonus included)
619-540-4310 or
www.snowjam.com

Local Events
page 75

Classical Music
page 91

Art Museums & Galleries
page 93

Theater
page 94

Pop Music
page 101

Restaurants
page 133

Movies
page 147

LOCAL EVENTS