



Vail in Summer ~ 14 Things to Do Off-Season at America's Biggest Ski Resort

COLLEEN LANIN, THE TRAVEL MAMA JUNE 7, 2017 2 COMMENTS

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Vail in summer overflows with fantastic off-season activities. While serious ski and boarding bunnies can't swoosh through snow down the mountains, there's still plenty of activities get your heart-pumping. Plus, Vail's Colorado mountain beauty is undeniable year-round. If you're looking for a gorgeous setting, delicious food and lots of outdoor fun, you need to check out these 14 fantastic things to do in Vail in summer.

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1. Get an adrenaline boost at Epic Discovery.

From zip-lining canopy tours to bungee trampolines, there's something for adrenaline junkies of all ages at [Epic Discovery](#) in Vail in summer. All ages can take on adventure courses and the Mountain Goat Climbing Tower. There's even summertime snow-free tubing hills for adults and kids at Epic Discovery.

Go tubing in Vail in summer at Epic Discovery (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

Are you game for a day of zip-lining? For a truly epic adventure, go for the Game Creek Aerial Adventure. This 2.5-hour course includes one aerial bridge plus seven zip lines, the longest one sending zippers aged 10+ soaring 2,700 feet above Vail's beautiful mountain landscape. That's a whole lot of beauty and adrenaline! Kids as young as 8 can zip the Golden Eagle line. There's no age restriction for the Little Eagle Zipline, but kids must weigh 30-100 pounds to give it a go.

Game Creek Aerial Adventure aerial bridge (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

If you ask me, though, best is the Forest Flyer alpine coaster (for ages 3+ with adult driver). Wind your way 3,400-feet down the mountain. I dare you not to hit the brakes at all. I couldn't do it, even though I know the coaster's brakes will automatically engage as needed.

Forest Flyer alpine coaster (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

2. Springboard your nature explorations at the Vail Nature Center.

For a more mellow activity, you can't go wrong with a hike on one of Vail's gorgeous trails. Start at the [Vail Nature Center](#), a farmhouse located between a sweet mountain meadow and the lovely [Gore Creek](#). There you can pick up trail maps, learn about local vegetation and wildlife, and get advice from staff on where to venture. You can also sign up for [guided hikes](#), [stargazing events](#), and [youth nature programs](#).

Gore Creek in summer (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

3. Take a hike...with a llama.

Yes, you read that right. You can go hiking with a llama in Vail with Paragon Guides. According to their [website](#), "Llamas have a curious, gentle and intelligent nature making them an ideal addition for your backcountry adventure." Plus, they'll carry your gear!

Hike with a llama in Vail with Paragon Guides (Photo from Paragonguides.com)

4. Wander through Vail Village.

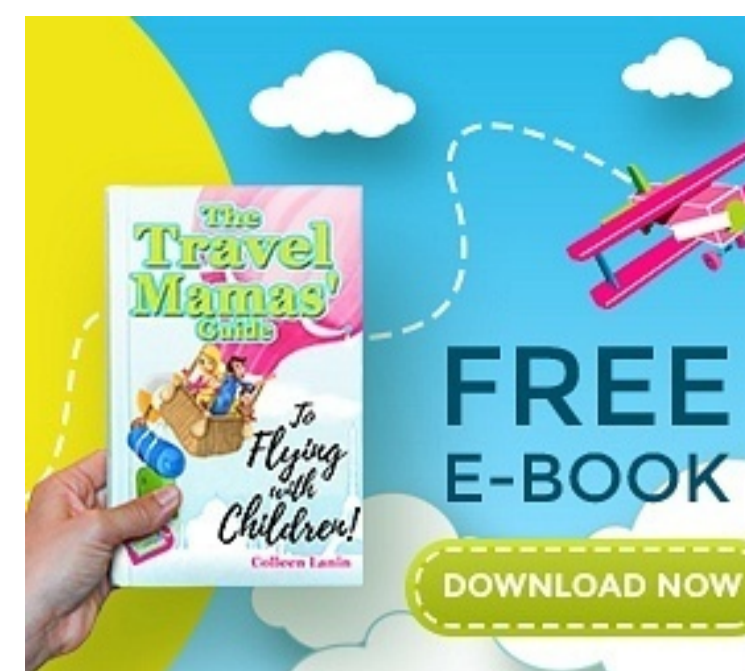
There's something so cozy about ski resort villages. Vail is America's biggest ski resort and boasts an impressive village filled with cute shops and tempting restaurants. Of course, you'll find all sorts of outdoor gear outfitters, but shoppers will also enjoy the many jewelry, clothing, and art shops. The Toy Store and Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory are a big hit with kids. Sign up for the [Vail Village Food and Walking Tour](#) to sample some of Vail's best cuisine, learn about Vail's history and discover interesting shops you might otherwise miss.

Forty-five impressive works of public art make Vail Village even prettier. Wednesdays in Vail in summer, you can attend a free [Art Walk](#) to learn more about the town's 45 exhibits. You'll see paintings, sculptures, murals, playground art and more. To explore on your own, pick up a free map of Vail's public art collection at the Vail Village and Lionshead Welcome Centers.











Just one example of the beautiful works of public art in Vail Village (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

5. Explore Vail on two wheels.

Whether you're a serious mountain biker looking to tackle Vail's peaks on two wheels, or you want a mellow way to explore Vail, bicycling makes a fun summer activity. [Paved trails](#) and [mountain trails](#) abound. Rent cruisers or mountain bikes from [Vail Sports](#). They've got several locations from which to get your gear



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including one in Vail Village. For an exhilarating downhill biking experience, sign up for [Charter Sports Vail Pass Bike Tour](#).

Biking not your thing? Sign up for a [Sage Outdoor Segway Tour](#) instead.

Explore Vail Village by foot, bike or Segway (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

6. Search for treasure at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens.

Hike or bike over to the [Betty Ford Alpine Gardens](#) for some beautiful scents and scenes. The world's highest botanical garden bursts with flowers in summer. If traveling with kids, the playful Children's Garden is a must-do. Be sure to pick up Treasure Hunt cards at the Education Center for a self-guided scavenger hunt. The cards lead families from letterbox to letterbox with clues that will please any mini sleuth.

Can you spy with your little eye the decorated letter box at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens? (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

7. Make your own spicy souvenir.

You don't need to be a Four Seasons hotel guest to enjoy the flavors of this upscale resort. Contact the [Four Season Residences & Resort Vail](#)'s concierge to sign your group up for their Spice Rub class. Learn how to make the perfect barbecue rub in the hotel's kitchen with Chef Marcus Stewart. Whether you like something hot, citrusy, all-American or ethnic, the chef will guide you in crafting your own spice rub to take home as a flavorful souvenir of Vail. You get a chance to taste your creation on some delicious cuts of meat, too!

Spice Rub Class at Four Seasons Vail (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

8. Take a wine tasting class at Root & Flower.

No matter the time of year, an Art of Tasting wine class at [Root & Flower](#) in Vail is always a good idea. Learn the art of pairing foods with the right wines while sipping some delicious vintages and nibbling on tasty bites. Even if you don't want to take a class, stop by to taste some local wines during your stay.

Art of Tasting class at Root and Flower (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

9. Shoot whitewater rapids.

White water rafting tours abound in Vail in summer. [Numbers Extreme Whitewater Rafting](#) promises a white-knuckle ride for experienced rafters or fearless beginners. For something less intense, choose [Browns Canyon Half Day Whitewater Rafting](#), suitable for most rafters including kids. For a truly relaxing ride, book the [Lower Browns Canyon Midwater Float Trip](#), for which Viator says you can, "Pick up a paddle if you like, or simply relax and enjoy this fun and mellow river ride."

Numbers Extreme Whitewater Rafting (Photo from TripAdvisor.com)

10. See Vail from the basket of a hot air balloon.

Flying in a hot air balloon should be on everyone's bucket list. And you'd be hard pressed to find a more beautiful location than Vail to experience a balloon ride. Book your seat in a basket with [Camelot Balloons](#). They've got more than 20 years of experience and get a five-star rating on [TripAdvisor](#).

Camelot hot air balloon ride (Photo from TripAdvisor.com)

11. Go flyfishing in Vail.

Ever since I saw [A River Runs Through It](#), I have wanted to try flyfishing. Although Brad Pitt won't be joining you, you'll still take in some incredible scenery and learn this elegant sport from knowledgeable instructors when you book a [Vail Guided Flyfishing Tour](#) with Minturn Anglers Flyfishing.

Flyfishing with Vail Guided Flyfishing Tour (Photo from TripAdvisor)

12. Hit the horseback trails.



Saddle up with [Vail Stables](#) to hit the horseback trails during your visit. They promise their horses are gentle and the photo opps are plentiful. Kids must be a very mature age of 5+ to ride. Get a discount when you [book online](#) AND pay in cash.

Horseback riding with Vail Stables (Photo from VailStables.com)

13. Relax at one of Vail's many spas.

Vail tends to attract a high-class crowd, so of course spas are plentiful, dahhhling. [Sonnenalp Spa](#) gets the highest ranking on [TripAdvisor](#). I personally adored my massage at Bloom Spa at [The Sebastian](#)

. Plan to spend some time after your Bloom treatment soaking in The Sebastian's mountain-view swimming pool or one of four hot tubs.

Spa goers can take a dip in The Sebastian's outdoor pool (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

14. Enjoy Vail's phenomenal culinary scene.

Oh, the food...THE FOOD in Vail! You could come to Vail solely for the dining opportunities and leave happy.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, especially in Vail. [Vintage](#) delights diners with its daily Champagne Brunch. You really can't go wrong here but I especially recommend the Prosciutto Wrapped Asparagus, served with two poached eggs, woodland mushrooms, caramelized onions and white truffle hollandaise. Wash it all down with one of their zippy Bloody Mary's or a glass of bubbly. Their outdoor patio is particularly inviting in summer.

An array of delicious breakfast dishes at Vintage (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

For an equally delicious start to your day, head to [The Sebastian](#). If you're feeling savory, order the Huevos Rancheros. For a sweet treat, indulge in their French Toast made with orange brioche stuffed with mascarpone cheese and topped with fresh fruit.

French Toast for a crowd topped with mascarpone cheese and fresh berries at The Sebastian (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

The swanky Sebastian hotel also offers a hip happy hour at their bar, [Frost](#). Choose from flatbreads, burgers and appetizers like truffle fries and empanadas. But the real draw is Frost's Design Your Own Mojito Bar. Select your own mint, fruit and juices for a drink that's as refreshing as it is pretty. Kids are welcome here and can order off their own menu.

Mojitos at The Sebastian's Frost Bar are perfect for summer in Vail (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

[Matsuhisa](#) will knock the chopsticks out of your fingers with their first class Japanese cuisine. I fell in love with the Nobu Tacos, filled with a choice of lobster, tuna or crab. They were so good, I got a second order. For gluten-sensitive diners like me, they're happy to make them with lettuce wraps. Sushi lovers will be in heaven here. There are plenty of cooked dishes to choose from as well, like Broiled Black Cod with Miso or Filet Mignon with Wasabi Pepper.

Nobu Taco served in a lettuce wrap at Matsuhisa (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

[Mountain Standard](#) offers upscale cuisine in a casual setting. Big hits on the menu include their Southern Pimento Cheese served with grilled bread, their Shrimp and Grits with creole butter, piquillo peppers and pancetta (divine!) and the many offerings on their Raw Bar.

Pavlova topped with ice cream and fresh berries at Mountain Standard (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

Upstairs is Mountain Standard's more elegant sister property and my personal favorite, [Sweet Basil](#). Voted the most popular Vail restaurant by Zagat's survey, expect incredible dishes like Watercress Risotto and Braised Colorado Lamb.

Gore Creek in Vail (Photo credit: Colleen Lanin)

Book your trip to Vail in summer!

Hungry for a visit to Vail yet? This stylish yet laid back town lures travelers seeking outdoor adventures year-round. And, you can see why Vail is especially worthy of a visit in summer. Book your discounted Vail vacation package via [TripAdvisor](#) or [Travelocity](#) now!

If you liked this story, you might also be interested in reading about partner ski resort, [Keystone, Colorado's summer activities](#).

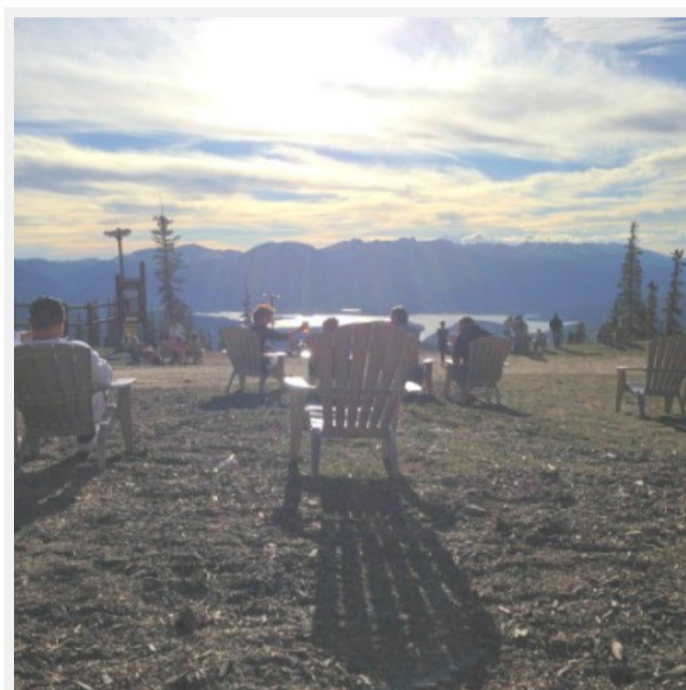
Would you like to visit Vail in summer? Which of these 14 activities appeals to you most? Let us know in the comments below!

Thank you to Vail Resorts for hosting my visit last summer. All opinions are mine, as always!

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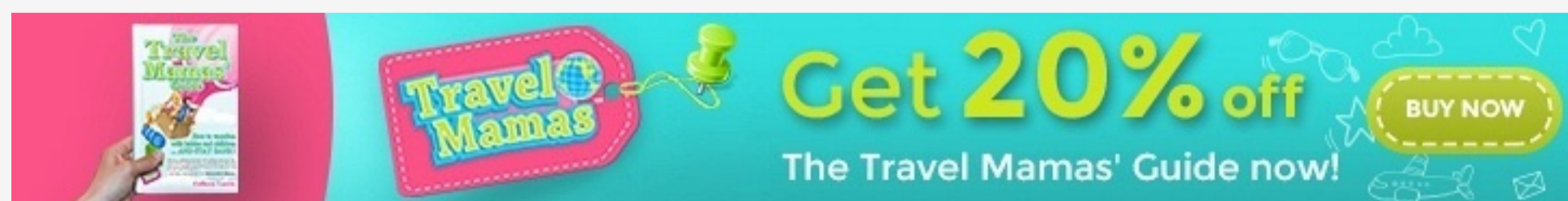
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About Colleen Lanin, The Travel Mama

Colleen Lanin is the founder/editor-in-chief of TravelMamas.com. As the author of her book, "The Travel Mamas' Guide," she teaches parents not only how to survive a trip with children, but also how to love exploring the world with