



PARK CITY IN THE SUMMERTIME- YES! BY RAY COLLINS

Question: You arrive at the Atlanta airport and begin settling in for a 5 hour wait for your connection to Salt Lake City, Utah. You learn another flight is leaving in an hour but there's no guarantee your luggage will be onboard. Do you roll the dice?

We'll tell you what we did at the end of this article—but first let's talk about Park City! We thought we'd check it out away from the typical busy ski season—and yes, they are open for business! After living in Florida 30 years, it's a shock to the system to see mountains at every turn!

We stayed in a one-bedroom suite or "PAD" at a cool place called the YotelPAD Park City in the heart of Canyons Village. It was a perfect spot to base, the epicenter of everything we wanted to do—from restaurants, gondola rides up the mountain, hiking trails and golf. YotelPAD is all about families, activities and fun. Amenities include a coinless game-room and swimming pool and hot tub with views of Park City Mountain.

After traveling cross country, we wanted to find a casual place to have dinner. Across the interior road from YotelPAD is a place called “DBB” which stands for drafts burger bar—part of Westgate Park Resort & Spa! A wide-range of locally-brewed beer—including gluten free—and a great menu. Erin had a chicken sandwich, and I had a tasty thick burger and French fries. We capped off our meal with their famous thick milkshakes. Great service and ideal atmosphere. Perfect start to our visit.

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We scheduled a guided hiking tour of Deer Valley the next morning. Not knowing where to go, we heard good things about White Pine Touring. They assigned us a lovely guide named Victoria, from Argentina. There’s no way we could have scaled as much as a bunny hill without her help. Victoria knew every nook and cranny of the mountains, gave us plenty of context and offered to take pictures of us—any time I was able to catch my breath and smile for the camera. We got some great pictures we’ll be framing. White Line Touring also handles mountain biking, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and rock climbing. They stay busy with Park City’s 450 miles of trails and the neighboring Uinta Mountains.

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Park City reminded us of Sarasota—in that it is forward-thinking, clean, user-friendly (free public buses) and has plenty of biking trails. There are plenty of options for renting bikes, and we downloaded an app and became proficient with the Park City e-bikes. (I’m embarrassed to admit this, but this was the first system we were able to master—after failing to figure out the bikes in recent trips to Washington, DC and Tampa!) We got up early the next morning and cycled into Historic Park City and explored Main Street before the day began. I could only imagine how busy the sidewalks must be during peak ski season. We’re not big skiers so coming in the summer was perfect for us.

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We heard good things about a restaurant called “Heart and Hill” and decided to check it out—and we’re glad we did. It was in the other direction from YotelPAD, in an area called Newpark. A beautiful planned-community with sparkling new homes and retail—made even more compelling with the crystal blue sky and ever-present mountains in the background.

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Heart and Hill is a family-owned restaurant—and we met the Proprietor Brooks Kirchheimer, an affable guy with an impressive resume. His goal was a fresh new approach on contemporary American cuisine. From Beer Battered Cauliflower shareables to Hawaiian Ahi Poke Bowls, to Pork Belly Sandwiches and pulled pork Ramen. We sat at the bar and ordered several appetizers, loving each one more than the last.

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Even though it was summer, the ski resorts stay busy with hikers taking the lifts to enjoy the scenery and get some exercise. We were able to hop on a gondola a short walk from our hotel and take it high into the mountains. The ride up was both scenic—and a bit thrilling. Wow! I said to Erin, “Don’t shake this thing!” I tried not to look down. We had a lovely walk along a nature trail high up in the hills, took plenty of pictures and enjoyed the ride back down as well.

For our last dinner in Park City, we wanted to go big. Near YotelPAD in the Westgate Park City Resort & Spa, is a high-end restaurant called EDGE Steakhouse. It was time to get dressed up and get pampered. When the waiter learned we came from the Gulf Coast of Florida, he quickly referenced Burns Steakhouse in Tampa—and then said EDGE is better. It was time to find out.

The waiter’s opening extensive monologue about the options on the menu, how the meat is obtained and prepared made us glad we were sitting down. He gave a very in-depth pitch about the choices in front of us. Erin went with New York Strip, and I had the Filet. We shared garlic mashed potatoes, mushrooms and asparagus. Certainly as good, if not better, than any high-end steakhouses. Nice surprise.

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We were sad to pack our bags already and leave this beautiful place. Erin was already talking about buying a condominium here and renting it out during the lucrative winter months so we could begin an annual summer vacation here. High praise!

We can’t wait to come back again to Park City!

Oh, and we did take the earlier flight, arriving four hours earlier than we would have—and our luggage did make it as well! A successful visit all around!

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