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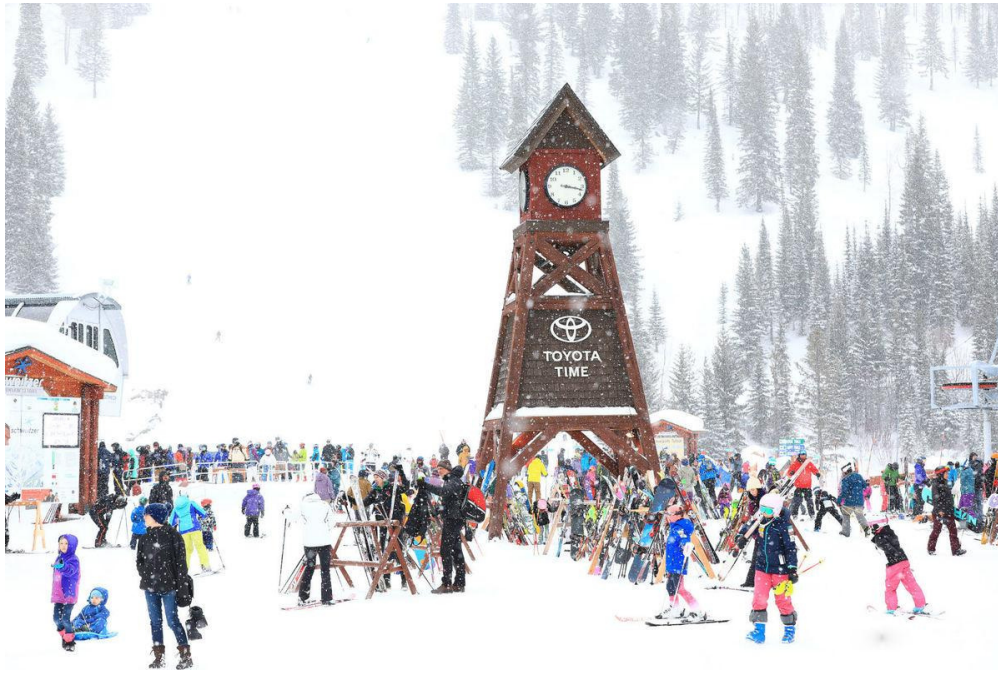
## Sandpoint Saturday Night

An entertaining gateway to Idaho's Schweitzer Mountain Resort

By LEE JUILLERAT For the Herald and News Feb 9, 2018

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The clock tower dominates the scene at the village at Schweitzer Mountain Resort near Sandpoint, Idaho.

Photo by Larry Turner

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SANDPOINT, Idaho — Call it a Sandpoint Saturday Night.

With apologies to Jimmy Buffet, who sang about Livingston Saturday nights, our evening was part of a four-day stay in Sandpoint, Idaho, just down the road from the Schweitzer Mountain Resort.

Larry Turner and I arrived a day before other ski journalists from around the country — including Florida and New Jersey — converged for time downhill skiing on Schweitzer's slopes and, of course, another group Sandpoint night.

Townsppeople were rockin' and rollin' on our Sandpoint Saturday night, some filtering into downtown's classic Panida Theater to see a film rather ironically titled, "Death of a Small Town in the West." Others were checking out the downtown Graffiti Alley alive with vibrantly colorful, often psychedelic murals, or stopping at MickDuff's Brewing Co. for hand-crafted ales and dinners.

### Rugged roots

Sandpoint, with a population of about 7,500, sits on the shores of Idaho's largest lake, Pend Oreille, and is flanked by the Selkirk, Cabinet and Bitterroot mountain ranges. It's where 29-year-old Theodore Roosevelt visited the then-notoriously rough-and-tumble town. It still retains its rugged personality, but things have changed. When Schweitzer began its ongoing development as a ski hill in 1963, it helped transform the area into a year-round tourist destination.

Skiing Schweitzer is why we were there. And although sometimes heavy fog often obscured views of the lake and neighboring mountains from the ski hill's array of runs, we weren't disappointed in the skiing. Unlike much of the Pacific Northwest, Schweitzer had been enjoying frequent snow. The hill is spread over 2,900 acres of varied terrain for skiing and snowboarding, making it the largest in Washington and Idaho. Other winter activities include cross country skiing, snowshoeing and fat tire biking.

It's a deceptively large area. Two high-speed lifts begin at the main village's Schweitzer Bowl front side but there are more chairs and runs on the Outback Bowl's back side. Because of the fog, we missed the fabled summit view of Canada and three states. We rode the Great Escape chair to the Sky House, a new restaurant near the summit, then followed the Great Divide to the Outback Bowl, where we enjoyed better visibility on "the quiet side of Schweitzer." We spent hours on groomed and ungroomed intermediate and expert runs off the Stella Chair.

A day later, with the area under even heavier fog, some of us enjoyed easy runs — and views of Lake Pend Oreille, off the Musical Chairs before refocusing on a series of mostly intermediate runs from the village's Basin Express.

In all, Schweitzer offers 92 runs, including several seriously challenging double diamond trails.

### **Schweitzer's legend**

The mountain has a fascinating history. Legend says a Swiss hermit found shelter in the basin bottom. It's said the hermit had served in the Swiss military. The mountain was named in his honor because in German, Schweitzer means "Swiss man."

It's also said the idea of creating Schweitzer Mountain Resort happened on a winter day when Jack Fowler traveling to his Spokane home from a ski vacation in Whitefish, Mont. According to resort historians, "Fowler looked up and was struck by the beauty of Schweitzer Mountain's snowy basin mountaintop. At once he knew the area could be developed into a premier ski resort. Fowler, Jim Brown and other key investors combined their resources, sold shares to local residents, and built Schweitzer's first chairlift. Dec. 4, 1963 was the official opening of the resort."

Spokane remains Schweitzer's main market — it's estimated about two-thirds of Schweitzer's visitors are from Spokane — while others fly into the eastern Washington city and make the 85-mile drive to the mountain. Because there is limited lodging on the mountain, many visitors instead stay in Sandpoint and either drive the 11 miles or take shuttles up the windy access road. Along with our Sandpoint Saturday night, we spent two other nights slopeside at the Selkirk Lodge, just steps from the Ski & Ride Center, several restaurants and, best of all, the Basin Express and Great Escape Quad.

Long-range plans envision adding more mountain-side housing and replacing an older chair. And while winter is a busy season — the ski area is typically open December through April — summer is even busier because of boating, fishing, water sports, horseback riding, camping, hiking and biking trails, scenic drives and whitewater rafting.

And, of course, Sandpoint Saturday nights.

### **Learn more about Schweitzer Mountain**

For information about the Schweitzer Mountain resort visit the website at [www.schweitzer.com](http://www.schweitzer.com) or call 800-831-8810. For information about Sandpoint visit [www.visitsandpoint.com](http://www.visitsandpoint.com) or call 877-487-4643.