

If you are a diehard skier then you must have a ski destination bucket list. It is a safe bet that most include Taos on their bucket list. This year, 43 diehard members got an opportunity to check Taos off their list. To get to Taos we needed to get to Albuquerque, and as luck would have it getting there from Philly posed some challenges. A few of us are starting to believe the gods of flight have it out for Joe B. Once we all arrived in Albuquerque our host from Snakedance, Roger took over. The resort has luggage handling down to a science. Once we got our luggage from the carousel and gave it to Roger the next time we would see them was in our room. The ride from the airport to the mountain was about two hours and forty-five minutes and took us through some of the most diverse scenery the Southwest has to offer. Since we were staying in condos a stop at the local market was a must. Again, Snakedance had their own take on the grocery stop. Everyone was given a large canvas bag with their name on it to put their food in. This allowed the Snakedance staff to bring all our groceries to our rooms for us. Everything you ever heard about Taos is true. It is an incredible mountain in a beautiful location with awesome trails that caters to everyone's ability. Taos Mountain definitely has that "old school" charm. The Snakedance Condos are located right on the mountain. This was truly a ski in- ski out location with the chairlift literally fifty feet from the door. I think everyone on the trip would agree, unlike the mega-resorts, Snakedance as well as the mountain village had a welcoming laid back and relaxed vibe. Taos does not have the jumbo high-speed chairs racing you to the top like the mega resorts, but they do not have the mega crowds either. The chairlift system they do have is well designed and gets people around the mountain efficiently. This was evident by the lack of lift lines all week. One unusual sight was their classic two-seater chairlift that did not have a safety bar. Cindy as well as others will attest, it was an uneasy journey back to the top. On our first day of skiing we were met with a beautiful bluebird day. Everyone gathered at the base in the morning and we were off for our first runs as a group. I think everyone on the trip who was skiing that day was in the group, at least for the first couple of runs. Much of Taos expert terrain is accessed by short hikes to the ridgelines. One of the hikes is to Taos's West Basin Ridge which offered some nice glade runs. Liam, Andrea, Steve, Tammy, John, Chip and Boddy ventured up the hiking trail to check it out. Taos did not have any recent snow fall before we arrived, but the trail crew did an outstanding job maintaining the mountain. Lucky for us, our first day ended with fresh snow hitting the mountain. The next morning spirits were high with the anticipation of skiing the fresh "pow pow"! Again, a large group of us gathered in the morning to make first tracks on the fresh snow at the top of the mountain. Even on a powder day the mountain seemed empty and our priority was to get first tracks. The endless hooting and hollering by the SJSC group as we carved the powder was classic. I even heard Ginny say, this is the best powder I have ever skied! The great conditions had folks stepping out of their comfort zone, with Ralph cheering her on, Tina decided to do her first black diamond called Pappa Bear. Apparently, that is all she needed and could not get enough of the black diamond run. If you were willing to take a short hike there is a great area called Hunziker Bowl, this was one of the favorites of Wayne and Laura. If you continued past the Hunziker Bowl, you hit an area called El Funko. This was a perfect name for this area because getting in and getting down to the bottom was definitely funky! John S., John M., Rich,

Joe B, Marshall, Nancy, and I got our funk on hitting El Funko over and over again. Taos had some challenging glade runs, and Rich reluctantly got personal with one of the trees in the Walkyries Glades. The fresh dumping of snow was just enough for the mountain to open their signature Kachina Peak which had been “officially” closed all year. Once Kachina Peak opened, everyone made a bee line to the chairlift that takes you to the top. With the new snow, Kachina Peak offered up some incredible technical ski terrain. Heather and John, who was on his first trip out west ventured to the top of Kachina and had a blast. Laura and Brenna also hit Kachina Peak’s awesome terrain and got some great pictures. John S. loved Kachina Peak so much he did it six times in a row! I saw Kristin, Rich, Marshall, Joe B. John S. hike to the very top of Kachina peak to get a look at the spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. Like most mountains, Taos had their action photographers stationed around the mountain, lucky for us we brought our own action photographer. Just like sitting for that family portrait, Jack gave us detailed instructions on properly executing the perfect action shot. With good conditions and weather, calling it quits at the end of the day was tough. One more run was never just one. Nancy and I found out that ending the day with Jeff and Robert, meant the last run is always from the top, ugh! Thursday night we had our group dinner hosted by the owner of Snakedance. Normally the owner would have everyone to his home for the dinner but because of the current restrictions we had our dinner at the resort’s restaurant. With the Taos area still under yellow restrictions dining capacity was limited and we were forced to have two separate groups for dinner. Mexican was on the menu complemented with pitchers of strong Margaritas. Even with the social distancing, Snakedance did a nice job of making the dinners pleasurable. Jack, Janet, Larry, and Ava enjoyed their dinner and Kristin really enjoyed the Margaritas! Dianne, Marie, and Michael took a day off from skiing and went to visit the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Marie had some great pictures of them hiking the vast sand dunes. Our last day of skiing started out good but then the winds started to pick up. Barb, Jen, Cindy, and Ginny decided to do their best wind dance at the top of the lift. Everyone was hoping the winds would subside but unfortunately, they did not and eventually the front side of the mountain was totally shut down. If you were one of the unlucky ones and got caught on the front side your day of skiing was cut short. Well, if you cannot ski what is the next best thing to do on a ski trip? Joe, Marshall, Scott, and Megan decided to check out the local brewery called Taos Mesa Brewery. For the final night of our trip, Bobby, Laura, and condo roomies: Rishi and Chip were kind enough to host the leftover dinner and scavenger hunt. Five condo rooms participated in the hunt and the competitive nature of all the groups made for some great laughs. The judges: Chip, Nancy and I had front row seats to some interesting entertainment as well as some clever substitutions to items on the list. Every team had to sing a chorus or two for points and Heather hit it out of the park for her team with her pigtailed rendition of “Hey Chippy your so fine you blow my mind Hey Chippy!” Condo roomies: Brenna, Robert (AKA Dad), Steve and their very resourceful leader Dawn managed to put up the most points in the hunt and were crowned the winners. Considering the current situation with the COVID restrictions and social distancing, our ski club members, the Snakedance staff as well as the mountain folks made our trip to Taos a

good and memorable experience. Nancy and I would also like to thank everyone who helped make our trip to Taos a success.