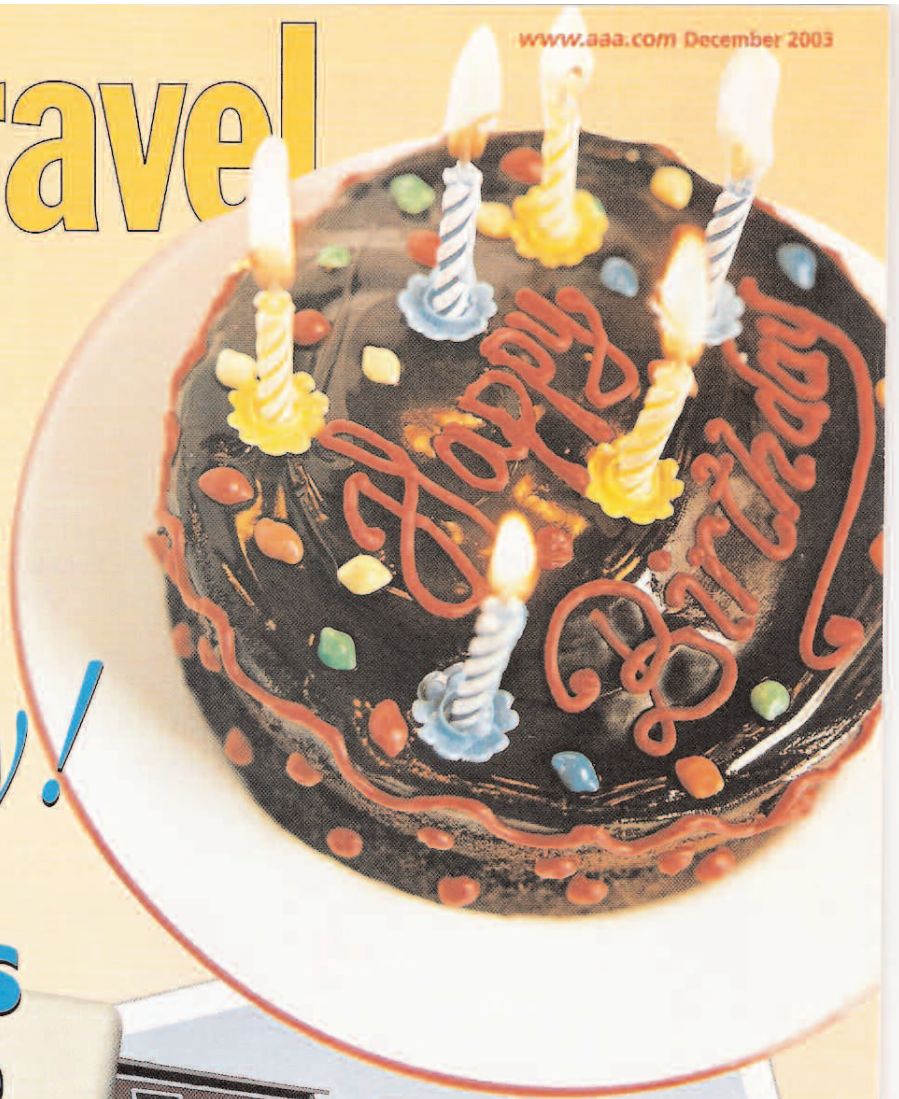


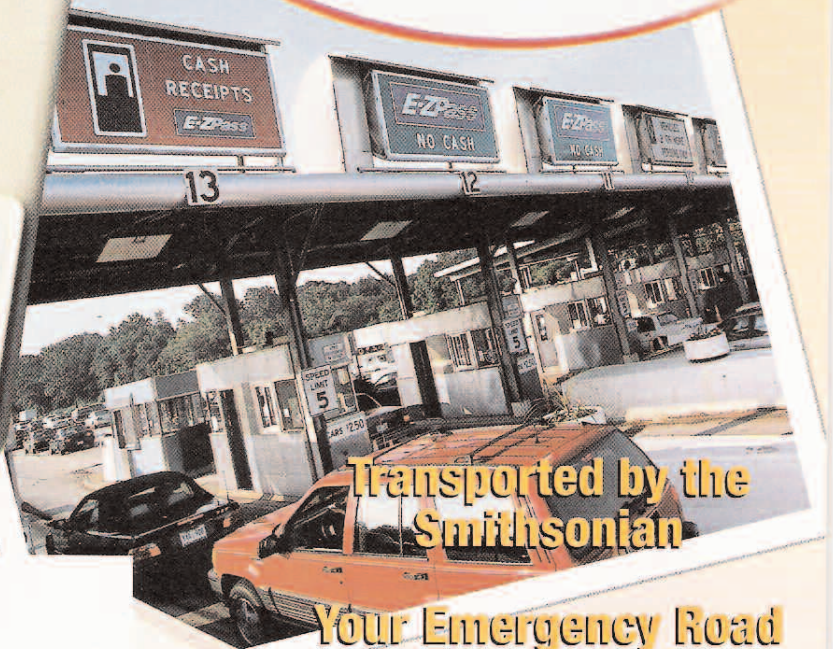
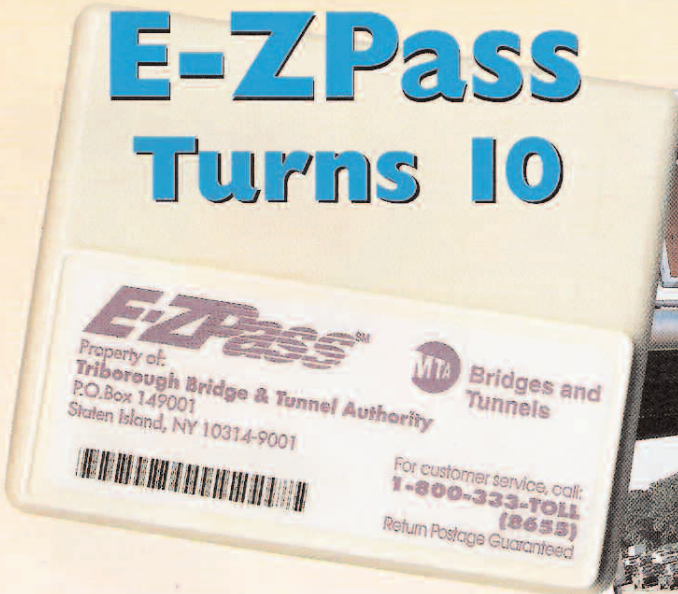
# Car & Travel

www.aaa.com December 2003

## Happy Birthday!



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# Taming Killington

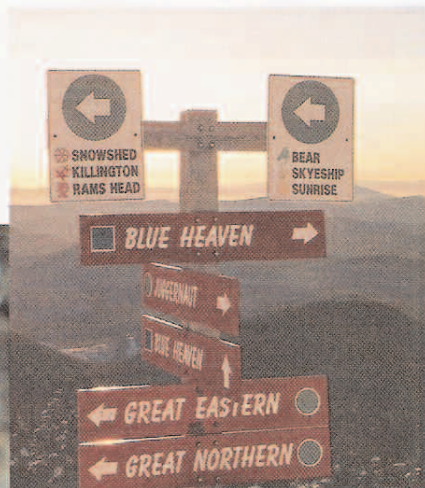
Vermont's monster ski area can be understood and enjoyed, despite the crowds and the complexity of its trail system.

by Nancy Ness

In past visits to Killington, Vt., I've spent a lot of time lost in a maze of trails, or herded in with a pack of skiers, but this year was different.

In the old days, the protective bar on the lifts at Killington featured cylinder maps of the trails that were so complicated and obscured by border ads that it was impossible to figure anything out. If you were lucky, you got on a lift with someone who knew the mountain—and they got you lost anyway. Good news: The revised trail map is now readable. The type and map are larger because the ring of ads that ran along the border is gone. You will no longer feel like Alice lost in Wonderland as you slip onto Juggernaut, Killington's long, flat trail.

To get oriented, I also recommend joining up with one of Killington's "ski ambassadors." I did just that on a free meet-the-mountains tour, which leaves daily at 9:45 a.m. from the Snowshed Base area. Our first runs were spent chasing the ambassador and cutting lift lines. Along the way, he taught us how to read Killington's signs and find trails of key importance, like Great Northern and Great Eastern. These two trails switch back and forth over most of Killington's seven peaks.



Better oriented, I was finally able to figure out the appeal of the Big K. The largest ski area in the Northeast, Killington is so big—with 200 trails, 87 miles of terrain, a vertical drop of 3,050 feet and 31 lifts—that once you know how to get around the area, you need never ski the same trail twice.

Killington's legendary bump trail, Outer Limits, has also become more approachable. One side of Outer Limits is now groomed, making it possible for more people to claim bragging rights. Outer Limits still has those mammoth bumps from top to bottom, but now wannabe bump skiers have an escape route. It may be safer this way, but the trail's fearful reputation has lost some of its big chill.

Killington may have become more accessible and approachable, but how about the crowds?

On the weekends, Killington's big ski terrain has always attracted large crowds with lots of testosterone. All that traffic on the slopes can quickly beat good ski conditions into the ground. The flip side of a weekend visit is it provides a lively singles scene. The most famous hang out, The Wobbly Barn, is a landmark that remains a crowded, fun, noisy bar upstairs with a restaurant serving pub food downstairs.

My plan was to beat the crowds with selectively timed skiing and a Killington/Pico combined pass. (Pico is a small, charming mountain with gentler terrain, less crowded trails and a respectable vertical drop of 1,967 feet.) Here is how to do it: Get on the slopes at Killington early (before 10 a.m.), take brunch at 11, ski again at noon while everyone else is having lunch, then head to Pico on the free shuttle when everyone else returns to the slopes. This way, you avoid the deteriorating conditions at Killington in the afternoon and have the best of both mountains.

Our home base at Killington was the Cortina Inn, which provides a free shuttle to both Killington and Pico. This is a major convenience, because parking at

**Killington's maze of trails and ski areas has now been mapped and signed more clearly for the baffled ski bum.**



**Monster and cubbyhole:** *Bustling, vast Killington can be accessed via free shuttle from the cozy, homey Cortina Inn (below).*

Killington's ski areas can be a hassle and a waste of precious ski time.

The Cortina Inn is a great hub for a winter getaway, with or without skiing. To unwind, you can pick up a book from the reading rooms, get a drink from the bar and then find a comfortable spot to curl up near any of five fireplaces. Or you can relax in the pool, sauna, whirlpool or gym, all just down the hall from your room.


The staff's hospitality and service truly won me over. I never heard "no" or "don't" while I was there. The inn welcomes kids and even the family dog, and all receive special attention. Cortina feels like a small town. Adding to the community feel is the striking local artwork displayed throughout the atrium.

Cortina has two places to eat. Theodore's Tavern serves pub food with all-you-can-eat pasta on Friday and Saturday nights. Zola's, the more formal dining space with wingback floral chairs and dark green wallpaper, serves breakfast and dinner daily and a legendary Sunday brunch. Wherever you dine, as an added after-ski treat, complimentary coffee, tea and homemade pastries are set out by the main fireplace each day at 4 p.m.

As a group of trails, Killington takes time to learn, but its wide scope gives skiers of



every level more than a day of new terrain to ski. During the week, it is an excellent destination, though a weekend visitor needs to either thrive in a crowd or make some adjustments to avoid it.

My Killington ski experience, however, was almost overshadowed by the comforts of the Cortina Inn. I would gladly return to Killington on any day of the week as long as I could stay at Cortina. 

**Cortina Inn:** 800/451-6108; [www.cortinainn.com](http://www.cortinainn.com)

**Pico Mountain:** 802/422-1200;

[www.picomountain.com](http://www.picomountain.com)


**Killington:** 802/422-6200; [www.killington.com](http://www.killington.com)


## Places to Stay & Eat

Suggestions for Killington include:

### LODGINGS



◆◆◆ The Inn of the Six Mountains

2617 Killington Rd.   
802/422-4302 Large Hotel

◆◆◆ Birch Ridge Inn   
37 Butler Rd.

802/422-4293 Country Inn

◆◆ Comfort Inn Killington Center

905 Killington Rd.   
866/AAA-SAVE Small Hotel 



### RESTAURANTS

◆◆◆ Hemingway's Restaurant

4988 US Route 4  
802/422-3886 American

◆◆ The Wobbly Barn  
2229 Killington Rd.  
802/422-3392 Steak & Seafood

◆◆ Olivia's  
831 State Route 100N  
802/775-2537 American

AAA assigns ratings from ◆ to ◆◆◆◆◆, which reflect the overall quality of the lodging or restaurant. The  or  icon means AAA members receive a special discount off the published rates. Visit TourBooks Online at [aaa.com](http://aaa.com) for more information about this area.



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