Grand Junction, Colorado: Snow, dinosaurs, and bananas

by Tracy Ellen Beard | Jan 27, 2018



A Ride in the Litter

GRAND JUNCTION, Colorado, January 26, 2018: Winter weather often makes both parents and kids feel tied up and confined with nothing to do. After weeks of dreary days in front of the TV or playing video games, plan a trip to work out the wiggles.

Escape the house and visit the perfect winter playground, Grand Junction, Colorado. This hidden gem of a city offers an escape from boredom with opportunities for skiing, digging, jumping, climbing, and exploring.

Skiing with the Ski Patrol

Bundle up, put on your snow gear, and enroll yourself and your kids in the “Ski with the Ski Patrol” program at Powderhorn Mountain Resort.

This program gives participants an inside look at the role of professional ski patrollers and educates people of all ages about mountain safety. Learn about the mountain while you simultaneously enjoy and explore the slopes.

The mountain boasts runs for all levels and a tubing hill, too.

The Ski Patrol

Some say the job of a ski patroller combines the roles of a maintenance person, firefighter, and police officer. Their job is to make sure everyone on the mountain is safe and that everything is in proper working order. Whether repairing lifts, padding poles, or shoveling snow, according to Rondo Beucheler, Ski Patrol Manager at Powderhorn, “Approximately 80% of the ski patroller’s job is maintenance.”

The patrol huts at Powderhorn stay equipped with rescue gear and a computer/phone system designed to alert staff quickly in case of an emergency. Ski patrollers are first

responders, like firefighters, and it is their job to get out the door and to the scene of an incident within one minute of a distress call. Trained for medical emergencies, they assess an injured skier's condition, stabilize them, and get the person off the mountain and into a warm environment as quickly as possible.

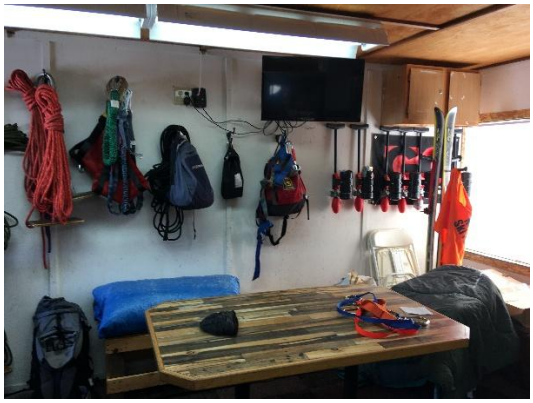


Monitoring the Computers in the patrol hut. Photo by Tracy Beard

Patrollers also monitor the mountain's safety. This means keeping an eye on the weather and checking for avalanche areas. Occasionally, this requires detonating explosives to manage snowpack, closing runs due to dangerous weather, or simply reminding skiers and boarders of the rules on the slopes.

Spending a day with the Ski Patrol is fun and educational. The equipment used is unique, like a balloon backpack for riding avalanches.

There are tons of ropes and pulleys for rescuing people entangled in trees, stuck in chairlifts, or caught in other predicaments.

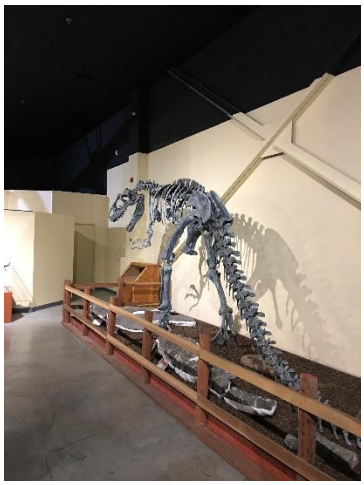


Rescue Gear. Photo by Tracy Beard

If you sign up for the program, you may luck out and get to play the part of an injured skier riding down the mountain in the litter, commonly known as the rescue basket.

Journeying Back in Time

Step back into prehistoric time at the Museum of Western Colorado's Dinosaur Journey. Use dental tools to clean dinosaur fossils, learn a little archaeology in the lab, and meander throughout the museum observing lifelike robotic replicas of thousand-year-old dinosaurs.



Robotic Dinosaur. Photo by Tracy Beard

Dig up bones in the sandpit and find out why this amazing animal no longer roams the earth.

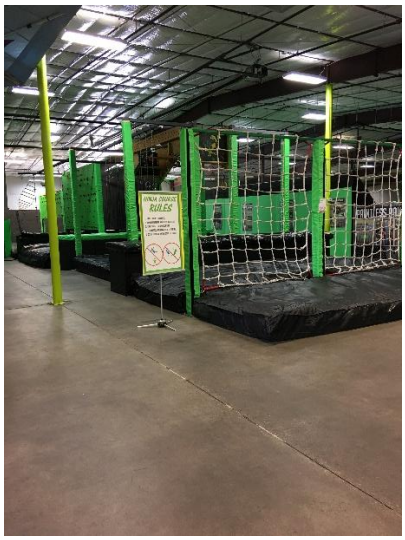


Cleaning Real Dinosaur Bones. Photo by Tracy Beard

Catching Air in Grand Junction: Get Air at the Silo

Run, jump, and test your balance at Get Air at the Silo, a trampoline park. Fly into the foam pits, challenge someone in a game of dodgeball, jump on the trampolines, or test your skills on the ninja course.

With over 10,000 square feet to romp and roam, you and your kids will leave relaxed and stress-free.



Get Air at the Silo. Photo by Tracy Beard

If you run out of steam before the kids do, take a break in one of the many massage chairs and reenergize.

The Grand Junction area offers climbing to your heart's content.

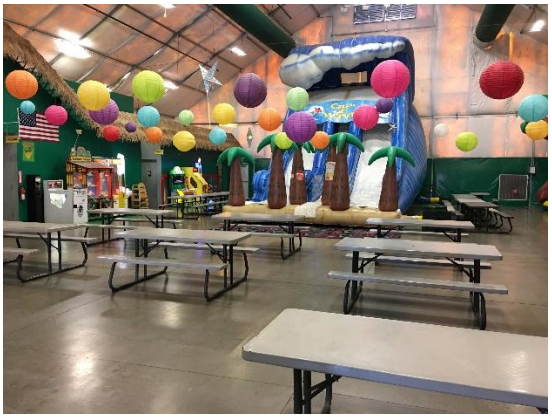


Bananas Fun Park Inflatables. Photo by Tracy Beard

Bananas Fun Park is great any time of year.

When it is rainy and cold out, spend part of your day in the inflatable playland. Jump and climb without fear while you land on soft, squishy, blow-up surfaces, or slither down one of the gigantic inflatable slides.

Compete against your kids in a friendly game of laser tag, or test your ninja skills in the laser maze. Get a bite to eat at the Congo Café and enjoy both old-and new-style games at the arcade.



Bananas Fun Park Slide. Photo by Tracy Beard

Warmer weather opens up additional options at Bananas Fun Park. Challenge someone to a game of miniature golf, splash and crash in the bumper boats, cool off in the Coconut Grove Waterpark, or zip around in the adult-size or mini go-karts.

Indulging in a Sweet Treat

At the end of the day, when your energy is spent, stop by world-famous Enstrom Candies and replenish yourself with a yummy treat. Pick up a delicious pastry, a pint of their ice cream, a box of candy, or some of their famous toffee.

Enstrom Candies has a rich family history that began when 17-year-old Chester K. Enstrom got his first job in an ice cream factory in 1919. After working in the ice cream shop, he often headed across the street to the candy factory to offer his services. Chester learned the art of candy making in those early years.

Today, his skills and talents have been passed down from generation to generation, and the family has expanded its product line to include toffee popcorn, truffles, and other decadent chocolates.



Enstoms Candy. Photo by Tracy Beard

Grand Junction, Colorado, offers a variety of seasonal activities, so quit sitting around on winter days chained to the house. Unleash yourself — and your kids — and take a trip to Grand Junction, Colorado, for some ridiculously vigorous fun.

As is common in the travel industry, the writer was provided meal and tour compensation for this review. While it has not influenced this review, the writer believes in full disclosure of all potential conflicts of interest.