



Springtime at Sundance

Take a breathtaking horseback ride through Mount Timpanogos and the Stewart Falls.

By Shannon Stewart Salinsky

Located near one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world, Sundance—Utah’s quintessential mountain resort—has the perfect trails to experience an unforgettable horseback ride through Utah’s Wasatch Front. The area is captivating during every season, but springtime at Sundance begs a horseback ride.

Although it’s somewhat of an overused term these days, “organic” seems fitting for Sundance. One of the most “underdeveloped developments” in the country, it is a year-round haven to those who crave an intimate experi-

ence with nature. Often mistaken as a town, Sundance is actually a mountain resort, and it was formally founded in 1969 by actor Robert Redford. The land was previously owned by a Scottish family who first used it for surveying and herding sheep; they later opened Timphaven, a local ski resort, in the 1950s. The actor purchased the resort and surrounding land a few years later—from that, Sundance was born. Still managed by the Redford family, this quaint resort accommodates mega-movie stars at various festivals throughout the year but remains a quiet haven in between crowd-drawing events.



“To us Sundance is and always will be a dream. What you see, smell, taste and feel here is a dream being carefully nurtured. It is an area whose pledge is to people. What we offer in the form of art and culture, spirit and service is home grown and available to all.”

—Robert Redford



A Ride to Remember

Sundance Mountain Resort, located at the base of the 12,000-foot Mount Timanagos, hosts one of the most popular horseback rides in the region.

Quaint stables and an authentic cowboy guide greet you a short jaunt up the mountain from the resort lobby and concierge area. After saddling up with Boulder Mountain Ranch, Sundance's preferred horseback riding outfitter, it's time to head out for a breathtaking ride. Long pants and long sleeves are recommended year round due to the lush, thick foliage cascading throughout much of the trails.

“Some of my favorite rides have been right up here,” said Guide Rylee Dick, whose family operates the stables at Sundance. “I basically grew up on a horse, so I've ridden many trails in my life. The scenery up here is just not something you take for granted, ever—even if it is a little old-hat to others.”

The aspen trees stand tall and proud like soldiers ready to salute. During the early spring, the mountains in the distance still have fluffy white caps.

Riders relish the scenery of tall spruce, maple glens and pinyon pines, and the canopy begins to open up before their eyes, revealing the clear blue sky. Fields of colors, as vivid as a painter's pallet, dot the landscape in wildflowers. It's not long until the trail fully opens and reveals the 200-foot cascading Stewart Falls.

As winter makes room for spring, the melting snow from Mount Timpanogos rushes down and into Stewart Falls, a scenic waterfall on the southeastern side of the mountain. One of the most picturesque vistas in Utah, the water continues to gallop down the mountain, rejuvenating streams that have been quieted for months. Bursting with newfound energy from the warm sunshine, the streams sing beautiful melodies alongside the beat of a horse's hooves.

The trail has numerous switchbacks as it eases up the mountain. As you weave back and forth through thick trees, riders spot a lonely picnic table sitting beside the trail—this is a usual gathering place for elk in the spring, as is an expansive nearby field called Elk Meadows. Here, guests are treated to a rustic, chuck-wagon dinner, complete with barbecue and baked beans. Guests of Sundance can access the meadows by horseback, wagons or shuttles, and the setting is perfect for groups of all sizes.

The ride back down to the stables is as pleasant as the ascent up the mountain. You simply lose yourself in the fresh aroma filling the air and the sea of aspen trees in front of you. Trail rides are offered through the spring and summer, and horse-drawn sleigh rides are a magnificent way to experience the region during the winter months. The horseback riding trails typically open in mid-May.



Adventures Abound

Sundance Mountain Resort offers a host of other great activities in the springtime, including its award-winning Sunday brunch—perfect for Easter or Mother's Day. Fly-fishing in the area is as good as it gets, so try your luck for a few rainbow, German brown or cutthroat trout. Springtime also brings the popular Sundance Mountain Resort Author Series, which hosts writers and speakers from around the nation to create a forum for innovative and stimulating ideas. The event has brought many luminaries over the years including Jimmy Carter, Madeleine Albright and Kathryn Stockett.

From hiking, mountain biking, scenic lift rides, canoeing, theatre, culinary delights and art of all kinds, there is no lack of activities to explore in the entire region.

Although Sundance might feel remote, it's conveniently located about an hour from the Salt Lake City airport. Robert Redford intended to preserve a unique and spectacular setting in an alpine landscape. He has not only succeeded at his dream of keeping condos and high rise hotels from being developed, he made it a wonderful vacation spot to escape the hustle and bustle of life for thousands of people and for many to come. ☺

