



Head For The Hills

April 21, 2014

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By: **Davina van Buren**

The skis and board might be stored for the season, but the party's just begun in the high-country.

Summer in the mountains means a lot of things: hiking; camping; biking. And one of our favorites? Festivals. Once the weather warms up, mountain-town residents will find any excuse to shut down the streets and party the weekend away. The snow gods were generous in the Rockies this season, but winter was long and extreme in some parts of the country (see: polar vortex), and spring fever has officially taken over. Most people are itching to get outdoors—sans mittens and parkas—for a taste of fresh alpine air. “The local community loves to engage in summer events, all of which appeal to a diversity of interests with one common theme: They take advantage of our beautiful outdoor venues,” says Gavin Dalglish, events coordinator for the Breckenridge Resort Chamber. “With as many bluebird days as we get over the course of the summer, showcasing the



GoPro Mountain Games concert in Vail. Photo by Zach Mahone.

outdoors and spending time under the sun is a must.”

We couldn't agree more. Here, we've rounded up our picks for the best festivals near Vail Resorts destinations. From bluegrass to bacon, festival-goers will find plenty of action in the hills this summer.



Kingdom Days Outhouse Races in Breck. Photo by Carl Scofield.

Breckenridge

Kingdom Days: June 14–15, 2014

When Breckenridge was founded in 1859, it was inadvertently left off of some U.S. maps, so Breckenridge became known as “Colorado Kingdom” until the town finally became incorporated in 1936. This weekend, the

[Breckenridge Summer Fun Park](#)

(great for families) officially

opens, the Breck Connect gondola begins daily summer operations, and the whole town pays homage to its glory days as a mining hub. Don't miss the hilarious Outhouse Races—teams construct (and decorate) their own outhouses, then race them down Main Street to the roar of cheering crowds.

Can't make it? Try these:

Breck Bike Week: August 15–18, 2014

Breck isn't just for skiing; it's a mountain biker's dream. Explore the town's impressive trail network during these weekend festivities.

Labor Day Weekend: August 30–September 2, 2014

What could be better than closing out summer against the stunning backdrop of the Ten Mile Range? This weekend of celebration includes rubber duck races, sidewalk sales, the Great Divide Arts Festival, and more.

Lake Tahoe

Race the Lake of the Sky June 28–29, 2014

Being landlocked has never stopped mountain folk from enjoying their water sports. These days, it seems like everyone and their dog (no joke) is into stand up paddle boarding. The sport, which is an offshoot of surfing that originated in Hawaii, requires balance, a strong core, and a sense of adventure. Novices and experts alike will benefit from this weekend of racing and expos. Elite paddlers will compete for bragging rights on North America's largest alpine lake, while newbies can sign up for a clinic to help hone their skills.

Can't make it? Try these:

Annual Great Gatsby Festival: August 9–10, 2014

Celebrate the roaring '20s with period fashions, high tea, a vintage car show, and plenty of bootleg champagne.

Valhalla Renaissance Fair: May 31–June 1 and June 7–8, 2014

Live out your Game of Thrones fantasy (minus the beheadings) against the tranquil backdrop of Lake Tahoe.



Left to right: Breck Bike Week, photo by Daniel Dunn; mud dog at the GoPro Mountain Games in Vail, photo by Zach Mahone; yoga at the GoPro Mountain Games in Vail, photo by Zach Mahone; Vail International Dance Festival, photo by Erin Baiano; Brighton festival signage, photo courtesy of A Taste of Brighton.

Vail

Vail International Dance Festival: July 27–August 9

You might be picturing prima ballerinas, tightly-choreographed routines, and muscular danseurs right now. And while you'll certainly see these things during this two-week festival, artistic director Damian Woetzel has plenty of less traditional

performances planned. For those unfamiliar with Woetzel's work, he collaborates with artists from Lil Buck (a former Cirque Du Soleil performer who specializes in a Southern style of street dancing called "jookin") to famed child prodigy cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Fans of TV hits *So You Think You Can Dance* and *Dancing With the Stars* will want to attend [Dance TV](#)—several of the shows' stars will make appearances.

Can't make it? Try these:

Go Pro Mountain Games, June 5–8, 2014

Three thousand athletes will compete for \$100,000 in cash at this adventure sports bonanza. You might even see [Floyd the Skateboarding bulldog](#) roaming Vail's streets.



GoPro Mountain Games in Vail. Photo by Zach Mahone.

Bravo! Vail: June 27–August 2, 2014

This summer, Vail becomes the only town in North America to host three of the world's most renowned orchestras—the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra—in a single season.

Keystone

Bluegrass and Beer Festival: August 2–3, 2014

If there are two things Colorado knows how to combine, it's music and beer. And bikes and beer... and mountains and beer...and, well, you get the point. This weekend, see for yourself why Colorado is famous for its suds. The party kicks off with a live bluegrass concert Friday night, followed by bluegrass seminars on Saturday and Sunday. More than 30 microbreweries (accompanied by loads of festival food) will be on the scene to provide a frosty respite from the summer sun..

Can't make it? Try these:

Blue Ribbon Bacon Tour: June 21–22, 2014

Health nuts, you may want to sit this one out. Directly from the event site: "Join fellow bacon-lovers in celebrating the magnificence of all things bacon." There is no shame in this festival's game.

Wine and Jazz Festival: July 19–20, 2014

Nothing goes together like vino and jazz. You probably won't be able to taste all 300 wines available for sampling, but you can have fun trying.



Festival in the streets of Brighton, Michigan. Photo courtesy of A Taste Of Brighton.

Brighton

A Taste of Brighton: July 11–12, 2014

Brighton has steadily grown in recent years; in fact, the downtown buildings in the Michigan hamlet now have a 99 percent occupancy rate. Though the town has had a summer festival for decades, last year the festivities were rebranded to showcase the vibrant businesses and residents who call Brighton

home. With a new mission to give visitors a “taste” of the city, food vendors serve \$1 or \$2 sample sizes, shops display sale-priced wares on sidewalks, and music—all local musicians—fills the streets of downtown.

Can't make it? Try these:

Smokin' Jazz & Barbeque Blues Festival: September 5–6, 2014

Whether you like it Texas-, Carolina-, or Memphis-style, 'cue connoisseurs will find their nirvana in Brighton this weekend. Bonus: It wouldn't be a jazz *or* barbeque fest without a wine and beer garden.

Brighton Fine Arts & Acoustic Music Festival: August 1–3, 2014

Live acoustic tunes are the perfect accompaniment to this prestigious celebration of arts—think watercolor, woodworking, sculpture, jewelry making, pottery, glass blowing, and more—in the heart of downtown.

Tags: **Vail, Beaver Creek, Breckenridge, Keystone, Heavenly, Northstar, Kirkwood, Mt Brighton, Multi-resort**

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