

12/7/13

Communications in response to VHA Newsletter - December 6, 2013:

Reading about tourism in Vail is kind of humorous for me.

In Europe - hiking - walking - Nordic walking is the big thing. Millions of tourists spend their vacation doing it.

In Switzerland you find now 60,000 km, which is about 40,000 miles, of well-prepared hiking and walking trails. These trails are well-marked and prepared for tourists! In other European countries there is almost not a single resort anymore without a big offering of trails for their guests.

A place like Vail in Europe would offer about 50 miles of carefully marked and well-maintained hiking trails. There are stores with special boots, clothing, rain gear, GPS maps and so on. Hiking in Europe is a well-run business and you wouldn't believe how much other business this creates.

In Vail, what else can visitors do? The thinking in Vail is to offer visitors eating and entertainment, but this is so far out of step with the world that it is a joke. Visitors can get this back home. Tell me, why should visitors come to Vail just for dining?

I wouldn't say anything about this, if it weren't for the difficulty that people from Europe go through getting to Vail, sitting hours on a plane and once they get there to be disappointed about what there is to do.

I remember when I came from Germany in the late 1940's to the United States to teach people skiing. It was a similar time to today. Americans back then had not picked up the idea of what a big business alpine skiing might be. It needed Europeans to show them how to do it.

Now, a lot of resorts in Europe have more income in summer than they do in winter. For this reason some of the mountain resorts are starting to shut down in wintertime, simply because they are tired of dealing with unsteady weather conditions.

It is odd to read that Vail's summer time business is slowing, while similar mountain resorts elsewhere in the world their summer business is booming. I wonder how much time it will take until Vail wakes up. But I am sure, whomever in Vail has the big idea to do what is done everywhere else in the world already, will be declared a big hero.

I am also sure that you will agree when I tell you that to walk 3 Miles (if you find some benches to sit down - instead of sitting on some rocks like in Vail) you will have more fun than going to the gym to control your growing "belly."

There are many ways to spend a vacation, if guests seem not to stay long enough in Vail that might be a reason to think about the reason why. But, this said, those responsible may not pay attention because the manager and tourism experts in Vail think they are already outstanding.

See you soon.

I just read your magnum opus on the health of Vail. Congratulations. It is unusual to see such a thorough analysis about anything let alone a community. The most worrying aspect is the lack of participation of the nonresidents in the process. It is not true that they don't vote. They vote with their feet. In my case since our unit is still on the market, they seem to be voting by not purchasing.

As many have noted, free is a difficult thing to beat. As long as the highways are free, they will be over used and alternative transportation has a hard time surviving until the congestion takes the free away.

There is no clear path to the future. My two cents is that Vail has embarked on a course which is markedly different than Aspen. Aspen is a gated community by virtue of its difficult access. Vail should try to become a city on its own. For

this to happen I-70 should become a toll road (so it can be relocated) and the Vail residential density should increase. Perhaps not in Vail proper but somewhere in the valley. If density is high enough, people will flock to a clean, well connected environment.

The one trend you don't talk about is the increasing high tax anti-growth policies of the Colorado Democrats. Rather than competing with the South and the sun, they want to compete with the North and the cold. It doesn't bode well.

Thanks for giving me a chance to think this morning.

Best

I have lived on and off in Vail since 1981. I own a condo in the Village that I purchased in 1988. Up until a few years ago, there was a market, a grocery store, in the Village in Crossroads plus, and for a long time, a deli in the Vail Village Inn.

During the big redevelopment of the last few years, hundreds of condominiums were built and marketed between the Village and Lionshead. They all have kitchens. But now there is NO grocery store in the Village or in Lionshead. (The General Store cannot be considered a market).

We are a walking village. That is one of the beauties of Vail. You can really come here for a week or longer and not need a car. Unless you want to actually eat in your condo.... without ordering pizza. I find it unconscionable that in the planning stages, a grocery store was not included. There was supposed to be one at Solaris. There is not. There was a small one, albeit expensive, in the Market Place on Meadow Dr....but it's gone now.

If I were bringing my family here and after checking into my condo, found out that I have to take a taxi or a bus or hire an expensive service to bring me food from the Safeway or City Market, I would not come back next year. I would go to Aspen.

Sincerely,

Editor Note: VRI has promised a grocery store will be included in their planned Ever Vail development, but that won't be built for years. We've suggested the Town lease the space they own under the La Bottega for a grocery store. The La Bottega recently opened a small deli, perhaps they could expand into the Town's basement space, but then there may be a problem with getting access for the handicapped and deliveries. The Town also has land at the east end of the Lionshead parking structure. We agree that it is an unfulfilled necessity and will keep working on the problem. However, the local restaurant lobby most likely won't be supportive of any approach that makes it easier for you to dine in your condo. Thank you for you expressing your concerns and I will pass them along to others.

Your newsletters are always great, but I found this one especially so. Keep up the great work!

I wanted to send you a quick note to let you know that I believe the following paragraph is not really correct. While pretty much factual for GOPRO, not at all true for USA PRO. Retailers and Restaurants both have reported that sales were down during this event, antidotally because the spectators were just "passing through." The lodges, on the other hand, were reported to be booked solid, but mostly from the race participants.

I think you should ponder the effect on Vail real estate as the word gets out to wealthy second home owners that they do not get fair treatment from the local government. They can buy in other locations where they will be treated fairly. In turn, they spend a lot of money on restaurants, shopping, etc.

Perhaps the town is killing the golden goose causing them to appeal to daily visitors who don't have deep pockets.

I have come to the conclusion that electing a town council that gives a hoot about second homeowners won't happen.

I think a boycott is needed where homeowners stop eating out or buying things in Vail once a week is tried. If that does not work, then twice a week, etc.

The economic power of the homeowners is large and needs to be used.

Regards
