D SECTION



When I need a break from the gym, I turn to my new favorite workout channel on Yo Tube – Allblanc TV. After four fitness vloggers met at a fitness competition in 2016, the banded together to create workout routines set in different locales. – Jennifer Mulson

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024



PHOTOS BY TIMOTHY HURST, THE GAZETTE
Training manager and instructor Mary Davis, helps first-time skier Quinn Leensvaart, 7, slowly descend down the artificial ski slope during a lesson on one of the three
indoor slopes on Wednesday, Jan. 24, at SNÖBAHN Indoor Ski + Snowboard Center in Centennial.

SNÖBAHN training manager and instructor Mary Davis, left, adjusts the angle of first-time skier Quinn Leensvaart 7, during a lesson.



### BY SETH BOSTER

ONLINE For a video from SNOBAHN, go to gazette.

CENTENNIAL · Sadler Merrill's first summer of

skiing was 2016.

If you read that line and raised your eyebrow, your reaction was similar to those who observed Merrills idea play out back then.

The idea was SNOBAHN, an indoor facility for learning to ski and snowboard and refine technique. The concept was new to the Front Range

Skiing indoors? It's cool enough for another SNÔBAHN in Colorado

# Visitation to state parks declines in 2023

FIELD NOTES



SETH BOSTER

Visitation to Colorado's state parks continues to dip after record years during the COVID-19 pandemic. Colorada Parks and Wildlife reports 17.8 million people went to the parks in 2023. According to data provided, that's a 9% drop from the record year of 2020, when closer to 19.5 million visitors were counted across the parks. The data show about 19.3 million visited in

mat surge came at a time when peo-ple flocked outdoors for fun and peace at a time of lockdowns, entertainment closures and changed work schedules. CPW noted a shift back to "normal" in 2022, when 18.1 million were tallied across the state parks.



A hiker makes his way to the end of the trail at Arkan-sas Point for a view of Lake Pueblo below on July 22, 2021.



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# SNOBAHN

at the time: a set of revolving at the time: a set of revolving, nylon carpets or "slopes" that could be altered for pitch and speed to mimic action on a mountainside. Like racquet-ball court-sized treadmills that are watered down for secondition disclopers.

w-like slickness. om SNÖBAHN's place in a high-rise shopping center south of Denver, the moun-tains could be seen in the distance - those real, snows world-class slopes. Which led to the obvious question for Merrill

Merrill.
"Why?" he recalled.
"We were more concerned it would be considered as a novelty or a gimmick," he went on. "So we wanted a strong brand and an impressive facility, so that when people came in there was this immediate credibility with what we were considered. this was a legitimate way to learn and train." Now comes SNÖBAHN's

Now comes SNÖBAHN's greatest testament to legiti

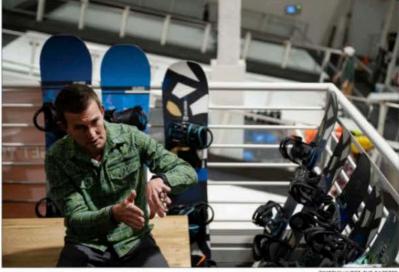
macy.

A second facility is set to open this month in Thornton with a bold billing to be "the premier action sports center in any city in the country."

The second SNOBAHN will bemore than double the size of the first 3,000 course feet

of the first, 38,000 square feet of the first, 38,000 square feet compared to 15,000 square feet. That means more room for park-style skaling and BMXing that currently hap-pens in a corner of the Cen-tennial building. And it means more room for Merrill's original, renegade dream: indoor skiing and snowboarding. Thornton will add a revolv-ing slope to the three found

ing slope to the three found in Centennial. That's the "al-pine" side of the business. The pine" side of the business. The next location will expand on the "freestyle" side as well — adding to the jump and giant airbag landing and trampo-lines where young and more developed athletes practice their flips and tricks in the air. That includes Cade Benton, 10. His mom, Cara, proudly



SNÖBAHN founder and CEO Sadler Merrill discusses the heightened difficulty of skiing on an indoor slope and how it c show weaknesses in a rider's technique that a natural slope may hide.

shows an iPhone video of his run at Copper Mountain last year that made him a slopenal champion.

style national champion.

SAOBAHN, Cara said,
"changed the trajectory of his
skiing." It allowed for a "structured environment," said father Caleb. An environment, he said, that was safer than
un-mountain obstacles, where
Cade could limit injury risk,
get comfortable in the air and
practice moves over and over
again.

You come in (to SNÖBAHN) and initially look at it like this is a learn how to ski place," Caleb said. "I think Cade tells the story that this is the kind

the story that this is the kind of place where you can learn to be an elite skier."

That's the sell. Similar to the freestyle zone, the revolving slopes are meant to be fast, efficient ways to learn balance before the classic ways of the "pizza" and "french fries."

But Merrill also likes think there's a reason why ski teams and Olympic dreamers have regularly returned here, why SNÖBAHN might be giving new meaning to post work turns for city dwellers work turns for city dwellers. No lift line here. Once a competitor himself on the University of Colorado-Boulder team, Merrill likes to think perfection can be chased on these revolving slopes – helped by the mirrors facing the skier.

"So you can look at yourself while you're skiing," gold medalist Bode Miller once said in a promotional video.
"You can make real-time corrections and improve dramat-

ns and improve dramat recti

rections and improve dramat ically very quickly."
It sounds like another pro motion, but Merrill swears "I'm a better skier today that when we started the busines

ight years ago."
When SNÖBAHN started,
we were open eight hours a

nd we'd have maybe 10 or 15 people come through early on," Merrill said. Now, he said, in-house instructors teach about 6,000 people a year how to ski or snowboard while others buy training ses sions and memberships

sions and memberships.
Among the team is Harry
Carrothers. A former ski bum
in Vail, like Merrill, Carrothers has been around since the
start.

"I thought it was a very cool
and interesting and great con-

"I thought it was a very cool and interesting and great con-cept," he said of his early im-pressions. "We're not replac-ing the mountains. We don't want to replace the moun-tains."

The stated goal, rather, is to

The stated goal, rather, is to get more people on them.

Merrill often cites a 2015 study commissioned by Colorado Ski Country USA and Vail Resorts that countered the perception of a ski-crazed state. That study determined fewer than 1 in 10 Coloradans

ctually skied among the vaationer crowds. Merrill counts himself un-

urprised "As an adult having kids, I realized all the barriers to en-

realized all the barriers to en-try in the sport," he said.

Time, money and fear were the big barriers. And yet, Mer-rill also realized, the ski in-dustry's impact on the state could be measured in billions of dollars — \$4.8 billion a year to be exact, according to that same Colorado. Ski Country and Vail study. Those numbers spoke to a business mind.

mind.

mind.

Along a successful entre-preneurial path out of ski bum life, Merrill thought of a way back into the industry he loved. It was not a new thought globally.

Indoor skiting is traced 100 years back, when refrigerated centers of artificial snow-ov-cred slopes began spreading around Europe. The tech-

ology seen in SNÖBAHN is from more recent decades. A leading manufacturer, Ski Machine, has been developing simulators in the Netherlands since 1995.

since 1995.
That's where Merrill went for his research. The famous "lowlands" of the country seemed a curious place for the revolving slopes to be popular.
"If they can prove that model in an area where there's not

"If they can prove that mod-el in an area where there's not even acceptable skiling, we figured this would be a higher probability of success," Mer-rill said. "We had this idea to fish where the fish are

And to break down those

Ish where the fish are."

And to break down those barriers.

While also selling itself in the "backyard" for Denverites—saving time on the drive to the mountains—"semi-private" lessons at SNOBAHN start at \$60 with gear provided. Others buy sessions at a similar price point to, as the menu says, "get ski legs back" or "build endurance."

It was good enough for Bode Miller to promote. The star's endorsement was part of careful marketing that Merrill knew was key for SNOBAHN early on. Careful thought went into the name, too.

The orange in the logo goes back to the orange of the slopes' Dutch manufacturer. Merrill sees those two dots symbolizing ski tips. The language is a nod to the sport's European roots, he said: "Sno' is Swedish for "snow," And 'bahn' is German for 'path' or 'trail.' We're the path to the

venture."
Inspiring a path to the mountains — that is indeed the goal. Merrill said, even as he dreams of expanding SNOBAHN to be "the default method for learning, training and progressing."

And maybe providing something close to the camaraderie that comes from being outside with friends.

Merrill one, evening was Merrill one, evening was

outside with friends.

Merrill one evening was
watching a skier fly on a slope
set to high speed. The swoosh
over wet nylon sounded close
to real carving. And then
came the remark from Merrill, as if a cheer for mastery
on the mountain: "Send it!"

### TAKE OUR ADVICE

Dear Amy: My husband has been irritable, tense, short-tempered and basically tak-ing things out on me and our 16-year-old son. old son.

1 confided in my

39-year-old stepson (my husband's son)

and let him know that I was worried about his father regarding stress and po-tentially some depression

issues.

I did mention that we were not getting along well and suggested that perhaps the son could give his father a break and take him away from the stress of the family business. The getway ended up being a trip to Vegas, which included to Vegas, which included drinking, gambling and yes, strip joints. This of course put a bigger wedge in our marriage. Would it be ap-propriate to let my stepson know how hurt I am, since he coordinated the "bache-lor trip?" — Bamboozled

Dear Bamboozled: Your were good, but the essential error you made was to share your marital problems with your hus-band's son. Confiding your concerns about his stress and possible depression one thing, but entrusti-children (no matter he old) with deeply person ion is



father. So, were you bam boozled when the So, were you bam-boozled when the son chose to take his dad for a Yegas blowout, versus a de-stressing yoga retreat in the woods? It was unre-alistic of you to expect a dif-ferent outcome. Your husband is unhappy. He is not treating you and your son well. His problem has come home to roost, and you and he should pursue marriage counsel-

pursue marriage counsel-ing right away. Couples' counseling does not always repair relationships, but it does facilitate comp does facilitate communica-tion and create pathways for behaving differents. And sometimes, counseling sessions can oncov-er intractable issues that lead to couples deciding to part. Your husband might be toying with leaving the marriage; he is forcing the marriage; he is forcing the marriage; he is forcing the issue by treating you badly, which is a cowardly — but common — way to transfer unhappiness onto family members.

Send questions to amydickinson.com or to Ask A RO. Box 194, Freeville, NY 1301

Dear Dr. Roach:

My husband had a small stroke last spring, causing a small loss of vision in his left eye. He is 81 and an otherwise active man. One doctor told him to

stop using meclizine and Viagra. Another physician said that he didn't see a problem with taking the meds. Whose advice should he follow? — M.M.

Answer: A stroke is caused by the death of brain cells, most commonly due to poor blood flow in the brain, and it's critical to avoid any med-ication that will increase the city of stroke Medicians is risk of stroke. Meclizine is an antihistamine medicine most commonly used for motion sickness and some-times used for vertigo. Al-

times used for vertigo. Al-though it has been reported to cause blurry vision, the risk of a person with a his-tory of a stroke taking me-clizine is minimal.

There isn't good evidence that Viagra is dangerous for a person who had a stroke. However, Viagra does low-er blood pressure by a few points, so if your husband's blood pressure is on the borblood pressure is on the bor-derline, that might be an issue. Most authorities say that a man who is stable, has ood blood pressure and is ore than six months out om his stroke does need

not stop Viagra.



Dear Dr. Roach: At 75, I developed stress urinary in-continence, but in the past two years, it has become more uncomfortable. My urogynecologist

has recommend-ed a urethral bulking agent called Bulkamid. Are you fa-miliar with this procedure? Can you give any insight on the pros and cons? — M.F.

Answer: My preferred treatment for female stress incontinence are pelvic floor exercises. Unfortunately, they don't work for every-one. In women well past menopause, I look carefully for evidence of vulvanginal for evidence of vulvovaginal atrophy and consider topical estrogen. If these low-risk therapies are ineffective, then a visit to the urologist or urogynecologist is in order. The most common treatments include surgery, such as the minimally invasive sling surgery, and also the injection of a bulking agent into the urethra, like Bulkamid. Comparing the two, surgery tends to have higher patient-satisfaction rates, but the injection is for evidence of vulvovaginal higher patient-satisfaction rates, but the injection is less invasive and still has a good result for me

Dear Heloise: Why do so many residential streets have such poor lighting? For a great many people, night blindness is a reality. For some, it's not too bad, but for the majority of

for the majority of the total to read street signs or find addresses after dark when you

dresses after dark when you have night blindness.

I would have thought that having well-lit streets all over town would be a priority for every city. Not only would it help those of us with night blindness, but it would also help prevent crime. Most thieves atay away from well-lit areas. With all the cameras that businesses and individuals With all the cameras that businesses and individuals use these days, good lighting can also help the police identify criminals. It might help people who walk during the evenings as well. Sadly, while our main streets are usually lit up like an airport runway, the side streets where most people live are often neglected and have very few street lights. — Donna H., Carlsbad, N.M.

Donna, we cannot diag-Donna, we cannot diag-ose or treat ourselves, so copile who have (or sus-ect they have) night blind-ess need to see a doctor, here are several reasons

for this problem, such as a lack of (or a low level of) vitamin A. It might also be something else, such as cataracts or glaucoma, to name a few. Your best bet is to see an eye specialist and have them test your vision. A doctor can give you a formal diagnosis and a course of treatment if your problem is treatable. Don't delay getting this checked out. Make an appointment as soon as you can. Your vision is too important to neglect.

As for better lighting on our streets, I have to agree with you. Many people would be safer if cities dropped certain projects and paid for better lighting on per such as a possible of the safer if cities dropped certain projects.

dropped certain projects and paid for better lighting on their streets. - Heloise

Dear readers: Garage become such messy places for holding large outdoor items and lots of family junk. Try this idea to or-ganize your garage: Paint ganize your garage: Paint parking area lines on the floor to designate space for bikes, a lawn mower or oth-er large objects. They will then have their own areas, and smaller items can be nized around them

### TODAY'S HOROSCOPES BY MAGI HELENA

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

This is probably a good time to be optionabout romantic opportunities. Consider

A sincere apology can often put things right. Make amends and a delicate family situation

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) It could be wise to pour oil on troubled waters. A person who is on the edge might be impressed by your thoughtful words. CANCER (June 21-July 22)

You deserve to receive the best but be wise about when you ask for favors or special

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

Accept sincere apologies and peacemakin efforts with good grace. It hurts you when you choose to hold a grudge. VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Whether the meetup is meant for socializing or networking, it's on you to present your-self honestly and authentically.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

You could be concerned about practicalities. You might want to stock up on some things

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) SCORPIO (OCC. 25-Nov. 21)

You can become indispensable. An ability to neopoliste the insa and outs of a thorny situation can turn you into a hero.

SAGITARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

You might have the wrong focus for your project. Consider reltling other people steer things in a better direction.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

Be a wise shopper if you feel a need to splurge and remember you do not need to AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Exert a little effort and you ma settle a feud. Kindness and con earn you a few extra points : PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) nts with a loved one

In the heat and complexity of trying to advance new projects, it's still important to maintain quality control.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Feb. 12

Let wisdom and intuition quide Let wisdom and intuition guide you as unforeseen events might disrupt your life this month. You may be glad for good friends and allies who can keep your spirits up. Most changes should ultimately be beneficial, so remain optimistic in March and take steps to plan ahead for your financial security.