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SKI

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SUGAR HILL INN PAGE 26

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DECEMBER 2011
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GO.

WHERE TO GO. WHY TO GO. WHAT TO DO.



SKIABLE
ACRES
264

VERTICAL
FEET
2,180

BASE
ELEVATION
1,900 feet

SUMMIT
ELEVATION
4,080 feet

Cannon Mountain, N.H.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN AT
A NEW HAMPSHIRE ICON.

By Joe Cutts

COURTESY OF GARY FELLER/CANNON MOUNTAIN

tip> Step back in time and take a walk through the grounds and common areas of Mittersill's original base village, built in 1945. Stick around for a drink in Baron's Pub.

GO. (now)

IT'S EASY TO MISUNDERSTAND Cannon skiers as simply wanting less of everything. Less glitz, less commercialism, less pretension. But the way they see it, Cannon gives them more of everything they want. More scenery, more vertical, more challenge, more character, more room to move. Now they've got 86 more acres of skiable terrain, too, since the installation last year of a double chair on the recently incorporated slopes of long-dormant Mittersill ski area next door.

I've got the place to myself. I know this because I keep asking the liftie. "Still just you," he booms as I zip by for my fourth run. "Gettin' lonely yet?"

Evidently it's more skiable terrain than they actually need, or so it appears on my first encounter. I don't see another skier anywhere. Admittedly, it's a weekday. And while the cover is good and the sun shines brightly, the temperature hovers in the low thirties—not warm enough to soften the bumps.

Which explains why everyone else is over at Cannon proper, enjoying nicely groomed manmade snow while they wait for things to soften up. Here at never-groomed Mittersill, the bumps may be hard, but they're chalky, not icy. And I've got the place to myself. I know this because I keep asking the liftie. "Still just you," he booms as I zip by for my fourth run. "Gettin' lonely yet?"

Though newly reopened, the Mittersill slopes aren't much newer than anything else at big, historic Cannon. They were originally the brainchild of an international playboy, the Baron Hubert von Pantz, whose Austrian castle was



SLEEP

› Cannon has minimal lodging, and Franconia is similarly amenity-light, but the area has a few charming B&Bs, one being the Sugar Hill Inn (from \$150; sugarhillinn.com). The clapboard farmhouse was built in 1789 and has seen several upgrades, though the broad mountain vistas haven't changed. The Mountain View Grand Resort is in Whitefield and runs shuttles to Cannon, 30 minutes away (from \$199; mountainviewgrand.com).



EAT & DRINK

› Sugar Hill's firelit dining room has a romantic ambience and ambitious cuisine. For more action, head south 10 miles to Lincoln and Woodstock, home of more touristy Loon Mountain.





info> cannonmt.com

A snow-coated summit lookout guards the frozen expanse of Franconia Notch State Park. This page: Hiking to Mittersill from the Taft Slalom trail.



MUST DO

> For ski-history buffs, Cannon's the trifecta. Ride the tram (installed in 1938), take a run on the Taft Slalom (developed as a hike-to race trail around 1932), and then get context on it all at the New England Ski Museum (next to the tram).

GO. (now)

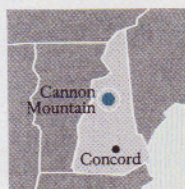
taken over by Nazis following the *Anschluss*, the political union between Germany and Austria that preceded World War II. He fled to the White Mountains, where he found a spot to build a new resort for the ski-mad Americans of the postwar years.

Von Pantz, who named Mittersill for his baronial homelands back in the Alps, envisioned a place that evoked the look and feel of an Austrian resort, and he was among the first to incorporate a slopeside village into his design. Today it's easy to be critical of the over-the-top Bavaria that pervades slopeside megadevelopments, but Mittersill deserves respect for being one of the original faux-Austrian American resorts.

The Baron carved out broad slopes descending to a classic alpine hotel with a scattering of alpine cabins. He brought in crack Austrian instructors and glamorous friends and presided over it all with grace and noblesse oblige. And yes, he ripped.

After three decades, the Baron returned home. New management sold off the resort's rooms and cabins, some of which can still be rented today. By the early '80s, poor winters and a slow economy forced Mittersill's closure. Its dormant slopes became a sidecountry playground for skiers willing to hike from the famous Taft Slalom trail. Those same skiers were the ones grumbling when state-owned Cannon incorporated Mittersill's terrain and added a lift.

The old double T-bar remains forlornly in place,



Cannon's 80-passenger tram ascends 4,080 feet in less than 10 minutes; Granite State hospitality at the Sugar Hill Inn.



Mittersill's dormant slopes became a sidecountry playground for Cannon skiers willing to hike from the famous Taft Slalom trail.

red and rusting under three decades of regrowth. Cannon's mountain-ops staff showed restraint when re-clearing Mittersill's trails for skiing. It rides like an abandoned ski area. No grooming, no snowmaking.

But Cannon didn't need Mittersill to be awesome. Avid skiers consider it

New Hampshire's best lift-served terrain. The lack of slopeside development gives it refreshing soul, and there's arguably no resort in the East with better scenery: Cannon guards the north entrance to rugged Franconia Notch, affording views of wind-blashed Lafayette across the way.

I make laps on Upper Ravine—a rough-hewn super G—and then rejoin my wife for lunch and leisurely afternoon runs in the sun.

Later, over a pint in the Cannonball Pub, I'm relaxed and satisfied, despite the lack of hot tubs, sashimi and valets. This must be what it means to be a Cannon skier. ●

CAL CRAWFORD



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