



# Parking Lot to the Slopes: A Solution to the Wait Time

Tucker Lawrence

## You Know the Feeling

The day is Saturday, March 11, 2023. My sister and I pull into Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT. Our hopes are high because we left early in order to beat the traffic. However, to our horror we are confronted with a massive line of cars at the mouth of the canyon, full of people who apparently thought that leaving early was a good idea as well. After searching for an hour (when we could have been skiing) we finally find parking, just to wait in line again to get on the "Apex Lift" at Solitude Mountain Resort.

Our original plan that day was to ski Brighton, a resort only 15 minutes deeper into the canyon; however, their parking had completely filled up. The lack of parking not only had taken away our precious ski time, but also our choice of ski resort.

## Not Alone

On the way home from the March 11 fiasco, I began thinking. I knew I wasn't the only one who's experienced a tragic, failed ski day like this. I texted my friend Justin Olcott and asked him if he's ever experienced anything similar.

"To our horror we are confronted with a massive line of cars"

He said that one day he had tried to ski at Alta, but the parking lot was full. He decided to try and make it up Big Cottonwood Canyon to ski Solitude; however, their lots were full as well. Finally, he tried taking the ski bus, but due to the delays, he had to wait an hour to board. When all was said and done, Justin had spent three of his six available hours waiting to ski.

Obviously some mountains manage parking better than others; however, the fan favorites, like Brighton and Alta, seem to struggle the most. The Article, ["The 10 Best—and Worst—Ski Resorts For Parking"](#) contains a list of the good and the bad with regards to ski resort parking.

## Cost

Along with wait time, another factor to take into account is cost. Your money is valuable, and you deserve to enjoy what you pay for. Many times, when you pull up to a resort, you've already dropped a large sum of money on plane tickets, paid for lodging, bought ski passes, etc. Ski ticket prices alone are out of control. From Stowe VT to Mammoth Mountain CA, skiers can expect to pay upwards of \$100 for a day ticket.

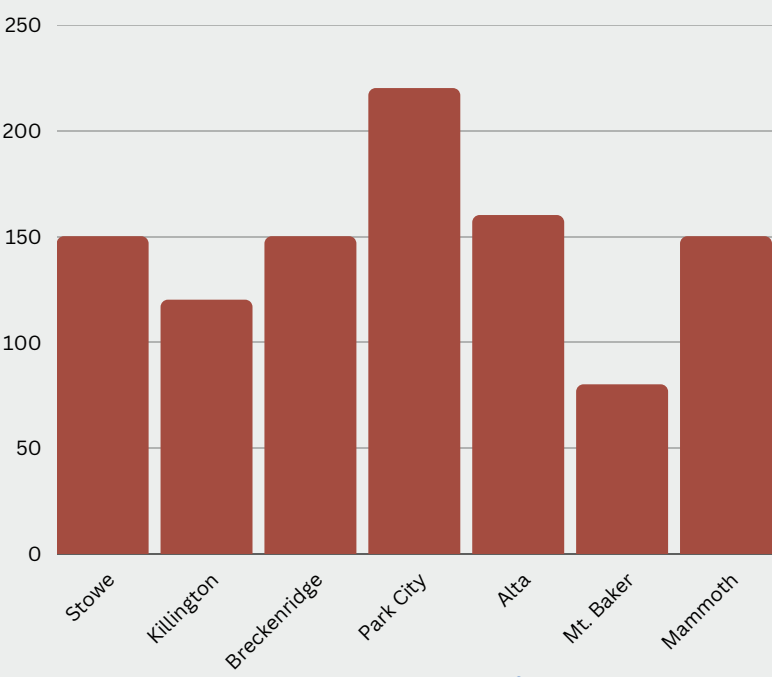
As the ski season begins to wind down in the spring months, lift-ticket prices are normally cheaper; however, this spring's prices seem to be showing no mercy.

[Onthesnow.com](https://onthesnow.com)

gathers lift-ticket information (displayed to the right) from ski mountain websites.

The ski ticket prices for March of this year are astronomical. 10 years ago, a skier would have expected to pay much less than these prices in peak season (January until early March).

Ski Ticket Prices March 2023



[United States Ski Resort Lift Ticket Prices and Rates \(onthesnow.com\)](https://onthesnow.com)

## Solution: The all-in-one Parking System

Think back to your last ski vacation. How much time did you spend skiing? How much time did you spend waiting in lines, for parking, etc.? Were your costs worth the four hours that you skied? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you are starting to think like me. Rising ski industry costs, stories like the one told by Justin, and my own experiences have all led me to think of a very simple solution, the combination of online lift ticket purchase processes, resort parking, and transportation.

Imagine pulling into a ski resort entrance with no massive lines to greet you, parking in your reserved spot, and then being on the snow after retrieving your ticket, all in a matter of minutes.

Many resorts already have systems in place for online ticket orders and parking. The problem is that these two systems are not yet combined.

## RFID

RFID stands for Radio-frequency Identification. Like the entrance of a subway or theme park, many resorts have an RFID system in place which stops a skier from getting on the ski lift without a valid scan of their ticket. Skiers can purchase a QR code on the ski resort's website, then later print a lift ticket using that code at kiosks like the one shown here.

Once at the resort, skiers must find a parking spot. many resorts offer online payment options for parking but require you to find a spot first. This can be a very frustrating process, much like my experience this past March.



<https://www.aspentimes.com/news/aspen-airport-get-your-ski-passes-here/>

[Aluvii](https://aluvii.com) is a company that produces kiosk systems for ski resorts and many other entities. Systems like Aluvii's can be customized to the needs of a company. Ski resorts can use this system to provide assigned parking upon the customer's purchase. Parking passes would be printed at the kiosks along with the lift ticket. Customers that purchase their lift tickets in advance can be given first pick at their spot, while those that procrastinate can be given other options if the main lots are full. Many of these options are already provided, i.e., ski shuttles (on resort transit) that take skiers from overflow parking to the resort. Resort employees are already tasked with directing parking-lot traffic. These same employees can be trained to mark, and patrol assigned parking spots.



# And Season Pass Holders?

This system would pose a potential threat for season pass holders. Season passes give a skier many advantages. Passes allow skiers to walk right onto the mountain without having to worry about picking up a ticket, they are much cheaper in the long run if a skier is planning on skiing locally for the season, and they give perks (food discounts, extra ski days, etc.). However, if day ticket buyers are taking all of the spots, where would season pass holders park?

Most resorts have multiple parking lots. One or two lots could be dedicated to season pass holders. Most being die-hard skiers, season passholders are willing to get up early.

By doing so, they could get to the mountain and fill up the "season pass only lots." According to an article published by [Thepointsguy.com](http://Thepointsguy.com), resorts such as Camelback, PA have already implemented



<https://camguide.net/usa/utah/salt-lake-city/brighton-resort/>

complimentary parking for season pass holders. A live status, like the Brighton Resort parking lot camera pictured above, can be provided so that season pass holders can track the progress of their assigned lots and know whether to park in the lot, park on the road, take a shuttle, ride with a friend, etc.

## Advantages and Disadvantages

Let's face it, making a flawless system is impossible. Someone will always be unhappy or inconvenienced. I believe that the all-in-one system will help solve many resort-parking issues; however, I know that it could raise some concerns. Below are a few advantages (other than saving time and money), along with potential problems of the all-in-one system.

### Better Access

Unless you like being boxed in by other cars, it's always nice to know you will have a clear route when exiting a parking lot. Many times, we don't think of this issue until it happens, however when it does, it really puts a damper on the end of our day.

Ski mountain parking lots are famous for bad parking jobs. Snow covers all the lines in the lot and, due to the lack of parking, cars pack in like sardines. The all-in-one parking system would force resorts to better maintain and define parking spots to honor reservations made by their customers. The system would also suggest other options (like the shuttle bus from distant lots), which would create an emptier lot and more breathing room for those that park there.

### Environmental Benefits

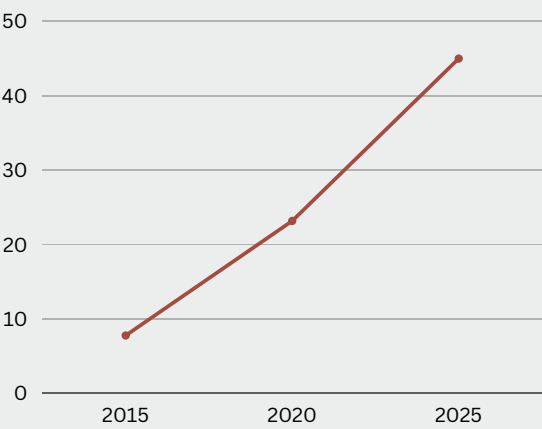
According to an article published by [Earthreminder.com](http://Earthreminder.com), "when all travelers use Carpools to commute, there would be about 780000 fewer vehicle trips per day. This would save 336.53 million liters of fuel each year."

The good news is that car-pooling seems to be on the rise.

Shown in the above graph is data provided by [Statista.com](http://Statista.com) on the number of vehicles used to car-pool from 2015-2025.

Most mountains already contribute to this upward trend by offering parking discounts to those who carpool. The all-in-one system would offer a similar online discount when skiers make their purchases, thus promoting carpooling.

Carpooling Vehicles (in millions) by Year



<https://www.statista.com/statistics/867668/carpooling-vehicles-worldwide/>

## Increased Overall Prices

Implementing the new all-in-one system may run the risk of raising resort prices. Although this new system would be an easy/low-cost change, resort management may look at it as a liability in the beginning. As many companies do, ski resorts often raise prices to counter any new purchases they need to make. Running a ski resort is pricy. According to an article published by [Newtoski](#), chairlift installation alone can cost \$20 million or more. Ski resorts need to cover their costs and then some, as the weather can be unpredictable, and lack of snowfall can lead to shortened ski seasons.

## The Scary "Additional Fees"

We all hate it when we see a total price, but then out of nowhere come extra fees that we didn't know about. Parking reservations can be seen as pesky, extra fees, and at times unnecessary because many mountains offer free parking. Resorts that offer free parking tend to see it as an advantage over their competitors. Parking reservations may make these resorts a little uneasy as it would take a while for people to realize the benefits that come from quick, painless parking.



<https://thepointsguy.com/news/ski-resort-parking-challenges/>

To get over this obstacle, resorts would need to collect data and prove to their consumers how much of an impact the all-in-one system has made on their parking procedures. Resorts tend to advertise a lot through social media. Published footage of smooth parking operations would grab the attention of resort customers much more than a post saying, "lot full."

## Conclusion

There is a problem. Skiers are wasting time and money waiting in lines instead of skiing. Resorts are selling more tickets than they have parking space for and are not providing adequate parking options or refunds. Too many family ski trips are ruined by long wait times. Gone are the days of short, half-day lunch breaks to the ski resort. The solution is found in better parking lot organization, and the combination of parking and ski ticket purchasing systems. The all-in-one system is the answer.

Of course, ski resorts won't change until persuaded by their consumers. Our biggest tool to get the message across will be social media. Through the power of posts and hashtags, we will be able to end lines at the ski resort once and for all. Use the hashtag below to start the movement now, because as [Warren Miller](#) has said, "if you don't do it this year, you'll just be one year older when you do."

Use #fixresortparking to start the movement towards better ski days!

## About the Author

Tucker Lawrence grew up in upstate New York, just five minutes from Titus Mountain. He learned to ski when he was two, and it has become more of a lifestyle than a hobby for him. He now lives in Provo, Utah. He skis at Utah resorts, such as Solitude and Brighton, and studies business on the side.

