



# Fueling the Passion

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One father creates the dream ski adventure for his kids.

By Sarah Kinbar



Clockwise from top left: Steve Garcia and company arrive at Mammoth Mountain, California. Garcia's son, 12-year-old Taylor. Bob LaPoint (right) sets up a ski. Garcia's 8-year-old daughter Alex. Olympic ski racer Errol Kerr. Alex Lauretano cuts to the ramp. Opposite: The crew poses at Mammoth Mountain.





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arents are in the business of creating experiences for their kids. It starts early when

you cheer for the small steps they take, shuffling across the living room; when you get sucked into the Vans store in the mall, buy a skateboard and teach them to ride; and when you celebrate their first deepwater start at the lake. Until they finally leave home, you shape your kids' world with a movie director's attention to detail.

**“Water skiing is one of the only sports that brings the whole family together.”**

— Steve Garcia

Steve Garcia of Mammoth Lakes, California, is a parent with an infectious enthusiasm for water skiing, and he passed it along to his kids, Alex, 8, and Taylor, 12, by creating experiences for them that fuel their passion for the sport. Many skiers talk about how important it is to grow the sport, to ensure it stays alive forever, but Garcia puts his money where his mouth is and makes it happen.

“Water skiing is one of the only sports that brings the whole family together,” says Garcia, who met his wife, Dana, on a ski lake in California and later bought a house there. “Everyone can do it, no matter how young or old. There have been tournaments that I, my wife and both the kids all competed in. Where else do you find that? Nowhere.”

Garcia wants the whole world to recognize the unique family vibe offered by water skiing. To that end, he put together a family trip in June that some would consider the experience of a lifetime: A



CLOCKWISE: JOHN MUMMER/PHOTOGRAPHY.COM; TODD RISTORCELLI (3)

Left, from top to bottom: Garcia and Taylor (right) laugh it up. Jason Seels catches a fish during the second-day icebreaker. LaPoint on Cheyenne Lake. Above: Marcus Brown in attack mode.

## Trip Planner

### ● MAKE FOOD A PART

Steve Garcia, his son Taylor and pro athletes arrived in Los Angeles on a Sunday and headed to Rock'N Fish in Manhattan Beach. The adults tried The Navy Grog, a gold rum and tropical fruit juice cocktail, topped with a layer of sweet Hawaiian dark rum. Plus, Bob LaPoint became the unofficial barbecue master for the rest of the trip.

### ● GET SETTLED IN

A charter flight took everyone from Los Angeles International Airport to Mammoth Mountain

the same day they arrived, where athletes were outfitted with the latest and greatest gear from Kittredge Sports.

### ● GET BUSY

On Monday, everyone spent the morning skiing on the mountain and the afternoon fly-fishing. The fishing outing was the perfect icebreaker for the group; and the camaraderie continued to evolve when the athletes participated in Marcus Brown's live webcast (marcusbrown.tv), which broadcasted from the Garcia house in Mammoth Lakes.

### ● TRY SOMETHING NEW

New experiences welcome group camaraderie and personal growth. Paralympic gold medalist Chris Waddell learned to water ski for the first time alongside Jamie Beauchesne and loved every minute of it.

### ● PACK IT IN

Garcia's trip itinerary was stuffed to the gills. On Tuesday at 11 a.m., after a fun morning filled with snow skiing and plenty of smack talk surrounding a friendly tournament, the group headed to Newbery

Springs, where the picturesque Cheyenne Lake awaited. Everyone was water skiing within three hours of leaving Mammoth Mountain. A big meal, the NBA finals and a late-night boat outing finished the day.

### ● FINISH WITH A BANG

Wednesday was full of more water-ski action. Snow skiers tested their jumping skills on the water for the first time. Then they all flew back to Los Angeles for the final HURRAH — a night out on the town.



Pro snow skiers Julia Ford and Stacey Cook ham it up on the slopes. Opposite, clockwise from bottom right: Jamie Beauchesne gets his swerve on. Taylor carves up Mammoth. Seels is not quite at home in the snow. The Garcia family.



handful of the best skiers in the world, both water and snow, gathered at Mammoth Mountain and Cheyenne Lake in California for four days of friendly competition and great times.

The amazing group of athletes that joined the Garcia family speaks to just how ambitious Garcia's vision is. The water-ski pros included Jamie Beauchesne, Alex Lauretano, Zack Worden, Casey Mommer, Bob LaPoint, Jason Seels and Marcus Brown. The snow skiers included Stacey Cook, Errol Kerr, Julia Ford and Paralympic champion Chris Waddell. While everyone came away saying it was one of the best trips ever, it was the kids Garcia had in

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mind when planning the adventure.

“My son Taylor is really competitive,” Garcia says. “He wants to win. This trip was great for him because he got to hang out with the best skiers, not as professionals, but as real people having fun. He got an insider's view, and the smile never

left his face the whole time.

“Alex, my daughter, is more into having a great time and not so worried about winning. Still, being in that environment with great athletes fired her up, and she skied the best she ever has. She was having so much fun that she wanted to win. During the competitions, she kept looking at me asking, ‘Did I beat anybody? Did I beat anybody?’ Fun makes people want to excel.”

It's fair to say Garcia considers the pro athletes who came part of his extended family. “My wife and I have an open-door policy,” he says. “Anyone who wants to show up to ski is welcome. The trip was like that too. Marcus Brown mentioned



## Good Times Await

Do you like the sound of a cross-training family adventure? There are a few places in the United States where you can get the best of more than one sport, and water skiing will be central to your plans.

### ● MOUNT HOOD REGION IN OREGON

Visit [mthoodterritory.com/itineraries.htm](http://mthoodterritory.com/itineraries.htm) for a list of travel itineraries. Snow ski at Mount Hood and water ski within a short driving distance at Detroit Lake. Bonus: Breitenbush Hot Springs, a complex of mineral hot springs, saunas, cabins and a day lodge, are close by.

### ● LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA

Another one of our favorite places is the Lake Tahoe area, and for snow skiing in particular, Sugar Bowl ([sugarbowl.com](http://sugarbowl.com)) in Norden, California. Less than two hours driving distance is Sunset Ranch, where you can rent the cottage and stay for an extended vacation or just book a lesson with Terry Winter. [skisunsetranch.com](http://skisunsetranch.com)

### ● CALLAWAY GARDENS, GEORGIA

Try to trapeze, seriously, after you water ski at Callaway Gardens' Robin Lake — or golf, or fish or play tennis. You can experience everything a la carte or check out the finely tuned Summer Family Adventure Package from June through August. [callawaygardens.com](http://callawaygardens.com)





King of Darkness tournament winner Zack Worden at Cheyenne Lake. Below: Casey Mommer digs for maximum speed. Opposite, clockwise from top right: Kerr tests out snow skis on the water. The Ski Mafia. Cook at warp speed. LaPoint's son, Kristian, and his new friend Taylor.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: JOHN KOWMER PHOTOGRAPHY.COM; TODD RISTORCELLI; SUSAN MORNING; JOHN KOWMER PHOTOGRAPHY.COM; TODD RISTORCELLI (2)

## Capture the Passion

Steve Garcia hired *The 32 Accounts* videographer and producer Ryan Sawyer to film the trip, and not just for posterity. "It is really important to me that we let people know what a hard-core sport water skiing is," Garcia says. "It is so much fun, it is so intense and it is the perfect sport for kids to pick up. I wanted to make a film that captured that and share the energy with people." The film, *Skier vs. Skier*, which was produced in collaboration with Militia Clothing, is available for free at [militiashop.com](http://militiashop.com).



it to one person, and he was on board. Then that person would pass it along. It spread like wildfire. At the last minute Bob LaPoint asked if he could bring his son. I thought, 'Why not?' This trip is all about saying yes."

LaPoint's 9-year-old son Kristian is a talented snow skier who recently became interested in water skiing, so this was his first major experience with the sport. "This trip was very special," explains LaPoint. "We called it our 'boys trip.' It was, without a doubt, the most fun we've

had together, and it exposed him to water skiing in such a positive, uplifting way. He still talks about the trip and all the people he met.

"Since we got back from the trip, we've skied together a bunch. Water skiing is something we'll be able to do together for many years to come. There will be many trips to look forward to."

A ski adventure can be elaborate, like this one. It began on the slopes and continued to a fishing expedition followed by a private flight to an exclusive

ski lake, with competitions and outings to local eateries mixed in. But something as simple as getting two or three families together for a local, nothing-but-skiing weekend has the same effect. Both outings build connective tissue by offering an exciting activity that everyone can participate in while having lots of fun in the process. Everyone laughs, everyone learns, everyone exercises — there's really no downside. And that's exactly the kind of thing that will draw people to the sport and ensure its longevity.