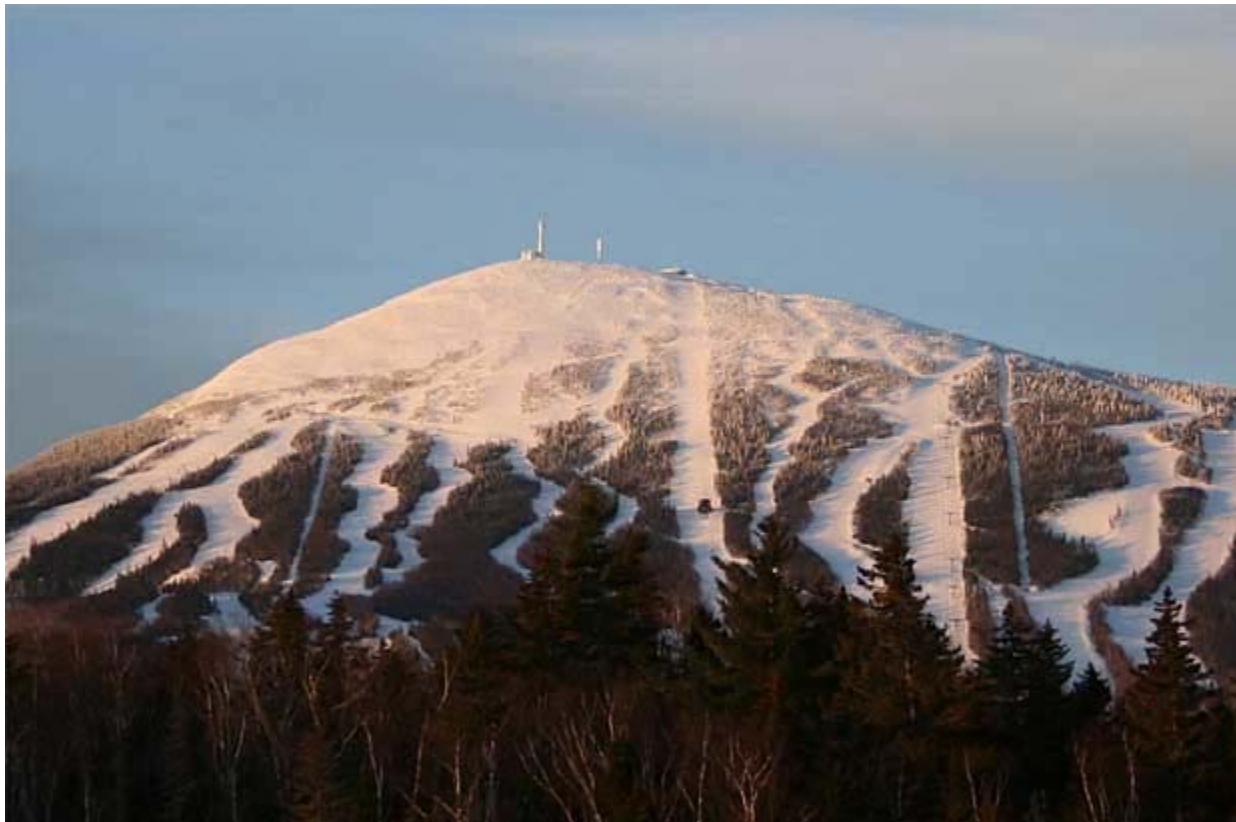


A tale of two family-oriented ski centres

Sugarloaf has broad, sweeping terrain; Edelweiss aims to please younger set

BY ROCHELLE LASH, FREELANCE DECEMBER 16, 2009



The distinctive cone of Sugarloaf Mountain in Maine, which has the only above-the-tree-line skiing in the east.

Photograph by: Handout photo, Sugarloaf Mountain

Imagine two vastly different snow sports areas. Each has a different scope and distinct character. However, Sugarloaf in Maine and Edelweiss in the Gatineau Hills north of Ottawa share common goals - to entertain families and to make snowboard-crazy kids happy.

Sugarloaf's broad terrain and continuous verticals in Maine's Carrabassett Valley are so sweeping that it is almost western in scope. Cone-shaped and looking a little like snow-capped Mount

Fuji, Sugarloaf is distinctive for having open snowfields around the summit, the only lift-serviced, above-the-treeline skiing and riding in the East.

Life at Sugarloaf centres around a slopeside pedestrian village with pubs, shops and lodging in a hotel, townhouses and condos that can accommodate 1,400 visitors. Children can walk to snow school or to the lifts by themselves.

Sugarloaf reinvented its terrain parks in 2008, with a new, advanced series of jumps and rails - a new beginner park and a superpipe and snowboardcross course designed by Olympic gold medalist Seth Wescott, who calls Sugarloaf home.

Sugarloaf also is the site of the Carrabassett Valley Academy, a renowned ski and snowboard learning centre, alma mater of some of the best, including Wescott and big-mountain rider Jeremy Jones. The Sugarloaf Board Room shop has the latest gear for snowboarders and free-riders.

Edelweiss

Edelweiss is a modest-sized mountain with a big heart for youngsters and teens. Similar in size and vertical drop to Mont Olympia in the Laurentians, Edelweiss is special for its extra-wide beginner trails, night lights on 14 of 18 runs and tube-sliding with its own chairlift, and novice to expert runs.

All that is great, but it's the riding in three terrain parks that really rocks Edelweiss. The Black Park -- that's the intermediate to expert area -- has smooth flow, long landings and some of the biggest jumps in Quebec, designed for big air. The snow school helps first-timers through freestyle snowboarding on tabletops and rails and skiing on moguls. Riding fans can check out Wednesday Jam nights, with door prizes, animation and music. After about two months to practice, Edelweiss's Big Air competitions start in February.

Edelweiss is owned by Mont Saint-Sauveur International, so season passes are interchangeable.