

BERGFREUNDE SKI CLUB - Portland, Oregon (NW Ski Club Council)
2005 Tollakson Outstanding Club of The Year Competition

Dear Aunt Bergie:

I hear of many friends doing lots of fun, group activities and often wonder how they got hooked up with a special group of friends, so available to go do fun-filled activities. I used to ski and would really like to get into that sport again, but don't want to go it alone. What shall I do??

Signed, Looking to Hook Up

Dear Looking to Hook Up:

I hear this lament often. Joining a club that does year-round activities is a great way to meet people, make friends, and participate in lots of activities—skiing and social. There are lots of clubs in the Portland area, with all sorts of interests, but let me tell you about MY club---**BERGFREUNDE SKI CLUB!!**

Bergfreunde (Bergies as we are fondly called) is a year-round, **all volunteer, nonprofit** activities club for active adults, on and off the mountain. We have over 400 activities year-round, all organized by volunteer members. With over 1800 members from all walks of life, we are the 3rd largest ski club on the West Coast. Bergfreunde was founded in 1966 by a group of Bonneville Power employees. Although it originally began primarily as a ski club, it has grown to encompass a variety of snow, sports, and social activities. Our club is a member of Northwest Ski Club Council (NWSCC) which is an organization that represents about 40 clubs in Oregon & Washington. They put on trips which Bergies can attend, distribute the NW Skiers Guide, organize a local trade show "Ski Fair", and assist clubs with leadership issues. NWSCC is one of nine Councils that belong to the Far West Ski Association (FWSA). FWSA also puts on trips that we can attend, and they hold an annual convention every June where club members can get the latest information from the ski industry, meet other club members for networking, attend leadership sessions to assist with ski club operations, meet world-famous athletes, attend a fabulous silent auction, and take part in the election process for FWSA. On Saturday night they have a gala event (dinner/dance) and clubs are recognized in the competitions for best website, newsletter, and outstanding club.

Many of our members are now over 50, but the club is working to attract the "next generation"—individuals in their 20's, 30's and 40's, as well as those "young at heart". Our focus is on a safe and socially congenial environment for our members. Because all of our trips and activities are organized by our members, costs are almost always considerably less than those of other activities clubs. Many events are free! And there are many opportunities for leadership involvement. Come join Bergies--meet new friends, get back into skiing, explore new adventures, and have fun—all at the same time!!

Bergfreunde welcomes participants at all levels - beginning to advanced, and there are SO many activities to choose from!! They offer a lot of instruction--teaching safety and tips for enjoying various sports and activities. I tried downhill skiing and was impressed with newsletter articles about skiers responsibility code, skiing with a helmet, and thermal strategies for chairlifts, ski areas, layering, etc. That Mogul Notes is chock full of important information to keep us safe while doing these activities! There was even an article from FWSA Person of The Year, Richard Lubin, "Skiers: Are You Paying Attention" – Clothing, equipment, attitude, health, etc. And, the club offers lessons & fundamentals for kayaking, canoeing, rock climbing, scuba, snowshoeing and windsurfing—just to name a few. Why—I even went to a 24-Hour Fitness club with a group of Bergies to get in shape for skiing—working out with friends and getting a discount. Wow!! Many activities such as hiking, biking, and Cross Country (XC) are listed in the newsletter, with a rating system—so you can know if a particular activity is suitable for your level.

The Trip Captains always make sure to give instruction to the group before they depart—discussing the activity, sign waiver forms, discuss any special needs, and make sure everyone has proper ID. You see--- Bergies advocates carrying ID when you do sports activities—you never know what might happen while your off in the woods or on a downhill trail—having your ID on you at all times would expedite medical assistance. In fact, when you join the club they give you a little plastic holder and ID card to fill out and carry with you at all times!

If you want to do some competitive activities, Bergies can offer you that as well. We support downhill race teams through Northwest Ski Club Council (NWSCC) in their PACRAT racing program with 6-7 Bergie teams per year. The Portland Area Club Recreational Alpine Teams is for beginners to the way advanced. Racers also participate in the Far West Racing Association Championships—a fun race weekend each year in April. And every June we participate in the annual Golden Rose Ski Classic race, held on Mt. Hood. This is a benefit for one of our local clubs (Mt. Hood Academy) that serves students in academics and ski racing. Of course, there's always other activities outside of skiing—some of the fun ones are golfing, walking, waterskiing, hiking, backpacking, camping, rock climbing, paddling sports, scuba diving, and bowling. Don't be a procrastinator—many trips are so popular they are repeated annually and sell out fast! So sign up early!

Trips are always fun and a great way to meet people. You can choose a short trip--like for a weekend--or a long trip that's 4-7 days or longer. Club members volunteer to run all events and trips—(remember—we're an All Volunteer Club!). We've had some great Bergie ski trips this past season—going to Whistler, Lake Tahoe, Mt. Bachelor, Yellowstone, Anthony Lakes, Big Mountain, Schweitzer, and Crystal Mountain. I went on the annual Lake Tahoe trip which always sells out fast, has about 100 people and they have an absolute blast. NWSCC puts on trips that Bergies are invited to attend—they went to Vail/Beavercreek last December with the San Diego Council and are planning another early-season trip this December. Just last month NWSCC went to Sunshine/Lake Louise for outstanding spring skiing. If you really want to go on a long trip that's packed with great skiing and fun on & off mountain activities, sign up for the annual Far West Ski Association (FWSA) "Ski Week." All the Councils attend Ski Week so club members from California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico are in attendance. In 2006, Ski Week will be held at Telluride, Co. Several Bergies attend Ski Week every year. FWSA puts on ski and non-ski trips which all club members are welcome to participate in---this year they are going on a Hawaiian cruise and skiing in Zermatt. All their trips are well organized and very fun!

OK—after you've tried several of the great ski and sports activities, you'll be ready to try Bergies many social events--take your choice--dance lessons, rodeos, symphony, movies, dine outs, pub nights, board games, self-improvement, tours, community volunteering, ocean cruises—the list goes on and on!! And there's our Annual Picnic in August (this year at Oaks Park!) and you can bring your whole family. I've led trips taking 30 people downtown to the theater & dinner, took 20 on a cruise to the Caribbean, and helped with the club's Adopt A Highway program. Our Community Affairs Director gets club members involved in all sorts of community/charity events. We've helped Oregon Public Broadcasting with its annual pledge drive, supplying volunteers for telephone calling; the all-volunteer, irregular, non-precision drill team participates in local parades and fairs to promote the club; we have a strong group of hikers who, yearly, always assist with trail tending in the Columbia River Gorge scenic area; and I helped a group of Bergies paint buildings in Portland with Volunteers of America. If you want to join Bergie members and help with community/charity projects, the newsletter has listings each month. Plus—when you lead trips, you really get an opportunity to practice your leadership skills. If you like leading groups and doing fun activities at the same time, Bergie is for you! You can lead any kind of trip—from an afternoon walk/hike to a week-long adventure out of state or out of country. The club holds leadership sessions and this is a great way to hone your skills and learn about trip leadership.

So you say you want to do some of the activities offered by Bergies, but too timid to attend?? Don't worry, be happy! Beginners are always welcome to participate—take golfing for example—members will give you lessons and teach you golf etiquette (what do you do when that little ball is in the bushes??). The Cross Country (XC) Workshops provide excellent instruction for beginners---how do you think we've arrived at such a large member-population of XC skiers—they all started as beginners and many are now teaching. And we obtain discount vouchers at the various XC areas in Oregon. Discount lift tickets are available for downhillers too—thanks to a great Downhill Ski Director!! Our nearby ski resorts let us know of upcoming special events and how clubs can participate. We are always invited to help with Winter Games of Oregon at Cooper Spur Resort on Mt. Hood. And we work with NWSCC on advocacy issues for the resorts in Oregon. Mt. Hood Meadows and Timberline received much help from Bergies, in the form of writing letters of support, with regard to installing new chair lifts in the past two years. NWSCC has set up an advocacy group, NW SnowSports Advocates, which makes it easy for club members to learn about the issues facing our ski resorts and take action. Some Bergies belong to Mt. Hood Ski Patrol, volunteering weekends. Ski Patrol is an annual guest speaker at our monthly membership meeting where they present various topics on safety on the mountain, and hold a fundraiser—where Bergies give generously!!

Special Olympics Oregon (SOOR) is the club's primary philanthropy—we hold a special place in our hearts for these athletes. The club holds various events to raise funds for their winter ski program. We provide volunteers to assist with the Winter Games each March at Mt. Bachelor where we're on-mountain, helping with all the ski events for the athletes. Our major fundraiser for SOOR is an annual bike-hike-walk event, "Le Tour de Valley", held at the Oregon Gardens. Bike rides up to 100 miles, hikes through nearby Silver Falls State Park and guided walks are followed by a huge spaghetti feed with all the proceeds benefiting SOOR.

As I said before, our club is a member of NWSCC/FWSA. If you want to find out more about what's happening within these organizations, just visit the Bergie monthly membership meetings. The NWSCC Club Rep is always on hand at their designated table—he/she can answer all your questions and give you flyers on the various trips/activities they put on. Plus, NWSCC has a dedicated monthly column in the Bergie newsletter.

I hope I've given you enough information to entice you to join BERGFREUNDE SKI CLUB!! I've been a member for over 20 years and have enjoyed the wonderful/varied activities, improved my skiing, and most of all, made some life-long friendships. I hope you, too, will find Bergies a very welcome, special club to belong to!!!