

GORE!

MOUNTAIN

By Phil Johnson

Many improvements have made New York's Southern Adirondack resort Great!

Should we get ready for another transformation?



Gore is a candidate to become "The Next New Place" in the Northeast

First of all, let's get one thing straight. "Gore", as in the Gore Mountain Ski Resort, refers to a surveyor's term for a triangular piece of land.

"More Gore", the area's marketing slogan, means more outdoor opportunity and variety on the four peaks that make up this ski destination in North Creek NY in the southern Adirondack Mountains. It is located about an hour and a half north of Albany, all that on good roads.

Skiers from New York's Capital District and the Mohawk Valley have been flocking there for years. But only recently have folks from farther afield started to come in appreciable numbers.

If you have been to Gore lately, you know it is a keeper. There are 29 skiable miles on 86 trails across the four peaks with a vertical of 2,100 feet, second best in New York State. There is a

dedicated beginner area, lots of intermediate runs, including some of the best cruisers in the east, several glades, terrain parks, and some very challenging advanced terrain, like The Rumor which is touted to be the steepest lift accessible trail in the East.

Haven't been to Gore? Maybe you suffer from "Exit 20 Syndrome!" Each week during the season, the mass of skiers who regularly head north from the metropolitan New York area do just fine on Interstate 87...until they reach Exit 20 between Glens Falls and Lake George. There, many cars, wagons, vans, and SUVs apparently experience a strange pull that makes them want to steer away from the highway and take Route 149 east toward Vermont.

In recent years, some pilgrims have managed to stay the course and continue north another 10 minutes to Exit 23 and Warrensburg. Then it is an easy half hour drive to Gore Mountain. And what they have found in North Creek is an appealing, well managed mountain that has

improved by leaps and bounds in recent years.

Here's why I think it is worth the trip!

Originally a destination for ski trains in the 1930s, the current Gore Mountain opened in 1964, the third of three ski resorts (Belleayre and Whiteface are the other two) developed by New York State. In 1984, it was taken in by the Lake Placid based Olympic Regional Development Authority which today operates both Gore and Whiteface.

While there is a long and storied history of skiing in this area, what has happened in recent years has made Gore a candidate to become "The Next New Place" in the Northeast. Like Okemo, VT in the early 1990s and Bretton Woods, NH more recently, an established ski area comes a long way in a short time. That's Gore today!

The leap forward actually began more than a decade ago with the redesign of the ski area to make the focus Bear Mountain, a peak that previously had just been a wilderness area surrounded by Gore ski terrain on three

sides. A new eight passenger gondola to the peak of Bear Mountain in the center of the ski center layout was completed in 1999. (There was a gondola at Gore from the start but this new one is shorter, lower to the ground, and much more reliable.)

This lift transformed Gore.

Now there was a quick and comfortable way up the mountain that offered access to terrain on all three other peaks, while eliminating the necessity of the long flat traverses that were tough on skiers and a real ordeal for snowboarders. New trails were cut, including several that were south facing, bringing sunlight and welcome warmth to an afternoon of early season and midwinter skiing. The other development that occurred was the link-up of the Mountain to the nearby Hudson River, for a major water source for snowmak-

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ing. In the east, where weather vagaries can play havoc with ski conditions, the ability to make snow is the key to success. No area in our region has a better water supply.

So, we have an area accessible on good roads, with lots of skiable terrain, serviced by a good lift system that provides access to trails with 95% snowmaking coverage. What's not to like!

Cruisers – riders and freeskiers too - have lots of choices on the east face of the mountain. From Twister to Showcase, to Wild Air, to Sunway, the intermediate terrain is outstanding whether it serves as a stepping stone for beginners or just a series of warm-ups for upper mountain challenges to come.

Those challenges most often start with Topridge, Uncas and Pine Knot, three trails from the top of the gondola that wind up at the Topridge Triple for more of the same terrain, or connect to the Straightbrook Chair for a ride to the top of Gore Mountain. For years Hawkeye and Chatiemac were the signature trails for advanced skiers. They are still lots of fun, especially when the snowmakers pile up the product and the groomers lay off so bumps become the plan of the day. There also seems to be new gladed terrain added nearby each year.

Recently Gore has pumped up its challenge to expert skiers with a couple of double blacks. "Lies" is a steep angle pitch off the top of the mountain that is plenty for most advanced ski-

ers. Then there is "The Rumor". This trail is roped off with signs all over the narrow entrance way warning those of steep terrain to come. The view from the gate looks benign, nothing of concern for the first 20 yards or so. Then, "The Rumor" becomes "The Moment". The first drop off is commitment. There is a lot of snow pumped onto this run. It is very steep and very bumpy. But the truth is that when conditions are right "The Rumor" is a memorable ride. One of these days it will be worth points back at the office on Monday morning.

While most Gore skiers spend most of their time on the east and south facing terrain, there is an entire north side that is inviting and rarely crowded. It can be very tough going, like Lower Steilhang which is for folks who find "The Rumor" too tame. But mainly it is a series of gentle runs of intermediate length that you can often have to yourself, even on weekends in midseason. And this is where you will find the Saddle Lodge.

Gore has a serviceable base lodge with recently improved food services which include the Tannery Pub, a full service, pub menu restaurant where the booths along the wall are made from old gondola cabins. But if you want your ski break with a view, the mid-mountain Saddle Lodge, which underwent a major makeover two years ago, is the place to stop. The food service is basic, burgers, fries and coffee, but the look out over the Adirondack High Peaks is exceptional, especially from the balcony level upstairs.

How about "More Gore"!

The master plan for the area is to connect the present ski hill to the old North Creek Ski Bowl, the original Gore Mountain ski area located just outside the village of North

Creek, about a mile as the crow flies from the current Gore base lodge. The mountain already runs a multilane tubing park on the site. This project, which has widespread local and state support, right now is somewhere between a glint in the eyes of planners and full blown construction. Completed, this would give Gore a Top-10-in-the-East vertical of more than 2,500 feet and make the area the equal in size of any resort in the region. It would not only super size Gore, it would revitalize the surrounding community which so far has yet to capture the full benefit of a major league ski area in its midst.

Those who come to Gore by car - and that includes most of those who come to the area - never see the village of North Creek. It is tucked in a mile or more past the current turnoff to the ski area access road. Slowly, however, improvements are being made in town. There is The Copperfield Inn, a high quality small hotel at one end of Main Street that has been serving guests for several years. And a handful of interesting small shops have sprung up nearby, such as the Hudson River Trading Company which features Adirondack-style furnishings and regional crafts. But this is not Lake Placid or Stowe or North Conway, at least not yet. Most of those who come to the area for multiday visits now either rent a condo, find a bed and breakfast tucked away in a nearby rural setting, or head back a half hour to Lake George and Glens Falls for lodging and nightlife.

While there will never be on-slope lodging at the exist-

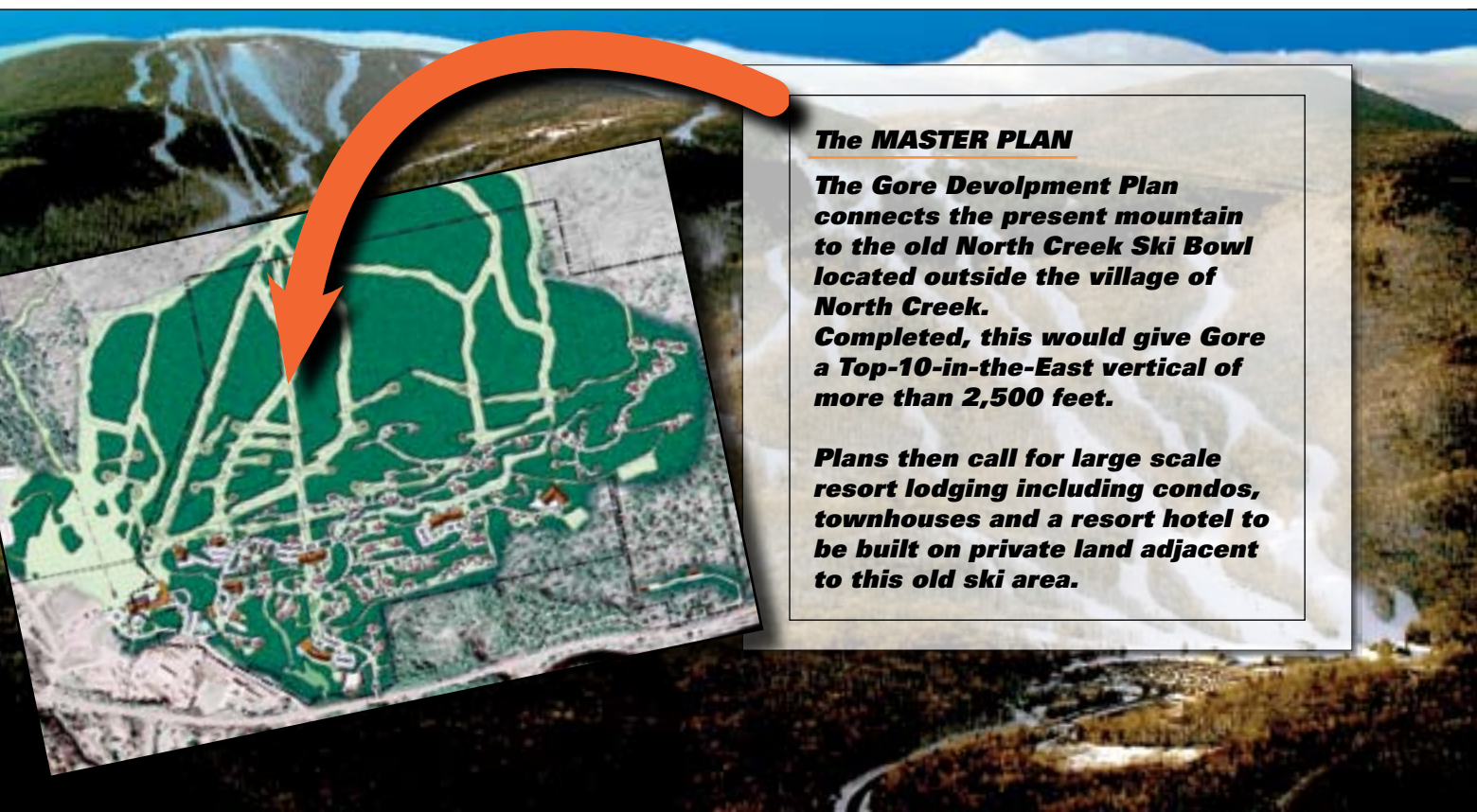


ing Gore Mountain because of land restrictions in New York State's Constitution, there is some promise that if the Ski Bowl connection project is done, a developer will build a large scale resort project on private land adjacent to the ski area. The plan calls for condos, townhouses and a resort hotel on property now owned by FrontStreet Mountain Development, a Connecticut based firm with long time Gore skiers as the principals.

If the Mountain and the town can connect, this would be a great leap forward in making Gore a major ski resort in the East. So get ahead of the curve. Overcome "Exit 20 Syndrome." Come up to North Creek to find out what's behind "More Gore!" *

Photography Credits:
Kid Jumping & Happy Couple:
Autumn Bayse
Smiling Faces: Shawn Holes
Aerial: Aaron Hobson

Racer: Stephanie Leonard
Two Instructors and Child:
Lorraine McCaffrey
Happy family: Carla Kolbe



The MASTER PLAN

The Gore Development Plan connects the present mountain to the old North Creek Ski Bowl located outside the village of North Creek.

Completed, this would give Gore a Top-10-in-the-East vertical of more than 2,500 feet.

Plans then call for large scale resort lodging including condos, townhouses and a resort hotel to be built on private land adjacent to this old ski area.

**Gore Mountain
Peacefull Valley Rd. • North Creek, NY 12853**

Website:	www.goremountain.com
Telephone	800-342-1234
Vertical Drop:	2,100 feet
Summit Elevation:	3,600 feet
Snowmaking:	95% coverage
Lifts:	8 passenger gondola 1 high speed triple 2 quad chairs 3 double chairs 3 surface lifts
Capacity:	14,867 skiers/hour
Trails:	86 Trails including 12 glades Novice 10% Intermediate 60% Expert 30% 3 terrain parks
Cross Country:	12 x country & snowshoeing

