

We enjoyed another lazy start today. It's nice to be lazy for a few hours in the morning before the action starts. We set off about 11:15 for what has become our daily commute up Highway 550. It was much quicker to get our gear sorted today as Andy and the kids knew how it all worked. I was very excited to finally be hitting the slopes.

We found it best to separate with one kid each as they had different preferences. The USA SIM cards Andy picked up on his visit in November have been invaluable for times like that when we do split. Purgatory is not a big mountain by USA standards, but it's large by NZ standards (1360 skiable acres), so it's quite tricky to find someone!

Sunday's skiing was centred on the Twilight lift (which went about half way up the mountain) and the tree lined trails that went down from it. Today we ventured to the top of the mountain and got in some fantastic long runs right back down to the base. The first time Matt and I ventured to the top of the mountain we jumped on the Engineer lift, which went up from the now familiar Twilight lift. As usual there was no lift queue so we hadn't really looked at the lift. It wasn't until we were on the lift and tried to pull down the safety bar that we realised there wasn't one! We were a bit surprised but have since found out it's not that unusual in the USA. It was a bit nerve wracking as it was a long ride and very high off the ground. The boys later discovered that a modern high speed express lift (with safety bar and foot rests) whisked you from base to summit in a fraction of the time.

Trail Map > [Durango Trail Map](#)

Even though this is one of the busiest weeks of the year, Purgatory lift lines are almost non-existent. It seems to be due to the sheer number of ski fields around here, and also the distance from Denver which means that it's mostly locals, not people who have flown in for a ski holiday. It is just great to spend the time actually skiing not waiting in lift lines half the day. We have been really lucky with both the snow and the weather. It was another lovely day today and the snow is the best they have had at this time of year for 30 years. With such a dry climate, some years there is very little snow early in the season.

It was a fantastic afternoon on the slopes and everyone is keen for one more round on Thursday. When we returned to Durango, it was lovely to call our families and wish them a Merry Christmas. A bit strange though as we have one more sleep before Santa arrives. Anna was determined that we needed a Christmas tree, so she made a cut-out one from paper towels. It hangs above our fireplace along with two 98c Christmas stockings from Walmart!

We had promised to take the kids out for dinner on Christmas Eve and had planned to go to

the "Serious Texas BBQ". That plan failed as it was closed - along with most other restaurants in Durango. It seemed that we'd picked the wrong night for a meal out. We did eventually find a table at the "Diamond Belle Saloon", inside the most historic hotel in Durango. It was a great experience as it's one of the most famous bars in the Wild West, complete with live entertainment and costumed staff. It also served delicious food to replace the calories we had burned on the slopes.

Tomorrow morning will be exciting for the kids with a few presents to open under our paper towel Christmas tree. Then we are off for a 3 hour snowmobile tour high in the mountains for a guaranteed white Christmas!