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Ski Fitness for Recreational Skiers

By Jim Safianuk

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Imagine yourself cruising down a groomed run carving elegant turns with your new shaped skis. In the distance you see two symbols, a blue square for a left turn and a black diamond for a right turn. Without hesitation you steer to the right. The pitch becomes steeper, the snow is un-groomed, and there are trees, lots of trees. You stop momentarily, pick a line, push off, and tighten your turns as you begin the descent.

Getting in Shape

Many skiers would have taken the left fork with the gentle groomed slope. Some skiers reach a plateau in their ability and find it difficult to advance to the next level. This doesn't have to be. The keys to unlocking your true potential lie in your mind and body. When you are mentally prepared and physically fit, the goal of becoming an expert skier can be realized.

Developing a Fitness Routine

Expert level skiing is more demanding on the knees, thighs, hips, abdomen, and back so preseason preparation is the norm. In short, you need the correct ski fitness routine to handle the rigors of expert skiing.

Your ski fitness routine should include: Ski stretches to improve your flexibility and mobility Ski exercises to build your leg and core strength and endurance Jumping exercises to enhance your explosive power and side-to-side quickness

Stretching for Ski Fitness

Let's start off with ski-specific stretching and leave the exercises and cardiovascular for another article. Lesson #2 of Skills of the Expert Skier contains ten ski stretches that you can do at home or on the

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road. Stretching keeps your muscles flexible, prepares you for movement, and helps you to bridge the gap from inactivity to vigorous activity without undue strain.

When you stretch and exercise often, you will learn to enjoy movement. You will be preparing yourself for the rigors of skiing in the expert zones where the ability to move quickly and easily is of prime importance.

First, we'll get into the why and when you need to stretch, before moving on to the basics of good stretching.

Why do ski stretches?

Stretching on a regular basis will make your skiing a lot easier by: Reducing muscle tension
Relaxing your body prior to skiing Signaling your muscles that they are about to be used Increasing

your range of motion during skiing Improving the ease and freedom of movement Enhancing the quickness of your ski turns Preventing injuries such as muscle strains and pulls

In addition, ski-specific exercising requires you to have a good command of ski stretches before you start doing the exercises. The reason for this is that some of the exercises will simulate actual expert level ski movements so you need to have your muscles relaxed, loose, and flexible, just as if you were beginning a day on the slopes.

Stretching before Skiing

Stretching can be done any time you feel like it. However, in the context of downhill skiing and the training course, I recommend you do ski stretches: At home, before you start the ski-specific exercises At the chalet, motel, or inn where you are staying, just before leaving for the ski hill At the ski resort, before your first run of the day, with your boots on and skis off

Stretching after Skiing

Strenuous activities like downhill skiing, especially at the expert level, promote tightness and inflexibility in the muscle groups. Therefore, stretching before and after any physical activity will keep you flexible and help prevent common injuries.

I know it's difficult to stretch after a long day of skiing. I have trouble doing this myself. On the last run when someone shouts out, "It's Miller time", your mind is more focused on that tall, cool one than on doing any more physical exertion. Besides, you've worked hard all day and deserve a break. I agree!

As a compromise, I would recommend that you do standing, ski stretches at the base of the hill after your last run, with your skis off. You can get way with just these stretches after skiing on smaller hills with less demanding terrain, and especially if you are not going to be skiing the next day.

However, if you are skiing in the mountains for six or seven days in a row, I strongly suggest that you

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do a complete set of ski stretches when you get back to the place where you're staying. After stretching, hit the hot tub. After the hot tub, go for a one to two mile walk. Don't use the elevator, take the stairs. The idea is to keep moving so your muscles won't become tight and stiffen up on you.

Trust me, I've seen a lot of people disappear on week skiing trips simply because their muscles became stiff and sore, or worse, they got injured from pulled or torn muscles. Skiing at an expert level requires you to be agile at all times with the freedom to move quickly and easily without any pain or stiffness. Stretching is an essential that you need to learn and put to practice on a regular basis.

Jim Safianuk is a certified ski instructor and writer of the downhill skiing lessons in the course Skills of the Expert Skier. Discover the oldest secrets and learn the newest skills to help you become the expert skier you always dreamed you could be. [Click here for more information:](#)

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Try An Aspen Ski Vacation

By Sarah Thomas

Aspen is one of the most popular ski destinations in the United States and perhaps one of the best well known in the entire world. Creating an Aspen ski vacation resort was the brainchild of Friedl Pfeifer, an accomplished skier from Austria who wound up in Aspen at the end of WW II.

With only a few dollars in his pocket he founded the first ski school in Aspen and partnered with Walter Paepcke to create to create what was then the world's longest chairlift.

The sleepy mining town of Aspen was suddenly transformed into one of the most popular recreational nooks in America. Now Aspen is home to many ski resorts, hotels, and bread and breakfast cottages to accommodate the thousands of people which take an Aspen ski vacation each year.

Are you considering an Aspen ski vacation? If so, it is a very popular choice, and you will be surely be glad you visited Aspen. Aspen is surrounded by 4 mountains and offers more than 4500 acres of fascinating terrain. Aspen receives plenty of snow each year that is just perfect for skiing and other snow related sports.

Ajax Mountain is a big draw for the more advanced skiers. It has over 700 acres for skiing and a vertical drop of more than 3200 feet. Next to Ajax is the Aspen Highlands which is perfectly suitable for beginning and intermediate skiers. You may even spot some Olympic medalists on the Aspen Highlands, as it is a favored skiing spot for skiers of all abilities who seek an Aspen ski vacation.

The Buttermilk is smaller mountain and more suited for beginning skiers. This also is home to the longest terrain park and host to the ESPN Winter X Games. The largest of the Aspen mountains is Snowmass and it has over 3000 acres of skiing terrain and has areas suitable for skiers of all abilities.

Snowmass is perhaps the most well known Aspen mountain and is popular for an Aspen ski vacation.

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It offers some spectacular panoramic views.

Aspen is situated around 215 miles to the southwest of Denver and about 75 miles to the southeast of Eagle. Aspen has its own airport, Sardy Field, which makes flying into the resort town for an Aspen ski vacation very easy to accomplish.

Sarah Thomas provides articles on

. You can find more of her work at

the site

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