

Mount Hood Summer Camps at Timberline, Mt. Hood, Oregon

by Emilio Trampuz

Timberline is the only US ski area open all year. The lifts stop for only for about 3 weeks in September, to give employees some vacation time. The ski season can be divided into 4 clearly separate periods:

1. **Winter season.** From the end of November (Thanksgiving) to end of March. Only the lower lifts are open, below Timberline (Molly's, Pucci, Jeff Flood, and Stormin' Norman). Occasionally, if the weather is good, the Magic Mile lift will also open (above timberline), but mostly the upper lifts are closed due to high winds and low visibility (fog).
2. **Spring season.** March, April and May. The best skiing of the year. Sunny weather, the most terrain open, and the lowest prices of the year. The Magic Mile is now regularly open, as well as all of the lower lifts. During a transition period of about a week or two, usually in April or May, all the lifts are open, so one can ski almost 4,000 vertical feet from the top of Palmer to the bottom of Jeff Flood express. A special Spring Pass is sold for only about \$100. Price varies depending on when the pass is purchased. It costs a bit more in March, and a bit less in April.
3. **Summer season.** Usually June 15 to the first weekend in September (Labor Day). Only the upper two lifts are open: The Magic Mile and Palmer, but the ticket prices go up again to about the same level as in Winter. This is because of the very popular summer camps, organized by many different groups of instructors. Late in the Summer (August), the skiing is usually confined just to the Palmer snowfield, a rectangular patch of snow that never melts. It's like a glacier, but it differs from a glacier in that it is stationary. Since it doesn't move, it never has crevasses.
4. **Fall season.** October and November. This is usually the least crowded period. The summer camps are gone, and the winter crowds have not arrived yet. Skiing is somewhat sketchy, confined mainly to the Palmer snowfield (in good weather). When the first snowstorms arrive, bringing snow to the lower elevations, the Palmer lift closes, and skiing is then mainly on the Magic Mile. The weather might close all lifts. Once there are more than 2 feet of snow on the terrain below the lodge, the Magic Mile will most likely close and some of the lower lifts will open.

Summer Camps are held mid- June to end of August on the upper slopes. The Magic Mile terrain is used in the early summer. Later in the summer, when skiing is confined only to the Palmer snowfield, the rectangular patch of snow is subdivided into several lanes, some 50 - 100 feet wide. One lane is reserved for each organized group, each camp. Only one lane, relatively wider than the others, is left open for the general public.

Summer Camps first started in 1956, when Richard Kohnstamm and the RLK Company took charge of Timberline Lodge and revived it after a short period of decline and even a temporary closure.

At first, the camps were held on the relatively lower terrain served by the Magic Mile lift. From 1956 to 1979, the Palmer snowfield was accessible only by hiking or by snowcat.

Summer Camps got a big boost when the first **Palmer chairlift** was installed in 1979/80. But, the winds on the upper mountain were so strong that during the first winter, three of the lift's towers were knocked over by the wind. Also, the ski area operators had to be sure the weather would remain good for the remainder of the summer before painstakingly attaching each chair to the cable, as this was a fixed chairlift.

In the mid-nineties, the Palmer chairlift was replaced by an express quad, with detachable chairs, which meant that the lift could be put in service at a moment's notice as soon as the weather improved.

Summer Camps grew in popularity. Among the first groups to organize summer camps were: Timberline Summer Camps, and Mt. Hood Summer Camps. But, word soon spread about the availability of this terrain for summer training, and eventually the US Ski Team came to train here, as well as numerous other ski racers from around the world.

Typically these days, in 2011, there are dozens of different groups and organizations from all over the world that organize summer camps at Timberline. There are camps for children (ages 10 -20) and for adults (21+).

Each organization schedules 3 – 10 camps throughout the summer. Camps usually last between 5 – 10 days. Typically 6 or 7 days. But there are also longer programs. Some well to do families can send their kids here for several weeks at a time.

Most camps focus on ski racing, slalom and giant slalom. There are also freestyle camps, focusing on terrain parks, half-pipes, and aerials.

Snowboarding camps started in 1986. Windells Camps and High Cascade Camps were among the first to organize snowboarding summer instruction and training.

Camp programs vary from one group to another, but it typically involves on-snow training in the morning and dry-land activities in the afternoon. During most of the summer months, lifts operate from 7 am to 1 pm., offering plenty of time for off-snow activities in the afternoon.

Most groups use lodging in the town of Government Camp, located at the elevation of approximately 3,500 feet. By comparison, Timberline Lodge is located at 6,000 vertical feet (at the edge of timberline), the top of the Magic Mile lift is at 7,000 feet, and the top of the Palmer lift is at 8,500 feet.

The Cascade Ski Club, the only local ski club that has its own lodge, has been opening its lodge to summer camp groups each summer for decades. The lodge, located in the heart of Government Camp, can accommodate almost 100 people in bunk beds.

See below for a list of just some of the many organizations offering summer camps at Timberline.

Some of the Organizations holding Summer Camps at Timberline, Mt. Hood, Oregon

- ❖ **Mt. Hood Summer Ski Camps** <http://mthood.com/>
14 summer camps (6 days each)
Kids camps and Adult camps.
Ski racing, Moguls, Freestyle aerials, Snowboarding freeride, Snowboard racing.
Based in Government Camp, OR.
- ❖ **Ski Camps Inc with Ted Ligety** (run from NY State) <http://www.skicampsinc.com/>
2 summer camps (6 days each)
Slalom and GS.
Ages 10 and older.
- ❖ **Olin - Lacasse** <http://www.skiracingcamp.com/>
Tony Olin and Josee Lacasse coach ski racing.
5 summer camps (7 days each)
- ❖ **Timberline Atomic Summer Ski Race Camp**
http://www.timberlinelodge.com/ski_ride/summer_camp/camp_home.php
3 Freeride camps for kids ages 7 – 14: 3 day, 5 day and 7 days camps (3 of each of them).
6 Performance Slalom and GS camps for ages 10 and up: 3 camps (6 days each).
1 Masters camp, for adults 21 and older: 1 camp (6 days).
Based at Timberline Lodge.
- ❖ **National Alpine Ski Camp (NASC)** <http://www.skicamp.com/>
Camps for kids 8 and older. Also Adult camps.
5 summer camps (10 days each) or combine any 2 into a double session of 21 days.
Based in Government Camp, OR and Ophir, CO.
- ❖ **Tichy Racing Ski Camp** <http://www.tichyracing.com/text/main.html>
8 Summer Camps (10 days) + 6 Clinics (4 days) at Timberline
Race training. Based in Government Camp, OR.
- ❖ **GMVS Junior Development** <http://www.gmvs.org/alpine-skiing/alpine-skiing>
2 summer camps (10 days each) at Timberline, Mt. Hood.
Based at Green Mountain Valley School, Waitsfield, Vermont.
- ❖ **Erich Sailers Ski Racing Camps** <http://www.skicamps.com/index.html>
2 summer camps at Timberline (7 days each)
Slalom and GS training. All ages.
Run by Ursula and Erich Sailer (originally of Telfs, Austria),
Email: esailer@skicamps.com, Phone: (952) 431-4477.
Ursula says: “Camps at Timberline started in 1956. ... My own experience started with 10 people,
8 years later we had 300 racers.”

- ❖ **Windells Camps** <http://www.windells.com/> (Snowboarding and Freestyle skiing)
8 summer sessions (8 days each). Also, some 6 weeks programs.
Snowboarding and Freestyle skiing. Average age of kids is about 13.
Based in Welches, OR.
Tim Windell says: “Snowboard camps began in 1986. I started teaching that same year. Among the first snowboarding instructors were: **Chris Karol, Bob Gilly and Tim Windell**. They were later joined by instructors: **Julian Richie, Charles Arnel, and John Philips**. About 3% of the participants are from Oregon, the other 97% are from all over the world.”

- ❖ **High Cascade Camps** <http://www.highcascade.com/> (Snowboarding)
Snowboarding (freeride, park, rail, jump, and half-pipe)
6 youth summer camps (ages 6 -20): 7 days each.
3 adult summer camps (ages 21+): 7 days each.
Based in Portland, OR.

Skiing on the Palmer snowfield, July 2006: Emilio Trampuz, Kurt Krueger, and Salah Khan. Photo by Tom Rodrigues.

