

# Big Sky Mountain Host Program

## *“Safety and Service”*

### Program Principles

- The Host Program is a volunteer program sponsored by Big Sky Resort with the purpose of enhancing the guest experience at Big Sky. The women and men in the Host Program often have the most direct interactions with guests compared to other staff. Hosts are selected for the program who project a love of skiing and Big Sky, and who take satisfaction from sharing that love with guests.
  - Hosts receive benefits in the form of season passes, lift ticket “vouchers”, and other discounts.
  - Hosts are covered by the Resort **Worker’s Compensation Insurance** while on duty.
  - We consciously avoid host candidates whose primary interest is a free pass.
- Program expectations and best practices are established by the Resort and Mountain Host Steering Committee to promote safety and effective interactions with guests.
- **The safety of guests and Hosts is of the utmost importance.** At all times, Hosts have the authority to adapt or cancel host activities due to weather or surface conditions.

### General Mountain Host Expectations

- All Hosts perform “plaza duty” as well as on-the-snow hosting activities. Answering questions, giving directions and other assistance to guests enhance the guest’s Big Sky experience.
  - Consistent with Resort policy for on-mountain staff, Hosts are required to take an annual skiing assessment to assure the safety of the individual Host and to project an image of professionalism to guests.
  - Opportunities to improve ski proficiency will be provided to Hosts as needed.
  - Hosts recovering from injury or illness may perform “plaza-only” duty until cleared to resume full activity.
- **Be on time for your scheduled shift and fully complete the assigned time.** Sign-in and out through **Homebase** prior to your shift and after completing it. Allow sufficient time to reach the resort given road and weather conditions. If you get caught in conditions that will delay your arrival, contact (if possible) another host scheduled for your time slot so that adjustments may be made.
  - There is a Homebase app available for both Apple and Android smartphones.
- Hosts are expected to present a “professional” appearance and bearing while on duty or anytime wearing their Big Sky Mountain Host jacket.
  - Hosts supply their own black ski pants. Hats should be in good taste and not referencing another resort.

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- Host jackets should be zipped to present a professional image. Backpacks are not permitted.
- Hosts are expected to have a smartphone for use on the mountain. Verizon generally has the best on-mountain coverage. Hosts should enter contact information for all other Hosts as well as the Dispatch (ski patrol) number (406-995-5880).
- Hosts are expected to be knowledgeable, use good judgement, and be flexible.
  - Hosts are expected to have a wide range of knowledge about the ski mountain (both South and North sides), important activities/events, base facilities, and the surrounding area.
  - Flexibility to change shift responsibilities for tasks and location may be needed for staffing or conditions reasons.
  - The Host Steering Committee conducts new host training, refresher training, and supporting materials to equip and inform Hosts.
- If a Host is injured while on duty, it is imperative to report the incident promptly to a member of the Steering Committee and/or the Mountain Host Resort Liaison (JC Estensen). Receiving prompt medical care is the foremost concern.
- Providing mountain tours is an important and highly visible hosting activity. Hosts must be able to conduct tours on both the South (“Big Sky”) and North (“Moonlight”) Sides of the ski mountain.
  - Tour training is conducted early in the season. Watch for details.
  - Hosts are encouraged to participate, when not scheduled to work, in tours conducted by experienced Hosts to see and hear how their tours are conducted.

### Select Rules/Best Practices for Mountain Hosts

Following is a number of “do’s and don’ts” and best practices. Training provided by the Steering Committee may include additional guidelines and practices.

- In keeping with Resort policy that helmets are required for all on-mountain staff, Hosts are required to wear helmets while on lifts or runs.
- While on duty, or whenever wearing your Host jacket, your skiing is limited to regularly groomed green and blue runs.
- All Hosts are required to meet at the tour gathering flag (near Swift Current) 15 minutes before scheduled tour times. If you are unable to do so, such as staying with an injured guest, call other Hosts so that they know you are not injured somewhere on the mountain.
- All discussions with, or in the presence of guests, should have a positive tone and impression. If a Host has issues with the program or the Resort, those should be brought to a Steering Committee member **not discussed in the presence of guests**.
- Moving between assigned locations on the mountain is not a free-skiing opportunity. Be on the lookout for guests struggling, injured, or appearing lost.

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- **If you encounter an injured guest** contact ski patrol dispatch with the run and approximate location of the injured guest, guest description including jacket color, apparent nature of injury (especially if the guest is unresponsive). Stay with the guest until ski patrol arrives and assist patrol if requested.
- If a guest is struggling to the point that they are a significant risk to themselves or other guests, **AND** if the guest agrees, you may request a “courtesy ride” through the Dispatch (ski patrol) number to safely take the guest to the base. Give Dispatch the same information as you would in an injury situation. Stay with the guest until ski patrol arrives.

### Shift Procedures

- Each day a “**Host Coordinator**” will be identified in the morning text sent to Hosts scheduled to work that day. The **Host Coordinator** will organize tours and assign Host tour leaders as needed and assign areas of the resort for non-tour Hosts to staff key signs.
  - The text comes from a Steering Committee member.
  - The Host Coordinator will be an experienced Host.
  - The Resort Liaison and His/her manager are included. This provides a valuable avenue of communication from the resort to scheduled Hosts.
  - The Host Coordinator will be selected from the midday shift hosts and is asked to be at the tour flag by 10:15 to organize tours and host assignments.
- The Host Coordinator will make the decision whether to cancel tours due to safety concerns, including tour route conditions and extreme weather. **Safety of Hosts and guests is of paramount importance.**
- All Hosts are to meet at the Tour Flag prior to scheduled tour times. If you are delayed, such as staying with an injured guest, use the text stream to inform other hosts. This for your safety.
- Presently we have only AM and Midday 4-hour shifts.
  - The AM shift is 8:45 to 12:45 and the midday shift is 10:30 to 2:30.
  - Clock in/out using **Homebase** prior to the start of your shift and after your shift is completed.
  - **There are no lunch breaks.**
  - The AM shift begins the day on the plaza greeting guests and answering questions. **Fifteen minutes prior to morning tour time AM shift Hosts should leave the plaza to “boot up”** and join the tour meeting at the tour flag. **Midday shift Hosts should meet at the tour flag 15 minutes prior to the afternoon tour time.**
  - **Midday Hosts are expected to be at the tour flag before 10:30; 10:15** if he/she wishes to be available for a morning tour.

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- If the AM shift is sufficiently staffed, one of the Host should go to the top of Swift Current to assist guests during the early rush.

### Tour Basics:

- **While at the tour flag face guests**, rather than standing with our backs to prospective tour participants. We want to present an inviting image to guests; not a “green barrier”. **Do not stand with your back to guests while at the tour flag.** We want to invite guests to take a tour; not present an obstacle.
- The Host Coordinator will report the number of tour guests via the group text at the end of the day or after the PM tour time.
- We **DO NOT** conduct tours for a single guest. Suggest he/she check back at the next tour time. Any tour participant under the age of 18 **must** be accompanied by a parent or guardian. With the growth in resort guest numbers and limited Host resources it is a poor use of resources to conduct single guest tours.
  - We **DO NOT** conduct “green only” tours. Our groomed green and blue run tours serve the broadest range of guests most efficiently.
  - **Minor guests must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to participate in a tour.**
  - Tours often benefit from using a “sweep” to ensure guest safety and an effective tour. A sweep “brings up the rear” and assists the tour leader to ensure that all guests are accounted for. The sweep should be a willing, competent skier from among the tour guests, or a Host if available.
    - Be sure the sweep has the cell number of the tour leader to communicate in the event of an injured guest, for example.
    - We encourage Hosts to carry a “sweep card” with your phone number to hand to the sweep skier. Get your sweep card back at the end of the tour.
  - If the tour leader feels a sweep is necessary, the tour has **more than seven guests**, and there no suitable sweep among the guests, the Host Coordinator may assign another Host to accompany the tour as a sweep. This assumes there is sufficient staffing to permit this. A tour with seven or fewer guests may not use a Host as a sweep.
  - The Host Coordinator may limit the size of a tour for the safety of the guests.
  - Inform tour guests that they may leave the tour at any time, but they must let the tour leader know so that we’re not concerned about a lost individual.
  - **Safety is paramount.** Conditions that are bad (or even “too good” – 18” powder overnight) may make our normal tour routes unsafe for the participants in the tour. Use good judgement whether to alter or end a tour in the interest of safety.

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- **If a tour guest is injured** inform the other participants that the tour has to be stopped. Follow the instructions for handling an injured guest described above.
- **Hosts must be sufficiently knowledgeable about both North and South sides to conduct tours on either side.** It is each Host's responsibility to seek out relevant information, including from experienced Hosts. Useful information is also available on the Host website. You may be assigned a tour on the "other side" of the resort than where you were scheduled if circumstances warrant.

### "Working the mountain" and "plaza duty":

- Presence at high volume signs/maps are a priority to give directions and answer guest questions. The priorities for the South side are (1) top of Swift Current, (2) top of Ramcharger and (3) top of Southern Comfort. For the North side the top of Six Shooter and/or Iron Horse as the circumstances demand.
- During very busy periods and if staffing permits, a midday Host may be assigned plaza duty by the Host Coordinator.
- Plaza duty addresses countless questions. Every Host should be familiar with ticketing, restrooms, lockers, lost/found, Snow Sports office, Big Sky Sports, etc. Be very careful when responding to "where do you recommend I ski?" guest questions.
- Become familiar with the handheld pass scanners to answer guest questions about the validity of their pass. Training and written instructions are available.

### Shift Scheduling/Swaps

- Scheduling is done in the fall in three seniority groups. You "claim" shifts directly on Homebase and the "schedule coordinator" (presently Jan Barr) will confirm selections as part of your schedule. Scheduling is done in thirds of the season, roughly: Opening Day to latter January, late January to early March and the remainder of March until Closing Day.
  - Scheduling instructions will be sent to returning Hosts by email.
- "Full time" Hosts have a commitment of 112 hours (28 4-hour shifts) balanced across thirds of the season. "Half time" Hosts have a 56-hour (14 shift) commitment.
- You may arrange to **swap** shifts with another Host. Once agreed upon with the substitute Host, text the Homebase administrator (presently Jan Barr) regarding the dates/shifts involved and copy the other Host involved. Hosts have always been highly responsive to requests for swaps ... life happens!
- **Emergency situations**, such as becoming ill the evening before a shift, may occur. Several Hosts have agreed to be emergency hosts. Contact the "roster coordinator" (presently Mike Boyer) who will contact an available emergency replacement. You are responsible for arranging an after-the-fact swap with the emergency substitute. Inform the schedule coordinator of the agreed upon swap.