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Ski Homes Scale Down, in Size and in Cost



Dusk in Park City, Utah, where a division of Yotel, a company known for tiny hotel rooms, is developing condos as small as 350 square feet. Credit...Djamila Grossman for The New York Times

By Elaine Glusac

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Living in the ski town of Park City, Utah, Geran Williams, 45, an airline pilot, finds that friends and family visit often.

The thought of an “overflow pad,” as he put it, to keep visitors from disrupting the routines of his family, including two small children, was vaguely in the back of his mind when [YotelPad](#), a micro-condo concept, announced last year that it was building 144 efficiently designed units. Starting at \$300,000 for 350-square-foot studios adjacent to the slopes, the project is set to open in summer 2020.

Mr. Williams jumped on a two-bedroom apartment for just shy of \$500,000, which in Park City, he said, is considered affordable. “There are a lot of social spaces for families to interact,” he said, listing the resort-like lobby lounge, pool and fitness

area. “The cost per square foot was high, but you get so much more for it in terms of amenities, things to do, location and convenience.”

Second homes in North American ski resorts tend to follow the Alpine mansion model, with multiple bedrooms, lavish kitchens and moose heads over the fieldstone fireplaces. But YotelPad is bringing the tiny-home trend to second homes in United States mountain locales, including Park City. It is also building a ski resort project in Mammoth Lakes, Calif., set to open in 2021.

Such homes are pitched to buyers who care more about the outdoors than relaxing on an overstuffed couch under a cathedral ceiling and who don’t mind sharing the Jacuzzi with neighbors.

“We thought there was an opportunity to create a product aimed between extended-stay residences, co-living spaces and a hotel,” said Hubert Viriot, the chief executive of the London-based Yotel, which includes YotelPad. “The heart of the concept is keeping the privacy of a private residence, then providing shared facilities commonly found in co-living spaces.”

In partnership with Replay Destinations, YotelPad is the first real-estate management offshoot of Yotel hotels, a pioneer in tiny-room hotels outside of Asia, where even tinier capsule hotels are more common, especially in Japan.

It opened its first hotel in London Gatwick Airport in 2007, enlisting an airplane designer to come up with an efficient use of space in “cabins,” as rooms are called, that range from 75 to 110 square feet.

Now the company operates eight urban hotels in cities like Amsterdam, Istanbul and New York, where a robot will store your luggage. Locations of six airport hotels include Paris Charles de Gaulle and Singapore Changi. Urban YotelPad residences are also under construction in Atlanta, Miami, Geneva and Dubai.

Relative affordability is the foundation of the concept. Compared with a \$300,000 entry-level unit at YotelPad Park City, which the company says is 60 percent sold, [Realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com) shows a median listing price in Park City over all of \$1.1 million.



A rendering of a unit at the YotelPad resort in Mammoth Lakes, Calif., to open in 2021. Credit...Yotelpad Mammoth

Second homes accounted for 76 percent of condo mortgages written in the area between January and May, according to the website, with the median purchase price of second-home condos at \$850,035 in that period.

Yotel's move into the mountains was inspired by Replay, which was founded by senior executives from Intrawest Corporation, the developers of ski areas such as Whistler Blackcomb in British Columbia and Deer Valley in Utah. Principals there saw the potential for small second homes after experimenting with them in Les Arcs ski area in France as a way to expand the market to more price-conscious buyers.

"We're seeing in the early results that there's a strong desire in millennials to own a second home and experience a resort environment with young children," said Gary Raymond, the managing director of Replay. "They have been priced out of the market and this clearly targets their needs."

Units feature convertible furniture, such as a sofa that becomes a base for a bed that pulls down from the wall and a desk that transforms into bunk beds. A storage wall houses a niche kitchen with a stainless-steel refrigerator, microwave and cooktop stove, and cupboards for clothes and ski boots as well as dishes and linen, all hidden behind wood-paneled doors. A large wall niche accommodates a flat-screen television, and there is a separate storage area in the building for larger gear like snowboards and mountain bikes.

The design provides for sleeping, showering and light eating with the intent of encouraging residents to get outdoors or socialize in public areas. In Park City, the YotelPad public spaces resemble those in modern hotels, with a lounge, game room, fitness center and outdoor pool. The location at the entrance to [Canyons Village](#) is close to the gondola and a heated four-person high-speed chairlift, leading to about 7,300 acres of skiable terrain.

Mr. Viriot, who grew up skiing at Les Arcs, described the target demographic as "younger and less conservative than the typical customer for a ski resort."

He added: "It's not a traditional experience with a fireplace in the house. It's modern, fresh and super flexible."

Yotel will manage both the Mammoth Lakes and Park City properties as hotels, renting the rooms of participating YotelPad owners to travelers. The project has proved particularly appealing to people who live nearby and can drive in for the weekend.

"It's almost a little intuitive," Mr. Raymond said. "If you can afford to fly your family to a ski resort two, three, four times a year, you can probably afford a larger unit."

[The Mammoth Lakes project](#) offers 156 small condos from \$300,000, starting at 410 square feet. Twenty-one townhomes at 1,500 square feet, called Domo, sleep up to 10 and start at \$1.5 million. The project has amenities similar to Park City, although the company expects to sign a third-party operator to manage a restaurant on site.

Verena Robinson, the owner of Mammoth Lakes Resort Realty, predicted the pads would appeal to outdoorsy travelers in their 20s and 30s, as well as to Europeans who are more accustomed to smaller living spaces. She compared them with what's available at the Westin Monache Resort nearby, where investors can buy similarly small units but without the efficient design and still earn about \$70,000 a year in rental income.

“The village of Mammoth had a surge in property values in the past year and a half, and in the last six months units are going for about \$600 a square foot,” Ms. Robinson said, pointing out that YotelPad is more expensive, at about \$732 per square foot. “But it’s a great concept, the location is amazing, and people love the area because you can walk to the village.”

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