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# Crotched Redux

## Travel East

Eric Vohr · Dec 18, 2003

It's been a rough few decades for small and midsize New England resorts. Most have closed (and are already well on their way to returning to their natural state). And the smart money says that the ones that remain will never thrive. But the new owners of Crotched Mountain disagree, and they have the track record to back it up.

Peak Resorts is a privately held conglomerate of, until now, Midwestern day areas. It's modus operandi is to buy and rejuvenate struggling midsize resorts—but only those near major metropolitan markets.

With wall-to-wall snowmaking, aggressively marketed nightskiing and innovative equipment-rental services, Peak Resorts has built a small but rapidly growing empire that now counts some 750,000 skier visits, says Crotched co-owner Margrit Kagi. With Crotched—90 minutes from Boston—it hopes to top the 1 million mark soon.

The company's flagship resort is Boston Mills Brandywine, near Cleveland, Ohio, which does 300,000 skier visits on 240 vertical feet of terrain in a region that more often than not has no natural snow. Crotched, the conglomerate's first East Coast acquisition, can take hope from the example of Mad River Mountain—45 minutes from Columbus, Ohio—which, after three years of Peak Resorts management, has gone from 60,000 visits to 200,000.

Crotched will adopt the Peak Resorts rental policy, a key component. Renters pay one price, \$27, and can change equipment as often as they like during the day—perfect, for example, for a skier who wants to try snowboarding without devoting the entire day to it.

What visitors won't see is real estate development in the base area. "We are strictly in the ski area operation business," says Kagi. "We leave the real estate to others, and that has worked quite well for us."

Nevertheless, Crotched's revival has been a boon to the local market: Kagi says prices of existing slopeside condos have doubled and, in some cases, tripled.