

Why you should love **mud season**



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Celebrate the deals, the sports and the food like a true local

By **Katie Coakley**
Special to the Weekly

When the ski resort closes, it's as if an eclipse falls over the land. But while a shadow passes over the lifts and gondolas, there is light peeking through the dusk. Concentrating too much on the lack of motorized access to the snow will make it easy to fall into the malaise of mud season. However, a keen eye and a bit of knowledge can turn mud into merriment for those who care to partake.

Sport

"There's really not much of a mud season anymore," said Beth Pappas, sports events and partnership manager for the Vail Rec District. "We get started as soon as the resort closes. We're putting on an event pretty much once a week well into September."

The VRD's first spring short track bike race takes place on Wednesday, April 23, at the Eagle County Fairgrounds in Eagle. Three more races will follow each Wednesday through May 14; locations will vary.

Get your feet muddy this spring on the valley's quiet trails. Head to Eagle for dry singletrack and the Trail Jam on April 26.

MUD SEASON, 13

Montana's SMOKEHOUSE

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- Sweet Pea Tarragon Ravioli
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SPECIAL TO THE WEEKLY

The Vail Rec District's first spring short track bike race took place on Wednesday, April 23, at the Eagle County Fairgrounds in Eagle.

MUD SEASON

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"There's really no lag time for people who want to be out on their bike," Pappas continued. "The short track races are a great opportunity for people to get in shape for their summer endeavors."

The town of Eagle is celebrating the opening of the Eagle Open Space trails with The Cycle Effect Trail Jam, a new event on Saturday, April 26, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Open to bikers, hikers, runners and spectators, the Trail Jam is a poker-run style event where participants gather raffle tickets for each trail completed. Prizes will be drawn and auctioned off at the after

party at the Dust Boot in Eagle with proceeds going to The Cycle Effect.

This is the first time that Eagle has organized such a big event for the trail openings, said Amy Cassidy, marketing and events coordinator for the town of Eagle. But it makes sense: Eagle's trails are opening about a month before trails in Vail or Avon.

Spring is also an excellent time to try out something new. If you haven't gotten into the CrossFit craze, then now's a good time to check out a class. CrossFit Vail offers the first class for free and, during April, a one-month membership for \$69. Rates will also drop May 1.

MUD SEASON, 14

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MUD SEASON

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Spa

Getting back into the swing of summer sports can do a number on tired muscles that haven't been abused in this manner for six months. Mud season doesn't have to refer to the mud on the ground — it should evoke images of mud baths, mud masks and an opportunity for overall pampering.

Sonnenalp Spa's Spring Rejuvenation Package gives the opportunity for four days of pampering. For locals only (proof of residency is required), \$129.99 provides a 25-minute facial with complimentary eyebrow wax, a 50-minute Swedish massage, a nail polish change and a day pass to the spa's amenities. One treatment per day; upgrades are available. Call the Sonnenalp Spa at 970-479-5404 to book.

For a midday break that feels oh-so-decadent, escape to Aria Spa at the Vail Cascade Resort & Spa for the Spring Mid-Day Happy Hour. Book a 50-minute or longer spa service on Monday through Thursday and receive 30 percent off of the cost of the treatment plus a complimentary beverage. This calls for Champagne.

Escape to Beaver Creek to experience the soothing waters of Aqua Sanitas at Allegria Spa at Park Hyatt Beaver Creek. For \$175, you'll enjoy a 50-minute Swedish massage and a choice of a 30-minute custom facial or signature pedicure, plus unlimited time in the hot tubs, sauna and steam room of Aqua Sanitas. You're saving \$75, but the relaxation is priceless.

Snack and Swig

One of the best-known — and best-loved — parts of mud season is the two-for-ones

at local restaurants. Afternoons are spent scouring the ads in the newspaper, deciding whether it's a French, Italian or steak night, forgoing lunch to make sure that there's plenty of room for dinner.

Maya at The Westin Riverfront in Avon is creating a happier mud season with an All Night Happy Hour daily from 2:30 p.m. to close. Specials include \$2 handcrafted tacos, \$5 margaritas and \$4 bites including mahi mahi ceviche, smoked brisket nachos and steak flatbread. It's also tamale party time: From now until May 31, Maya is hosting a Tamale Festival with specialty cocktails and unique tamale creations. Try the tamale starter sampler, featuring four different tamales paired with Crazy Mountain beer, to get your taste buds acclimatized.

For some of Vail's most lauded cuisine at "you must have a hookup" prices, head into Vail Village. La Tour is offering entrees for \$20.14 and Restaurant Kelly Liken has three courses for \$45 and 50 percent off selected wines. The only difficult decision that you'll have to make is what to order.

Keep an eye out for \$2.99 New York Strip nights at the Minturn Country Club. This special night not only provides amazing value, but an opportunity to see those friends who were slammed during the season and are only now emerging back into regular society.

When it boils down to it, that's really where the joy of mud season comes in.

"It's really a local timeframe," said Lourdes Ferzacca, of La Tour. "When you go out into town, you see people you know."

So instead of bemoaning mud season, embrace it. There's plenty to enjoy in this wonderfully short period of time that should be rightfully called "spring."



SPECIAL TO THE WEEKLY

Offseason restaurant deals are a local's best friend. Pictured is Maya's tamale starter sampler, featuring four different tamales paired with Crazy Mountain beer.



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