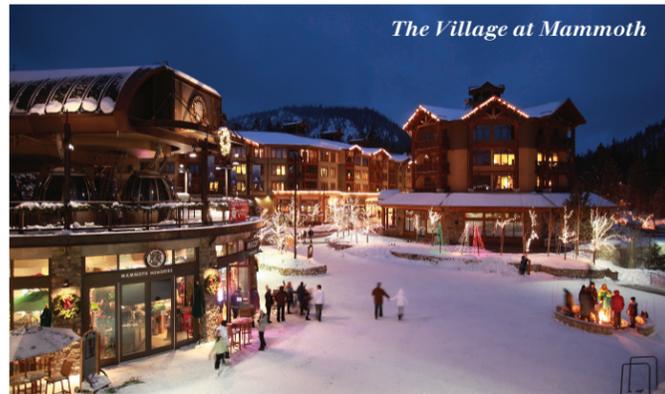


# DESTINATION

as featured in  
**california**  
meetings + events



The Village at Mammoth



Mammoth Gondola



Hot Creek



The Westin Monache Resort



Mammoth Mountain Mill Café

## A MAMMOTH UNDERTAKING

Meetings in the Eastern Sierra reward visitors with majestic scenery and engaging activities at any time of year. BY JANET FULLWOOD



The Westin Monache Resort



Mammoth Unbound



The Village at Mammoth

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: (CLOCKWISE) VILLAGE AT MAMMOTH; MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN; THE VILLAGE AT MAMMOTH; JANET FULLWOOD; THE WESTIN MONACHE RESORT; MAMMOTH; PETER MORNING.

TO CALIFORNIANS WHO LOVE THE OUTDOORS, the resort town of Mammoth Lakes, tucked into the Eastern Sierra at an altitude of 7,880 feet, is a magical place. Skiing in winter, hiking and fishing in summer and majestic scenery year-round draw visitors from near and far. Increasingly, thanks to expanded air service into Mammoth Yosemite Airport, growing numbers of people are coming for conferences, corporate retreats, events, team-building getaways and other group gatherings.

“New air service has opened the potential to have groups from across the nation and around the world, which is real exciting for us,” says Bob Peckenpaugh, vice president of hospitality for Mammoth Mountain Resort, which operates the ski area and associated hotels, condominiums, luxury vacation rentals, lodges, restaurants and other venues. “The limitation is that there are only 70 seats per plane, but that’s OK for us because our hotels are built for the 150- to 200-room group.”

Mammoth is 300 miles from both San Francisco and Los Angeles, with a major mountain range, the Sierra Nevada, in between. But the logistical challenges involved in staging a gathering here are offset by the fact that people don’t come all this way to just sit in a conference room. “They come to meet and add an activity,” Peckenpaugh says. “For example, we have a couple of medical groups that come year after year. They’ll do their annual classes to keep fresh in their particular field, but the idea is that they also have the opportunity to get out and ski.”

“Last winter,” he adds, citing another example, “we had an investment banking company that flew 70 people up for a day trip on a morning Alaska Airlines flight from Los Angeles. They rented the back side of the mountain and the Outpost Café, set up their audio-visual, did awards for employees and had ski school and our 12-passenger Alpina Sherpa snowmobile available for whatever they wanted to do.”

Winter might be the most high-profile season at Mammoth, but summers are sublime and even busier, says Sandra Di Domizio, owner of Mammoth-based Green Fox Events. “We get an amazing amount of snow,” she says, “but we also get over 300 days a year of sunshine.”

While Green Fox specializes in producing

weddings, outdoor events and corporate gatherings, about a quarter of Di Domizio’s time is devoted to facilitating events for corporate planners who don’t live nearby and have only a passing familiarity with the destination.

“If you’re planning your wedding or a corporate event at Mammoth, you want someone local to make you look good,” she says. “A third-party organizer helps keep people on their toes. If I’m partial to a particular vendor, whether it’s a caterer, a florist or an A/V company, it’s because they provide great customer service.”

TOMS Shoes is one corporate client sold on the destination. “We’ve been coming to Mammoth in celebration of the holidays (and the year’s hard work) since January 2008,” says Megan Memmott, assistant to the company’s founder.

### Mammoth Lakes at a Glance

**LOCATION:** Mono County on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, about 300 miles from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

**POPULATION:** 8,234

**ALTITUDE:** 7,880 feet

**AIR SERVICE:** Mammoth Yosemite Airport, 10 minutes from town, is served by Alaska and United airlines, with service from San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego and Orange County.

**LODGING ROOMS:** About 6,000 total including condos, hotels and motels.

**MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE:** The largest indoor venues can accommodate about 300 people. Outdoor festivals and special events draw several thousand.

Memmott worked with Green Fox to plan that first meeting for 25 people and subsequent ones for increasingly larger groups. In March 2012, the TOMS group totaled 210, the majority of whom traveled by chartered bus from company headquarters in Los Angeles.

On that trip, the group’s lodging base was the Westin Monache, a 230-room luxury hotel with 2,000 square feet of function space. Previously, they had stayed at the ski-in/ski-out Mammoth Mountain Inn (a Mammoth Mountain Resort property), holding off-site dinners at various venues. A Mammoth high point: a lip-synce/costume dance party held at Canyon Lodge.

“For a town with a permanent population of only 8,234, Mammoth offers a surprisingly diverse array of lodging options for small- to medium-size groups. Choices range from budget venues such as Sierra Meadows Ranch, whose dorm-style cabins are popular for high-altitude training camps, yoga retreats and equestrian groups, to Tallus Private Residential Club, a complex of rentable luxury homes adjacent to a glass-walled clubhouse that’s available for weddings and corporate and fundraising events. The Village Lodge, with 205 rooms, and the adjacent 230-room Westin Monache are the largest conventional hotels. Snowcreek Resort boasts a golf course and wide selection of condos and vacation homes, while small groups often gravitate to old-fashioned woody retreats like Tamarack Lodge and Pokonobe Lodge, with lakeside settings and an immersed-in-the-mountains vibe.

On the team-building front, the possibilities are as limitless as the planner’s imagination. In summer, fishing, boating, kayaking, climbing, hiking, horseback riding, golf and other outdoor pursuits take center stage. New on the scene is Sky Time Helicopter Tours, offering year-round reasonably priced scenic flights over the Eastern Sierra in a four-passenger, state-of-the-art Robinson R66 Turbine helicopter that owner/pilot Ed Roski calls the Rolls-Royce of flight-seeing crafts. ☞

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