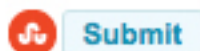
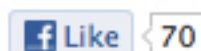


## EXPERT ADVICE



### The World's Best Apres-Ski Bars

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#### The Minturn Saloon (Vail, Colorado) 6 of 8

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Family-friendly **Vail** can feel like Disney World on snow, but the Rocky Mountain resort certainly knows how to cut loose after the lifts stop spinning. Most folks gravitate to bars lining Bridge Street, the faux European village's main pedestrian drag. There you'll find standouts like the **Red Lion**, where towering nachos, craft brews, and live music outweigh the fact that bellying up at the overcrowded bar might take 30 minutes. Or **Hotel-Gasthof Gramshammer**, a Tyrolean-style inn that's been serving Austrian food and beers on its sun-splashed terrace since the Sixties. Head over to the Lionshead base, and there's the always popular **Garfinkel's**.

But if you're in the mood for a more traditional Colorado après-ski experience – and you're an experienced backcountry skier – then you've got to head out of bounds. Instead of following the flock back down Vail's front face, advanced skiers can cap their day with a schuss down the **Minturn Mile**, an unpatrolled bowl that funnels into a dicey wooded luge track before spitting you out into the former mining town of Minturn. Look for the backcountry gate off the top of the Lost Boy trail in Game Creek Bowl: It gives access to the Mile – you'll notice signs advising skiers and snowboarders that the area is unpatrolled.

Minturn isn't much more than a collection of trailers and ramshackle homes, but that only adds to its frozen-in-time charm. A quick walk into town delivers you at the **Minturn Saloon**, a local favorite that's been in the beverage-slinging business since 1901. Taxidermy and awesomely Eighties ski posters adorn the walls of the bar, where you'll find skiers and boarders saddled up by the fireplace downing \$22 house margarita pitchers and unlimited chips and salsa. The saloon's Mexican restaurant gets lively around 7 p.m. in the adjoining room, which you'll loudly disrupt every time you stomp through in your ski boots when nature calls. There's a bus shuttling skiers back to Vail, seven miles down I-70, but if you've properly indulged you'll have long missed the last one and need to call a cab. We suggest **Hummer's of Vail**, cowboy.