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IMBA Designates Park City as World's First Gold-Level Ride Center

Park City is the model for the IMBA Ride Center® program

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) has designated Park City, Utah, as the world's first Gold Level Ride Center. In announcing this honor, IMBA Regional Director Ryan Schutz said, "We're awarding our highest designation to this amazing mountain bike destination. No location better exemplifies the Ride Center ideal of offering great options for any level of rider and any style of riding."

In 2008, IMBA held their World Summit mountain biking conference in Park City. Since then, the wheels have been turning on IMBA's Ride Center program and on the idea of Park City as an exemplary mountain biking destination. IMBA is the organization that designates trails, such as Park City's Mid-Mountain Trail, as the world's "Epic" rides. The Ride Center program offers an equivalent endorsement on a much broader scale.

Charlie Sturgis, executive director of Park City's Mountain Trails Foundation, accepted the award as a representative of the sponsoring organization that coordinated with IMBA to make sure Park City met all the requirements of the Ride Center program. "After two years of working toward this, we were able to fill in the criteria sheets requested from IMBA," explained Sturgis. "We've been told we received 96 out of a possible 100 points, and while there are other Ride Centers, we're the first venue to be rated high enough to be Gold Level.

IMBA ranks locations for possible Ride Center status based on a comprehensive range of criteria, including everything from the number of miles of various types of trails to the types and quantities of lodging and restaurants in the area. Not only do they want to know if there are pump tracks and lift-served riding in town, but they also ask about trailhead facilities and activities for after the ride.

One of the benefits of the IMBA Gold Level Ride Center designation is that mountain bikers looking for the best biking adventure locations in the world will see Park City's leading Ride Center status in IMBA published materials. Enthusiasts will even be able to click through and book biking vacations in Park City through the IMBA website.

Rhonda Sideris of Park City Lodging, Inc., noted the potential for increased summer visitors and lodging business. "I see no reason why we shouldn't pursue lift and lodging packages in the summer just like we already have in the winter," says Sideris. "The IMBA designation gives us bragging rights similar to our ski resorts' winter rankings."

As director of the Mountain Trails Foundation, Sturgis agrees that the IMBA designation offers the opportunity for more summer and fall business, and he pointed out that there was another valuable consideration. "Perhaps one of the things that I'm proudest of with regard to the Gold Level Ride Center designation is that we will be working with IMBA as the standard bearer for their program. We've agreed to host other communities that want to become Ride Centers. We'll show them what we've done and introduce them to people in town who help coordinate all the various aspects that support mountain biking here so they can see how to further biking in their communities. We'll also be speaking at IMBA conferences across the country and potentially around the world to help further the sport. It's kind of a cool place to be in, and we're proud on behalf of the whole community," Sturgis says.

With an incredible network of trails, countless events and activities, and an enthusiastic and supportive community, Park City officially became the first IMBA Gold Level Ride Center in the world in the spring of 2012. This distinction was reevaluated and reconfirmed just last year, in 2015.

ABOUT IMBA

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational association. Its mission is to create, enhance and preserve great mountain biking experiences. Since 1988, IMBA has been bringing out the best in mountain biking by encouraging low-impact riding, volunteer trail work participation, cooperation among different trail user groups, grassroots advocacy and innovative trail management solutions. IMBA represents its members, supports its chapters and its work benefits the mountain biking community. Learn more at IMBA.com.

The Ride Center™ designation represents IMBA's Model Trail recognition for large-scale mountain bike facilities that offer something for every rider. The recognition is rated on a system of bronze, silver, and gold levels.

ABOUT PARK CITY MOUNTAIN BIKE HISTORY

In 1868, mining prospectors came to the mountains above Park City for silver and gold. What those gold and silver miners didn't know was that their original working trails would become award-winning mountain bike trails. At an average grade of 4% to 6%, these trails possess the ideal flow for both climbing and descending on a mountain bike.

Fast-forward to 1992 and the birth of Mountain Trails Foundation. This new governing body set to work and carved out more bike trails every year—culminating in 400+ miles so far. Today the gold is now brown and is being mined by all sorts of modern cycling prospectors. Because of the vast and diverse network of trails, coupled with a welcoming array of lodging, dining, and bike-friendly amenities, IMBA has named Park City the world's first Gold Level Ride Center, putting the town on the map as the leading example of what a mountain bike destination should be.

ABOUT MOUNTAIN TRAILS FOUNDATION

Founded in 1992, Mountain Trails Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Park City, Utah, whose focus is on the development and maintenance of local trails for nonmotorized, recreational use. The Executive Director, Charlie Sturgis, is an original cofounder of the foundation, and has lived in Park City for over four decades. Since its creation, the mission of Mountain Trails Foundation has been “to advocate the building and improvement of trails while working with local governments, private landowners, developers, and the general public in an effort to educate these groups on the benefits of a nonmotorized, outdoor recreational amenity.” Mountain Trails Foundation, with the help of extensive volunteer efforts, now maintains 400+ miles of summer- and winter-use trails in Summit County, Utah, with Park City as the epicenter of the trail network. Working closely with both the Snyderville Basin Recreation District and Park City Municipal Corporations, Mountain Trails Foundation has developed the trail system of the world's first IMBA-designated Gold Level Ride Center. The long-term goal of Mountain Trails Foundation is to provide the greater Park City community and its visitors with diverse recreational opportunities utilizing a seamless, year-round trail system.