The launch of the longest continuous vertical cable car in North America is just one of a host of reasons to revisit revitalised Jackson Hole, says Suzanne Garnier.

"Big Red is back," declared the cinema-sized screen at the base of Rendezvous Mountain, 12 miles north-west of Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where a crowd of 1,000 or more had braved darkness and freezing temperatures on a Friday evening last December to witness the unveiling of a new 3.5km tram. Moments later, a greyish-blue cable car, emblazoned with the resort's iconic cowboy atop a bucking bronco, slid down the cable and was unwrapped from its following white sheath. From a trap door in the bottom of the box, a team worked, known laughingly as a "tramp," scuppered down to the ground below. The crowd hurtled marshmallows, and the fireworks began.

But then this is no ordinary tram. Spanning 3.7km of cable and climbing a vertical distance of 1,262m, its two cars ascend to the summit of the 3,381m Rendezvous Mountain in a speedy nine minutes, climbing the longest continuous vertical rise of any hill in North America.

"I'm not sure it was vision, it was just so obvious that this was the last dodging," says Alex Meyer, one of the team who built the original tram system 42 years ago. Back then he spent two winters tugging his bulldozer up the mountain to scout runs before moving nearby Elm to build the first tram.

Now 95 and still going, he's lost none of his enthusiasm. "We lost money all the time," he adds, "but it had our private air area. To appreciate the smell of beauty of this man against nature achievement, one simply needs to abolish the statistics. Located in the backcountry of Grand Teton National Park, in a base camp known as Teton Village, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort consists of two mountains: Rendezvous and the 2,590m Apline View. Between them, at 2,772m, sits the Grindelwald Summit. Together they account for 2,500 acres of bowls, terrain and 146 named trails (not to mention 3,000 backcountry acres) — half of them expert grade and 40 per cent intermediate. In the distance, down south, looms the spectacular north face of the Grand Teton, the range's highest peak at 4,390m, its unyielding granite face drenched in white and streaked with dark crev."

Descending after descent, you never know what lies beneath the most precipice. The mountain falls endlessly in steep drops, broken by slopes that seem to melt off in grousers, rumbling swags. But underneath an annual 120cm of powder lurks a tumbling rock pile and tussocks like bamboo shoots. Creepers are prone to avalanche, temperatures are sub-zero, falls live longer and visibility is compromised. In other words, it's one beast of a ski hill. And if you don't watch it out, this treacherous mountain, once known only to fur trappers, can become as obscure.

Although daredevils have been skiing its wild chutes and bowls since the 1930s and 1940s, it was only when the Kremmerer family bought the ski area in 1992 that Jackson's potential as an international ski destination began to be realised. But the reinvention of Big Red has raised its game as a winter sports resort once again, which, in conjunction with its revitalised après-ski scene, makes it an alluring place for a holiday.

Chef among those who have pioneered the restaurant scene at Jeff Durr, the accomplished chef at the Snake River Grill, just steps from the author actions of Jackson Square, whose menus run to chocto-stuffed mashed potatoes wrapped in applewood-smoked bacon and green-lip credit with pickled figs — just the kind of dishes to warm up with after a day on the slopes. A few blocks away is the recently renovated Snake River Brewing Company, noted for its organic Oat-3, an English-style brown ale that it brews on site.

Another restaurant worth knowing about is Caval House. But this establishment is a great place for classic meat dishes with a twist (cider-glazed pork belly with fennel and apple sauce), Marchin Farm lamb chops on a lemon garlic chipper plate), and draws local and visitors alike. His most popular shucking bar joint Q Roadhouse, on the road out of the village, is another hit joint, and owner of the eco-chic Hotel Terra (all organic cotton sheets, futon coffee, natural decoration and chemical free cleaning products) is a good bet for a slap-up Italian mountain supper of mouflon wrapped in speck, porcini and foxtail cheese fritters and plies of thinly