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LEISURE

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Ski Iowa

IT'S OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS

By JOHN KARRAS
Register Staff Writer

Part of the news in cross-country skiing in Iowa this year is that fashion has arrived in some parts of the state and is on the way in others, with reservations.

(Anything said about cross-country skiing demands reservations because the sport's devotees traditionally are more independent, less sheep-like than their Alpine cousins. And yet, fashion is on the way.)

The rest of the news is that inflation has not worked its evils on cross-country equipment nearly as severely as it has on most other merchandise.

In addition to more fashion, there will be more groomed ski trails in Iowa this year, more warming houses, more areas designated for the sport, and more races.

All this means, of course, is that the sport is becoming more popular in Iowa and that more people of a gregarious nature are getting involved.

Time was when the only Iowans on cross-country skis were the sort who set out over trackless fields and through silent woods in search of at least the illusion of wilderness in the crystalline fastness of the winter countryside.

MORE FANCY LOOKS

Those hardy types still are out there, of course, but more and more cross-country skiers will be showing up this year in fancy knickers and multicolored pullover shells, in stylish woolen turtleneck shirts and high knee socks with snowflake patterns on them.

Several ski stores in Des Moines, Ames and Decorah reported clothing for cross-country touring — knickers and pullover windbreakers — selling very well this year. A Dubuque store reported selling a lot of the touring clothing and also one-piece racing suits. Stores in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City reported little demand yet in those communities for cross-country clothing.

(In fairness, cross-country clothing does make sense for the sport beyond considerations of trendiness. As most beginners soon learn, the easiest thing to do is overdress. Cross-country is strenuous, and the over-dressed soon find themselves soaking wet with sweat, even on sub-zero days.)

As for equipment, nothing new has shown up this year. Manufacturers are pushing a narrower touring binding similar to the binding racers use, but opinion among store owners is divided over whether the binding's time has come.

Many retailers see Iowa skiers becoming more sophisticated, noting that more waxable and fewer non-wax skis are being bought.

As for the inflation factor, cross-country packages still can be had starting at around $100 (depending on quality), an outfit, including skis, bindings, boots and poles.

FIBERGLASS SKIS

The trend of the last several years away from wooden and into fiberglass skis continues. In Des Moines, the Campsite still carries two lines of wooden skis among the fiberglass, and the Chalet carries one. North Slope has none.

Fiberglass skis are faster than wooden skis, flex characteristics are more dependable because they're easier to control in manufacture, and the fiberglass skis require less maintenance. On the other side of the argument, some die-hards think wooden skis are prettier.

CLINICS SCHEDULED

Many instructional clinics are planned or already scheduled for the season in many parts of the state. They include:

- **Des Moines** — The Des Moines Tribune clinic with certified instructor Alan Bogus of Eagle River, Wis.; indoor session, Jan. 3 at Camp Dodge recreation hall; snow instruction, Jan. 5 at Jester Park; no snow dates, Jan. 17 and 19; in cooperation with Des Moines Outing Club and Polk County Conservation Board.

Both Campsite and the North Slope conduct clinics, and Campsite again will be holding classes in conjunction with adult education. Call the stores for details.

The Des Moines Outing Club will have tours and group instruction at Jester Park, snow permitting, Dec. 15 and 29, Jan. 13 and 27, and Feb. 3, 9, 16 and 23. Write to Box 7043, Grand Station, Des Moines 50309 for details.

- **Decorah** — Instruction is available from the Parks and Recreation Department by appointment. Clinics are planned but not yet scheduled. Nordic Outfitters will hold a clinic Nov. 25 at the shop.
- **Cedar Rapids** — The Sons of Norway in cooperation with the Cedar Rapids Recreation Commission will hold a clinic at 1 p.m. Jan. 13 at Squaw Creek Park.

Indian Creek Nature Center has scheduled clinics from 9 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. on Jan. 5, and from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Jan. 16 and Feb. 6. Trails at the center are always open.

- **Dubuque** — Wilderness Sports will be grooming courses at Swiss Valley conservation area and at Bunker Hill golf course. Clinics and races will be scheduled later. Details are available at the store.
- **Iowa City** — Both the Bivouac and Eby's are holding clinics. Call the stores for times and places.
- **Ames** — Country Sport and Michael's Cyclery will hold clinics. Call the stores for information.
- **Spirit Lake** — Clinics are offered at Indian Hills Golf Course.
- **Emmetsburg** — The Parks and Recreation Department will offer a seven-Saturdays course from 1-4 p.m. beginning Jan. 12.

MANY RACES SLATED

In addition to instruction, races are proliferating in the state this year. Most of them are of the time-trial variety, with racers starting a minute or so apart and racing the clock.

At least one will be a mass-start race, the second annual Great Iowa Nordic Ski Race at 2 p.m. on Jan. 13 at Krumm Nature Preserve in Jasper County. The race is sponsored by the Newton Ski Club in cooperation with the Jasper County Conservation Board.

The Sons of Norway and Armstrong's of Cedar Rapids are sponsoring a race Jan. 19 at Squaw Creek Park with the help of the recreation department and the Linn County Conservation Board.

The Bivouac will sponsor races in Iowa City at 1 p.m. in City Park on Jan. 5, 13 and 20. The Bivouac and Eby's will co-sponsor races on Feb. 2 and 10, probably on Finkbine golf course.

In Des Moines, the Parks and Recreation Department will sponsor a race at noon Jan. 26 at Ewing Park. Co-sponsors are the Outing Club, Campsite, Coors, Army Corps of Engineers and Polk County Conservation Board.

The Outing Club will hold races at Jester on Jan. 13 and 27 and Feb. 3 in cooperation with the Chalet and Karhu-Titan ski company, and on Feb. 9, 16 and 23 in cooperation with Coors. Bob Post, Outing Club president, said that "one way or another, we're going to get tracked trails at Jester."

Where to ski? Besides the places mentioned above, most golf courses permit cross-country skiing and many state parks and forests have trails that lend themselves to the sport.

Camp Hantess, south of Boone, has winterized several cabins and is open through the winter. Rental is $3 a person for 24 hours, and meals are served at $1.75 for breakfast, $2 for lunch and $2.50 for dinner. Rental skis and instruction are available. Call Sue Welch, camp director, at (515) 432-6325 for reservations.

Yellow River Outfitters, 6 miles east and 4 miles north of Monona, maintains 15 kilometers of groomed trails. Trail fee is $5 per person a day. Call (319) 539-2425 for more information.

The Army Corps of Engineers maintains trails at Saylorville starting from the boat ramp parking lot northwest of Camp Dodge.

If you get the impression from all this that a lot of Iowans are getting serious about cross-country skiing, you're right. But we still have a way to go to match our brothers and sisters to the north, in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

At this moment, hundreds of them are doing bench presses, sit-ups, back raises, long-distance runs, leaps with ski poles up hills in preparation for the racing season.

And that's really serious.

IT IS AN ALTERNATIVE, BUT FEAR NOT, ASPEN

By DIX HOLLOBAUGH
Register Staff Writer

Ski Iowa?

The thought conjures visions of skiers thrashing along barren cornfields where the biggest mountains are ice-covered haystacks.

But Iowa's downhill ski spots — they cannot be called resorts by any stretch of the imagination — have sprouted like winter mushrooms in the past few years, and while they won't challenge Vail or Steamboat for breathtaking scenery or precipitous slopes, they do offer a close-to-home alternative for the beginning or weekend skier who wants to test the slopes, however gradual they may be.

So fear not, Colorado and Vermont. Iowa lacks the basic ingredients for even middle class downhill skiing. No mountains, avalanches, crevasses or powdery snow here. The state can't even guarantee that there'll be snow on the ground in midwinter. And Iowa's winter is breathtaking only when it is insufferably cold.

But beginning skiers can get a start here, testing the bunny hills on rented equipment before investing hundreds of dollars for equipment and clothing.

Most of Iowa's ski spots offer qualified instruction, family rates, rental equipment and night skiing.

Dubuque

The most elaborate of the dozen commercial slopes in Iowa is Sundown, near Dubuque. Much money, time and thought have gone into this converted 70-acre cow pasture, which boasts four "snow guns" that "can make eight tons of snow in one minute."

Sundown is located at 9000 Asbury Road, 5½ miles west of Dubuque. This is Sundown's eighth season. Hours are from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Sundown is closed Christmas Day.

There are 16 interconnecting runs and trails, all lighted. Chairlifts and rope tows have a capacity of 7,200 skiers per hour.

A new lodge opened last year with a cafeteria, a bar, a lounge, a rental shop and two fireplaces. Another lodge is for groups and brown-baggers, but also serves food and has a bar.

Rates: Weekday $9.50 adults, $7.50 senior citizens and students. Rates go down after 4:30 p.m. Weekend prices are $11 and $9.50. Rental: $10 per day includes skis, boots and poles. There's a free skiing program for handicapped persons, with instructors trained to teach blind persons and amputees.

For more information, contact Kristi Doemel, 9000 Asbury Road, Dubuque, Ia. 52001. Telephone (319) 556-6676.

Estherville

Estherville's Holiday Mountain is one mile south of Estherville and 14 miles east of Okoboji on Iowa Highway 4. There is a chalet with a snack bar, a rental shop, snow-making equipment, rope tows, ski instructors and a ski patrol.

Holiday Mountain is open from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Saturdays and holidays, and until 7:30 p.m. on Sundays. Weekday hours vary.

Weekend rates are $5.75 for adults and $4.25 for kids; weekday rates are $4.50 and $3.50. Rental rates are $4 for skis, $2.50 for boots and 75 cents for poles. The rental rates decline after 4 p.m.

Private lessons and group rates are available.

For more information, contact Holiday Mountain, Inc., P.O. Box 102, Estherville, Ia. 51334. Telephone (712) 362-2264.

Waverly

To get to Waverly's Ski Villa, go north on First Street NW past the north power plant, to north end of Stockwell Bridge. Take the first turn and follow the signs.

Ski Villa has six rope tows, snow-making and grooming equipment, and a warm chalet with food and a rental shop.

Ski Villa is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturdays and holidays, and until 6 p.m. on Sundays. Weekday hours vary.

Rates are $4.75 for adults and $3.50 for students on weekends and holidays, and slightly less during the week.

Skis rent for $2.75, boots for $2.25, and poles for $1.

For more information, contact Erv Happel, Ski Villa, Route 3, Waverly, Ia. 50677. Telephone (391) 352-9922.

Montezuma

Montezuma's Fun Valley is located 8 miles south of Interstate 80 and 2½ miles west of the International Store on Iowa Highway 63.

Fun Valley features a clothing and pro shop, a restaurant, a "funny run" of 1,500 feet, and other ski runs. In addition, there are areas to snowmobile and sled.

There's a special rate every night from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. when $6 covers lift tickets and ski, pole and boot rental.

Fun Valley is open from noon until 9 p.m. Sunday through Friday. Saturday hours are 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Rates, which include rental, are $10 weekdays and $12 on weekends and holidays.

For more information, contact Ed Bryan, Fun Valley, Montezuma, Ia. Telephone (515) 623-3456.

Dexter

Dexter's Deer Run Sports Area is 2½ miles north of Dexter on Road P-48.

The Deer Run Sports Area features a chalet with a snack shop, five runs, three rope tows, instruction and ski patrol.

It is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. and is lighted for night skiing.

Approximate rates are $5, with an additional $5 for ski, boot and pole rental. The rates are cut in half after 6 p.m., and group rates are available.

For more information, telephone (515) 798-4575.

Decorah

Decorah's Nor-Ski is 1½ miles north of the intersection of U.S. Highway 52 and Iowa Highway 9.

Nor-Ski boasts five slopes ranging from a bunny slope to an intermediate hill. There are four rope and cable tows. The shelter house has soft drinks and candy but no warm drinks. It's best to bring a winter picnic.

The slopes are lighted for night skiing, but there is no snow-making equipment. Instruction is available.

Tow rates on weekends and holidays are $4 for adults and $3 for students through high school. Night rates are $1 lower.

Skis rent for $3.50, boots for $3 and poles for $1.

The slopes are open weekends and holidays from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Closed Monday and Wednesday. For more information contact Bob Hunt at (319) 382-3506.

Boone

Boone's Ski Valley is 3 miles west of Boone on U.S. Highway 30.

Ski Valley offers three rope tows, four ski runs, snow-making and grooming equipment. Night skiing is available by reservation on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Lift fees Monday, Thursday and Friday are $4.50 for adults, $3.50 for children 12 and under. On Tuesday, Wednesday, weekends and holidays, the rates are $5.50 for adults and $4.50 for kids.

Ski Valley is open Monday, Thursday and Friday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Skis rent for $4, boots for $2 and poles for $1. Private lessons are $10 per hour; groups of three or more get special rates.

Ski Valley's warming house sells lunch and gloves.

For more information telephone (515) 432-2542.

Dubuque

Dubuque's Veterans' Memorial Park Ski Area is located on Thirty-second Street off U.S. Highway 52 in Dubuque.

The slopes are lighted for night skiing, and has snow-making equipment and a warming house. But bring your own hot chocolate. And there are no rentals, so bring your own skis, too.

There are two tow ropes, and rates are $2 for adults and $1.25 for youngsters up to age 16.

The ski area is open Tuesday through Friday from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and during Christmas vacation from from 1 p.m. until 8 p.m.

For more information telephone (319) 588-1478.

Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs' Crescent Ski Hills is 7 miles north of Council Bluffs on Highway 183.

Crescent boasts some of the state's steeper runs, and has snow-making equipment, one poma lift, two tow ropes and one T-bar. There's a full lodge with a snack bar, a bar bar and a grill.

Crescent is open weekdays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Tow rates on weekdays are $8 for adults and $5 for kids 12 years old and younger. After 6 p.m. the adult rates are $6, kids $3. On weekends and holidays the tow charge is $11 for adults and $7.50 for children before 6 p.m. Again, the rates go down after 6 p.m.

Equipment rental, including skis, boots and poles, is $8 for adults on weekdays, $9 on weekends. The rate is $6 for children on weekdays and $7 on weekends and holidays.

Ski lessons are $12 an hour for private instruction and from $5 to $8 in small groups. The facilities will be closed Christmas Day. Season passes are $140 for a single, $120 for students and $260 for a couple.

For more information, telephone (712) 328-9547.

Milford

Milford's Horseshoe Bend is 2 miles south of Milford on U.S. Highway 71. Turn at the sign and go three miles west.

There's a large shelter house with a big fireplace, and the coffee pot is always on. There's even some hot chocolate. And there's no charge to use Horseshoe's hills, although contributions are welcome. There is no equipment rental.

This is the eighth season on this 160-acre winter playground. It is open weekends and holidays from 1 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., and on weekdays from 4 to 9:30 p.m. Bring your own tubes, sleds and snowmobiles.

For more information call (319) 338-4007.

Humboldt

Humboldt's Winter World is located 3 miles east of town on Iowa Highway 3, then half a mile mile north. Follow the sign.

Winter World features four lighted ski slopes, three rope tows, snow-making equipment and a cable car on rails for tobogganers. There's a chalet with a snack bar and a fireplace. Beginning skiers get one free ski lesson, and advanced instruction is available. In addition, there's a ski shop that offers repair service.

Winter World is open Monday through Friday from noon to 5 p.m., and on weekends and holidays from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. There's skiing on Wednesday night from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. The slopes are open other nights by reservation only.

Tow fees on weekends are $5 for adults, $4.50 for skiers age 12 to 18 and $2.50 for kids under 12. Weekday tows are $4, $3.50 and $2.

Rental skis are $4, boots $2.50 and poles 50 cents. Cross-country ski equipment rents for $6.

For more information, telephone (515) 332-3329.

Pella

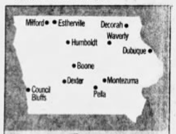
Pella's Sunset is located 6 miles southeast of the city. Go east on Iowa Highway 63 and follow the signs.

Sunset offers a warm chalet with a snack bar and a ski shop. There are three tows and snow-making and grooming equipment. Lessons are available from a certified instructor.

All day lift rates are $6. After 6 p.m. the rate is $3.

Sunset is open weekdays from 2:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on weekends and holidays from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Groups of 35 or more can reserve the park for private parties after 9 p.m. Also, there are rates for Ladies Day, Men's Day and Family Day.

For more information call (515) 626-3291.



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