

IT IS AN ALTERNATIVE, BUT FEAR NOT, ASPEN

By DIX HOLLORAU
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Ski Iowa?

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

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 lighting.

Dubuque

The HUNT SKI AREA at the Hunt Commercial Depot in Iowa's Twin Falls, near Dubuque. Much money, time and thought has gone into the converted 70-acre cow pasture, which boasts four "snow guns" that "can make eight tons of snow in one hour."

Skiing is located at 9000 Ashby Road, 5 1/2 miles west of Dubuque. The Hunt's eighth season. Hours are from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Sunday is closed Christmas Day.

There is 18 man-made runs and trails, all lighted. Country and rope tow have a capacity of 7,000 skiers per hour.

A new lodge opened last year with a cafeteria, a lounge, a rental shop and two fireplaces. Another lodge is for groups and brown-baggers. And there's food and a bar.

Rates: Weekday \$9.50 adult, \$7.50 senior citizens and students. Rates on weekends and holidays are \$11 and \$9.50. Rental: \$10 per day includes skis, boots and poles. There's a free ski program for disadvantaged persons, with instructors trained to teach blind persons and amputees.

For more information, contact Kristi Dorn, 9000 Ashby Road, Dubuque, Ia. 52001. Telephone (319) 556-0676.

Estherville

Estherville's Holiday Mountain is one mile south of Estherville and 14 miles east of Oklaqui on Iowa Highway 4. There is a chalet with a snack bar, a rental shop, snow-making equipment, rope tow, 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 \$3.75 for adults and \$2.25 for kids; weekday rates are \$4.50 and \$3.50. Rental rates are \$4 for skis, \$2.50 for boots and \$5 for poles. The rental rates include 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 sign.

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 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Sundays. Weekday hours vary.

Rates are \$4.75 for adults and \$3.50 for students on weekends and holidays, and \$2.75 for kids. Rental rates are \$2.25, and poles for \$1.

For more information, contact Ski Villa, Route 3, Waverly, Ia. 50677. Telephone (319) 352-9922.

Montezuma

Montezuma's Fun Valley is located 8 miles south of Interstate 80 and 2 1/2 miles west of the International Store on Iowa Highway 63.

Fun Valley features a clothing and shoe shop, a restaurant, a "lumpy run" of 1,200 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 rope 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 (512) 623-3456.

Dexter

Dexter's Deer Run Sports Area is 2 1/2 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 \$3 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 Deer Ski is 1 1/2 miles north of the intersection of U.S. Highway 32 and Iowa Highway 9.

Deer Ski boasts three 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 food.

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 children 12 and under. Night rates are \$3.50.

Ski 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 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Closed Monday and Wednesday. For more information contact Bob Hunt at (319) 362-3506.

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 \$3.50 for adults and \$2.50 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.

Ski rent for \$4, boots for \$2 and poles for \$1. Private lessons are \$10 per hour, group 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 Villaview Memorial Park Ski Area is located on Thier's road, off U.S. Highway 32 in Dubuque.

The slopes are lighted for night skiing, and ski snow-making equipment

and a warming house. But bring your own hot chocolate. And there are no rentals, so bring your own ski tips.

There are two rope tows, and rates are \$2 for adults and \$1.25 for youngsters up to age 14.

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

For more information telephone (319) 588-1478.

Council Bluffs

Council Bluffs' Crescent Ski Area is 7 miles north of Council Bluffs on Highway 163.

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

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. After 6 p.m. it's \$6 for adults and \$4 for kids.

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

Ski lessons are \$12 an hour for private instruction and from \$3 to \$8 in small groups. The facilities will be closed Christmas Day. Season passes are \$140 for a year, \$120 for juniors and \$200 for a couple.

For more information, telephone (712) 328-1547.

Millford

MILLFORD'S Narramore Bend is 2 miles south of Millford 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 Narramore'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 skis, boots and snowmobiles.

For more information call (319) 340-4007.

Humboldt

HUMBOLDT'S "WINTER WONDER" is located 3 miles north of town on Iowa Highway 31, then half a mile north. Follow the sign.

Winter Wonder features four lighted ski slopes, three rope tows, snow-making equipment and a cable car for the children. There's a snack bar 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 club that offers repair service.

Winter Wonder 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 skier nights by reservation only.

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

Snow 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.

Polta's Summit is located 6 miles southeast of the city. Go east on Iowa Highway 63 and follow the sign.

Summit offers a warm chalet with a snack bar and a ski shop. There are three runs 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.

Snow 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.

