

Winter Sports Big Business in State

As the mercury goes down, Michigan's winter travel barometer goes up, for cold weather sports have become big business in the state.

The season, for example, some half-million resident and out-of-state sportsmen (with families too) will storm Michigan's expanded winter sports areas, according to the state tourist council. "And that," says executive secretary Robert J. Furlong, "is a mighty conservative figure."

The estimate, he explained, is based on a council survey of Michigan's winter sports industry in 1954. "Since then the winter travel business has increased enormously," he said.

Winter sports, of course, includes everything from skiing and tobogganing to bob-cat hunting and ice fishing. But the biggest single increase has been in the number of skiers who have taken to Michigan's slopes.

BIG BUSINESS

"We estimate 375,000 members of the 'slat set' will mush to ski centers dotting the state from the upper peninsula's 'copper country' to Kalamazoo 'down below,'" Furlong said. "And they will spend some \$12½ million in the process."

"Michigan now has 64 organized winter sports areas—an all-time high," he continued, "more than any other state east of the Rockies. Twenty-six of them have opened since 1953. And this year alone nine new ski centers go into operation for the first time. But eager resort operators already are making plans for further expansion and, new developments next season."

With the trend today toward family recreation, all of Michigan's winter resorts are equipped for beginners as well as experts and in-betweeners. Ski slopes vary in length from 300 to 3,500 feet, the longest being at Porcupine Mt. lodge in the west end of the upper peninsula.

RENTAL EQUIPMENT

Other ski center offerings include slalom bowls, ski jumps and cross-country trails. Toboggan slides and ice skating rinks also are standard equipment at many areas. And for the indoor division of the winter sports fraternity there are restaurants, snack bars, lounges and warming shelters. Rental equipment is available at most centers and many resorts offer special "ski week and weekend" package vacation plans which include lodging, meals, equipment and—most important—instruction.

The nine new ski centers are scattered across the entire state, from the western upper peninsula to southeastern lower Michigan.

Of 14 upper peninsula winter sports four are new: Cliffs Ridge at Marquette; Big Valley at Newberry; Brice's Hill near St. Ignace; and Peek-a-Boo Hill between Hessel and Cedarville in the Cheneaux island area.

West Michigan offers 23 ski centers, two of them new this year: Walloon Hills, 4½ miles west of Walloon lake near Petos-

key, and Buck Hills, 10 miles southeast of Beulah.

Two of East Michigan's 21 ski areas are making their debut this season: Indian Hills Ski Park, 8 miles west of West Branch and Summit Ski club, 3½ miles south of Fenton in the southern lower peninsula.

SNOW MACHINES

Southeastern Michigan's winter sports centers now total six with the addition of Grampian Mt., 14 miles north of Pontiac.

Newest thing on Michigan's ski scene, said Furlong, is the artificial snow-making machine. Manufactured snow will be featured by four more centers this season: Caberfae, Houghton Lake Snow Bowl, Grampian Mt., and Summit Ski club; making a total of six ski areas offering man-made snow. Snow machines were installed last year at Boyne Mt. and Mt. Holly.

Santa Rides Sputnik

TOKYO, Nov. 30 (AP)—Will science put Santa Claus' reindeers out to pasture? A Tokyo department store has a giant Christmas display showing Santa riding a Sputnik.

Besides the addition of the nine new areas to Michigan's roster of winter facilities, existing winter sports centers have been improved and expanded since the close of last season. New slopes have been bulldozed and old ones have been lengthened and graded. New electrically-driven rope tows and T-bar lifts have been installed by a number of areas, while Caberfae has added a double-chair lift to its facilities. In all, several hundred thousand dollars have been invested in Michigan's winter sports expansion program, according to Furlong.

Many areas also have added shelters and lounges, while others have expanded present facilities to handle the growing number of enthusiasts who flock to Michigan's snow country.

Furlong said the Tourist Council now is preparing a new edition of a state-wide ski map and winter sports guide which pinpoints the location of each of Michigan's 64 ski centers and lists their facilities. The map is expected to be ready by mid-December for free distribution throughout the state and the midwest, he said.

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