

New Downhill Ski Area in the Works

The new Steeplechase Ski and Snowboard Area, 13 miles north of Rochester, plans to open for its preview season this winter. The first new downhill ski area to open in Minnesota in many years, Steeplechase is located in the rugged, hilly bluff country of southeastern Minnesota. With a vertical drop similar to other local ski areas in the state, Steeplechase will offer 18 runs up to 1500-foot long, with four chairlifts and a full-service chalet with ski and snowboard rentals. The hills will be totally lit for night skiing, and nature will be assisted with high-tech snowmaking equipment.

"It'll be very much oriented toward family skiing," explained Kevin Kastler, one of six partners on the new development. He and his father started up Coffee Mill ski area near Wabasha in the 1970s, so he's familiar with family skiing. Steeplechase will offer 10 percent off lift tickets for families coming with at least one adult. Adult lift tickets will be \$21 weekends and holidays, \$17 weekdays; youth lift tickets are \$17 and \$14.

For the latest information on opening dates, call 507-843-3000. The ski area is located five miles north of Oronoco off Co. Rd. 18 (becomes Co. Rd. 1).

More Downhill News

Giants Ridge will open a new 93-suite lodge this winter, providing quick access for downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing. Complete with restaurant, pool and fitness area, it's called the Lodge at Giants Ridge.

Spirit Mountain expanded its snowboard park last year, with a longer half-pipe, and remodeled its SKIwee Area and Children's Center. This year, it's celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Welch Village has added its first double black diamond run and a new quad chairlift, and will be keeping its snowboard area up to speed with a new half pipe groomer and shaper.

Lutsen Mountains added a tubing park with two 1,300-foot luge-style lanes, with dips and high-banked corners, and special four-foot tubes for the exciting ride down.

For more information on downhill skiing and snowboarding, call the Minnesota Office of Tourism, 800-657-3700 or 651/296-5029.



▲▲▲ Welch Village is tucked into the hilly country between Red Wing and Cannon Falls, and has 38 downhill runs.