

# Iowa areas charging uphill to capture downhill skiers

## Skiing in Iowa

**KEY**

Boone: Ski Valley  
Cherokee: Sunset  
Crescent: Crescent Hills  
Dayton: Dayton Dell  
Decorah: Nor-Ski Runs  
Dexter: Raccoon River  
Dubuque: Sundown  
Humboldt: Silver Creek  
Milford: Horseshoe Bend  
Montezuma: Fun Valley  
Waverly: Oak Highlands

**By Deb Wiley**  
Gazette Northeast Iowa Bureau

Go ahead and laugh at the posters that show a downhill skier schussing through the middle of a haystack.

Truth is, despite Iowa's out-of-state image as tabletop country, there are 11 ski areas around the state — four in Eastern Iowa — that love to see their business go downhill.

Nobody's claiming that Iowa is home to the Rockies of the Midwest. But there's always room for hyping the "Mississippi Mountains" at Sundown in Dubuque or the "Iowa Alps" at Fun Valley in Montezuma. Nor-Ski Runs in Decorah claims one of the steepest vertical drop hills in the Midwest on one of its two expert

slopes — a mere 950 feet long but with a 250-foot drop.

This season, which has been such a disaster for heating budgets, has been a real lift for ski hills.

Iowa's slopes are touted as excellent "bunny" training grounds and good practice runs for the Jean-Claude Killy types.

"Many have learned to ski at Nor-Ski," says Craig Hunt, who runs the ski hill in winter and the municipal campground in summer for the Decorah Parks and Recreation Department. "In the West you can spend two hours coming down a mountain. At Nor-Ski, coming down on your face or on skis can take 10 seconds to two minutes on our expert hill."

Near Montezuma, "We call 'em the Iowa Alps just for kicks," says

Edwin "Easy Ed" Bryan, a 65-year-old ex-farmer who opened his family-run Fun Valley there 16 years ago. "We're different because we don't figure we have an expert run. But they all tell me we are an outstanding beginners area."

At Oak Highlands in Waverly, owner Mark Dunkelberg says the latest snow sport there is snow tubing and one hill has been designated exclusively for tubers.

Dunkelberg also caters to beginners. "We've taught 800 people in a year to ski," he says. "Then they go up north (a reference to the larger resorts of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan)."

**SUNDOWN, FUN VALLEY** and Oak Highlands all report good

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