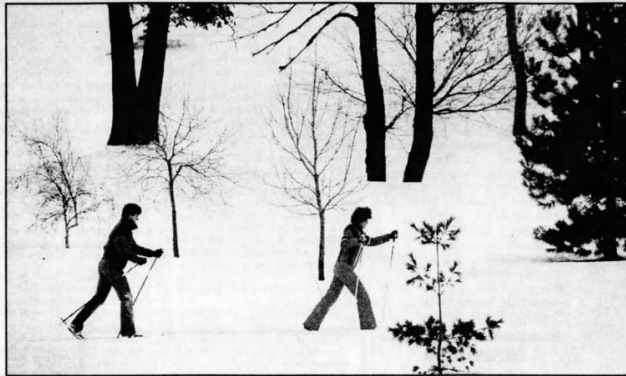




Michigan resorts are ready to welcome both cross-country and downhill skiers for the holidays

*It's time to go
with the snow*

Resorts beef up equipment to ensure happy holidays

By NANCY KALEY
Lifestyle Staff Writer

Skiers can have a light snowfall this season and still schuss a good base because of the \$50 million spent by state lodges on snowmaking equipment in recent years.

Thirty-eight of the 46 ski areas listed on AAA Michigan's downhill guide have snowmaking equipment, many investing each year in advanced technology and new equipment to attract skiers, says

This year, for instance, Shanty Creek-Schuss Mountain Resort near Bellaire spent \$50,000 installing five more snow guns to help assure covered runs by mid-November.

Others who have expanded snowmaking capabilities include Nub's Nob near Harbor Springs, Timber Ridge near Gobles, Ski Brule-Ski Homestead near Iron River and even Marquette Mountain near Marquette — an area which already is setting early season snowfall records.

Another new development is the snowboarding craze which has resulted in 23 areas, compared to 15 last year, welcoming snowboarders this winter.

Crystal Mountain near Thompsonville, Sylvan Resort near Gaylord, Mount Holiday near Traverse City and Alpine Valley have installed half-pipes for snowboards. This special embanked terrain for trucks and stunts is expected to attract spectators as well as performers.

Lift tickets statewide this year range from \$3 to \$30. Weekend lift tickets at most major West Michigan resorts will cost you \$20-plus — close to last year's top \$24 lift-ticket fee.

Closer to home, the weekend day rate is \$17 at Otsego's Bittersweet and \$18 at Gobles' Timber Ridge. Tack on an additional \$10 or more if you want to keep schussing at nighttime.

Of interest to downhillers:
■ A new state-of-the-art \$100,000 groomer that provides a better snow surface leads the list of improvements at the Boynes — Mountain and Highlands. Guests at both resorts also will be able to check their equipment with an attendant who stores it in a secured area at the base of the slopes for a minimum cost. It can be used overnight by skiers who don't want to carry their skis to cars or lodge rooms.

■ This year's Learn to Downhill Ski Day will be held Friday, Jan. 19, at resorts across the state, offering complimentary beginner lessons and ski lift tickets to the novice. A total of 31 resorts — including Bittersweet at Otsego, Timber Ridge at Gobles and Cannonsburg north of Grand Rapids — are participating.

ing. To sign up, just call one of the ski facilities before Jan. 18 to pre-register and reserve your free day of skiing.

■ Another popular statewide promotion, Silver Streak Week Jan. 29-Feb. 2, will offer free downhill or cross-country skiing at 40 statewide resorts. Some areas are also offering additional specials (up to 50 percent) on lessons, rental equipment, food and lodging. To receive your free lift or trail ticket, all you have to do is show proof of age at the facility of your choice. But you may want to call ahead to learn about other promotions.

■ A new Tailgate Room (for brown-baggers and those with picnic baskets) has been added at Boyne Highlands as part of a 15,000-square-foot expansion of its day lodge facilities. In addition to a check room, eating room and rest-rooms, child care also will be provided seven days a week in the lodge.

■ Five Midwestern pop, rock and Reggae bands also have scheduled concerts at Boyne Mountain — the Minneapolis-based Ipso Facto Reggae group kicking off the series Dec. 28.

■ Crystal Mountain at Thompsonville has expanded its beginner's slope — adding an additional area, only a few steps away from the area's rental building, and equipped with a new handle-tow lift. The handle-tow is easier to learn to ride and also gives all skiers easy access from the rental/lift building over to the base of the intermediate Cheers chairlift.

■ The new indoor and fitness center at Crystal — a 5,000-square-foot facility located near the area's main lodge — is now slated to open in mid-February. It will include two pools (one for lap swimming), a whirlpool/spa and exercise room.

Cross-country skiers take note:

■ Novice cross-country skiers can take advantage of free beginner lessons and trail passes on Cross-Country Ski Day on Saturday, Jan. 6, at 35 state sites. Those nearest Battle Creek include Fitzgerald Park at Grand Ledge and Lake Lansing Park-North at Haslett.

■ There are 131 groomed and marked trails listed in AAA Michigan's new statewide Cross Country Ski Guide. National forest land also is open for back-country touring in the Lower Peninsula's Huron-Manistee National Forest and the Upper Peninsula's Hiawatha and Ottawa national forests.

■ In addition to private trail sites, 33 of Michigan's 46 downhill ski areas offer Nordic skiing.

Grand Traverse Resort has added six kilometers to its cross-country course and, like many other areas, lights some trails for night skiers.

- Many areas do not charge cross-



Where To Go Downhill

[illegible]

GUIDE TO GROOMED CROSS COUNTRY TRAILS

[illegible]

country skiers; others charge \$3 to \$15 trail fees. State parks require only a vehicle permit for drive-ins.

■ More than 700 skiers in several classes are expected to compete in the White Pine Stampede — one of the na-

tion's top cross-country race events — Feb. 3 at the Shanty Creek-Schuss Mountain complex.

■ A new recreational cross-country race to benefit Easter Seals will be held at Shanty Creek-Schuss Mountain Feb. 24.