

Lansing State Journal

COUNTY

Area ski resorts wait for chance

Traffic on Michigan's slopes remains slow as wait continues for snow

By Justin Schneider
For the Lansing State Journal

Thanksgiving Day came and went without a flake of snow on the ground.

With downhill skiing season on hold, it's safe to say that some in Michigan are experiencing cabin fever.

"We're really die-hard skiers," Brian Ballard of Okemos said of his family. "We normally ski Thanksgiving weekend, but I'm kind of unsure about conditions up there."

The lack of snow has the Michigan skiing industry looking to park interest in the sport during the 1999-2000 season.

Winter recreation accounts for nearly one-third of Michigan's \$9.5-billion-a-year tourism industry, according to the Michigan Ski Industries Association. Michigan has more ski resorts than any other state except New York.

Local businesses are aware of the situation, but have yet to feel the effects.

"We have started to pick up," said Laurie Howe, soft goods buyer for Freestyle Ski Shop in East Lansing. "It's been busier than it was last year at this time. We had a lot of people looking on the Saturday before the (Michigan State football) game."

"Thanksgiving tends to get people started if they need new equipment," Ballard said. "We have had a lot of people looking on the Saturday before the (Michigan State football) game."

Ballard said his family — wife Barb, daughter Briana and son Brandon — ski nearly every weekend during the season, usually at Boyne Mountain.

"We definitely look forward to it, it's something that keeps us busy," Ballard said. "If you're going to live in Michigan, you can either fight the snow or you can enjoy it."

The Michigan Ski Industries Association is trying to ensure that skiers statewide enjoy this winter with its Discover Michigan Skiing Program and its White Gold Card venture.

Discover Michigan Skiing is aimed at bringing prospective skiers into the sport. Ski programs include lessons, equipment and ski passes and are available for adults (\$25) and children (\$15).

A snowboarding program for ages 10 and over is also offered at a cost of \$35.

"It's an affordable way to learn the right way," Nicky McWilliams, Executive Director for the MSIA said. "This makes it a little bit easier and a bit more affordable. With your lift ticket, equipment rental and lesson, it's a really good deal."

The MSIA hopes to reach more advanced skiers with its White Gold Card program.

The \$140 card allows skiers one day of skiing at 25 different ski areas throughout the state. White Gold Cards are valid all winter with the exception of the holiday ski season from Dec. 25 through Jan. 2.

The MSIA has produced the card for the last six years, and only 400 of them have been made available for this winter. White Gold cards are available at participating MSIA ski shops throughout the state and through the MSIA.

Ski resorts involved in the program include both Boyne, Nub's, and Shanty Creek and Sugar Loaf. Ski areas have done their part by making conditions on the slopes more enjoyable.

Thirty-two of the state's 42 ski areas are reporting changes and additions for 1999, according to AAA Michigan. Many of them are a short drive from Lansing.

Pine Knob Ski Resort of Clarkston increased its snowmaking capability while adding new rental kiosk and snowboarders and doubling the size of its terrain park. Pine Knob also lengthened its race hill 25 percent and upgraded the lodge and cafeteria.

Bitterroot Ski Resort near Oriskany raised its peak to 350 vertical feet and increased snowmaking for this winter. Cannonburg Ski Area has added 200 pairs of skis for rental while increasing snowmaking and grooming.

Ballard has seen snowboarding facilities improved in recent years as the sport has grown in numbers and acceptance at Michigan ski resorts. His daughter, Briana, made the transition from alpine skiing to snowboarding.

"Probably the best thing they've done in the last five or six years has been the snowboard areas," Ballard said. "Most ski resorts have kind of accommodated both downhill skiers and snowboarders."

Whether or not the weather is as accommodating remains to be seen. "Everybody coming in is talking and praying for snow — business really isn't off," Howe said. "We get busy selling this time of year for Christmas gifts."

"We need the snow, we need the weather to work for us."



Important phone numbers

Michigan ski conditions hotline
800-644-SNOW
Michigan Department of Travel
800-643-YES

Internet web sites

Alpine Valley
www.alpinevalley.com
Boyne County
www.boynecounty.com
Boyne Mountain & Highlands
www.boyne.com
Caberline
www.caberline.com
Great Lakes Nordic Skiing Council
www.glnsc.org
Great Lakes Ski Magazine
www.glskimag.com
Michigan Travel Bureau
www.michigantravel.com
Northern Michigan Nordic Ski Council
www.nmnsc.org
Shanty Creek
www.shantycreek.com
Snowboarders United Network
www.snowboarders.com
Sugar Loaf
www.sugarloaf.com
Sylvan Treelaps
www.treelaps.com

Downhill skiing

No.	Upper Peninsula	City	Phone number	Vertical drop (ft.)	Longest run (ft.)	Chairs	Lifts	Instruction	Rental equipment	Trail maps	Night skiing	X-country skiing	Ski school	Logistics	Weekend lift tickets	Weekend lift tickets	Weekend lift tickets
1	Boyne Highlands Resort	Boyne Falls	231-526-3000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	44	550	5,200	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$34	\$40	\$40
2	Big Powderhorn Mountain	Big Powderhorn	231-549-6000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	49	500	5,200	12	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$34	\$40	\$40
3	Caldera Peaks Ski Resort	Caldera	231-862-3000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	31	485	4,800	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$30	\$40	\$40
4	Glendon Sports Park	Glendon	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	34	375	2,500	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$30	\$40	\$40
5	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	22	400	3,300	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$25	\$30	\$30
6	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	20	600	3,300	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$25	\$30	\$30
7	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	8	423	1,500	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$15	\$15	\$15
8	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	9	300	2,400	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$15	\$15	\$15
9	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	15	641	6,000	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$20	\$25	\$25
10	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	18	180	1,000	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
11	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
12	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
13	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
14	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
15	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
16	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
17	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
18	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
19	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
20	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
21	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
22	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
23	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
24	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
25	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
26	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
27	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
28	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
29	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
30	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
31	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
32	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
33	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
34	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
35	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
36	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
37	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
38	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
39	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
40	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
41	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
42	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
43	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
44	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
45	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
46	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
47	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
48	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
49	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
50	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
51	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
52	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
53	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
54	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
55	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
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57	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
58	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
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61	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	231-576-2000 or 1-800-60-BOYNE	17	300	3,300	28	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	\$22	\$28	\$28
62	Marquette Mountain Resort	Marquette	23														