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Ski facilities new, old and changed

Skiers will find improved facilities at most Upper Midwest ski resorts this season, plus one new ski hill, a couple of closings — and a ski area that changed its name and moved from one town to another.

The latter is **Wild Mountain,** formerly **Val Croix.** When the Rivard family operated the area its address was Taylors Falls. Now, under new owner Dennis Raedecke it is located at Almelund. New approach, same geography.

Almelund is between North Branch and Taylors Falls, and Wild Mountain is 15 miles east of the North Branch exit on Int. Hwy. I-35. There Raedecke has re-contoured the slopes to take full advantage of the 300-foot-high glacial bluffs, increasing the length of runs to 4,000 feet. He has also prepared cross country ski trails (free, or 50 cents for a ride up the lift) and stocks rental equipment for the fast-growing sport.

On the other side of the state, **Detroit Mountain** at Detroit Lakes, where people have been skiing since 1911, is installing a chairlift. The lift was purchased from defunct **Lookout Mountain** and was the first chairlift in Minnesota.

Afton Alps, Afton, has added two new chairlifts, bringing its total to 10, more than **Aspen Mountain** in Colorado has. Two new chairlifts were added at **Birch Park,** Houghton, Wis., too, making three total. New chairlifts also came in pairs for **Loch Lomond,** Thunder Bay, Canada, and **Devil's Head,** Merrimac, Wis.

Lutsen also has two new chairlifts, one serving Ullr Mountain from the chalet to take beginner and ski school pressure off other lifts, and another up Bridge Mountain. At **Mount McKay,** Thunder Bay, a third chairlift was added to newly-opened slopes. Both **Mount du Lac,** Duluth, and **Mont Ripley,** Houghton, Mich., installed chairlifts this season, the first for each area.

Port Mountain's chairlift, installed last season will get its first real test this season as the Bayfield, Wis., area has newly graded slopes from top to bottom. Formerly called **Ashwabay,** the area grew from a 317-foot vertical to 470 feet in the process.

"Going to build me a mountain," could also be the theme for **Snowcrest ski area at Somerset, Wis.** Earth movers spent the summer heaping an 80-foot mound to give the area's east side a new 300-foot vertical and runs up to a mile long.

At Red Wing, **Mount Frontenac** has opened a new section with a double chairlift serving beginner and intermediate terrain. Its "superwide" trails through pines and birches are lighted for night skiing. **Sugar Hills,** Grand Rapids, celebrate its 10th season with special events all winter.

Whitecap, at Montreal, Wis., has a new "bilateral" chairlift that runs up one side of the mountain and down the other, opening much new ski terrain in addition to that served by its original chair. **Val Chatel,** Park Rapids, will take full advantage of runs opened for skiing last season on its north side.

cal but offering "tubing and snurfing" as added attractions. **Alpenhorn,** ski area on the north shore of Lake Koronis at Paynesville, closed after a couple of slow seasons, will re-open next year as **Crystal Hills. Buffalo Valley,** Buffalo, is closed for financial reasons, and **Mount Rockwood,** Silver Bay, also called it quits.

Along with slope improvements the amenities haven't been overlooked. **Buck Hill,** Burnsville, has added Hoigaard's ski shop, one of the most complete equipped at any Midwest ski area. **Mount Telemark,** Cable, Wis., has a new $5 million lodge with two swimming pools, sauna, lounges, dining and convention facilities. It will open about Dec. 1.

With improved facilities such as the above, ticket prices have ascended at many areas, as permitted under the wage-price freeze. Top price in the Midwest is **Boyne Mountain's** $8, on the Michigan lower peninsula. On this side of the lake **Pine Mountain** and **Devil's Head** ask $7.50, while **Lutsen, Telemark, Indianhead** and **Loch Lomond** are pegged at $7.

It all adds up to a big season of skiing ahead. Most areas predict a Thanksgiving Day opening, for which skiers will be thankful indeed.

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