

WINTER RECREATION --- GUIDE



Snowmobiling

The fluffy stuff can sure be fun. Snowfall may keep many Americans inside next to the fire – but not the winter adventurer like you! Jump on a snowmobile and traverse the winter wonderlands.

Snowmobiling offers a powerful, safe way to ride through even the deepest of snow and can be an exhilarating way for families to spend time together.

PRE-RIDE CHECKLIST

Cold weather can be damaging to your machine. Before you start your snowmobile, The Weather Channel recommends that you check all critical parts spanning the drive belt, battery, rods, handlebars and throttle for proper working condition.

It also suggests packing the following items for your safety in case of an emergency:

- Spare spark plugs and belt
- Emergency rations of food and water
- Tool kit
- Flares
- Extra ignition key

FIND A TRAIL

Many national forests and parks offer trails for safe snowmobile action. Check your local tourism bureau's website for interactive maps that highlight these trails for your planning purposes.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Remember a few basic etiquette tips when taking your snowmobile to the land. Only drive when there is a snow depth adequate to keep your track from digging up the ground cover, and never chase an animal that may be crossing the trail during your ride. Keeping the environment and wildlife in mind will ensure the overall well being of the land you enjoy.

DON'T DRINK & RIDE

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, more than 70 percent of fatal snowmobiling accidents in the state involve alcohol. Alcohol can have a negative effect on a driver's vision, balance, coordination and reaction time – all vital factors to a safe snowmobile ride.



Skiing & Snowboarding

Skiing vs. snowboarding: It is a debate that rages on between winter riders. Each popular sport offers a unique type of snow experience that has drawn athletes and thrill-seekers for many years.

No matter which way you lean on the argument, we can all agree that both activities are as exciting as they are great for your health. Check out the websites of organizations like the National Key Council Federation to search for and find the top ski and snowboarding resorts in the United States.

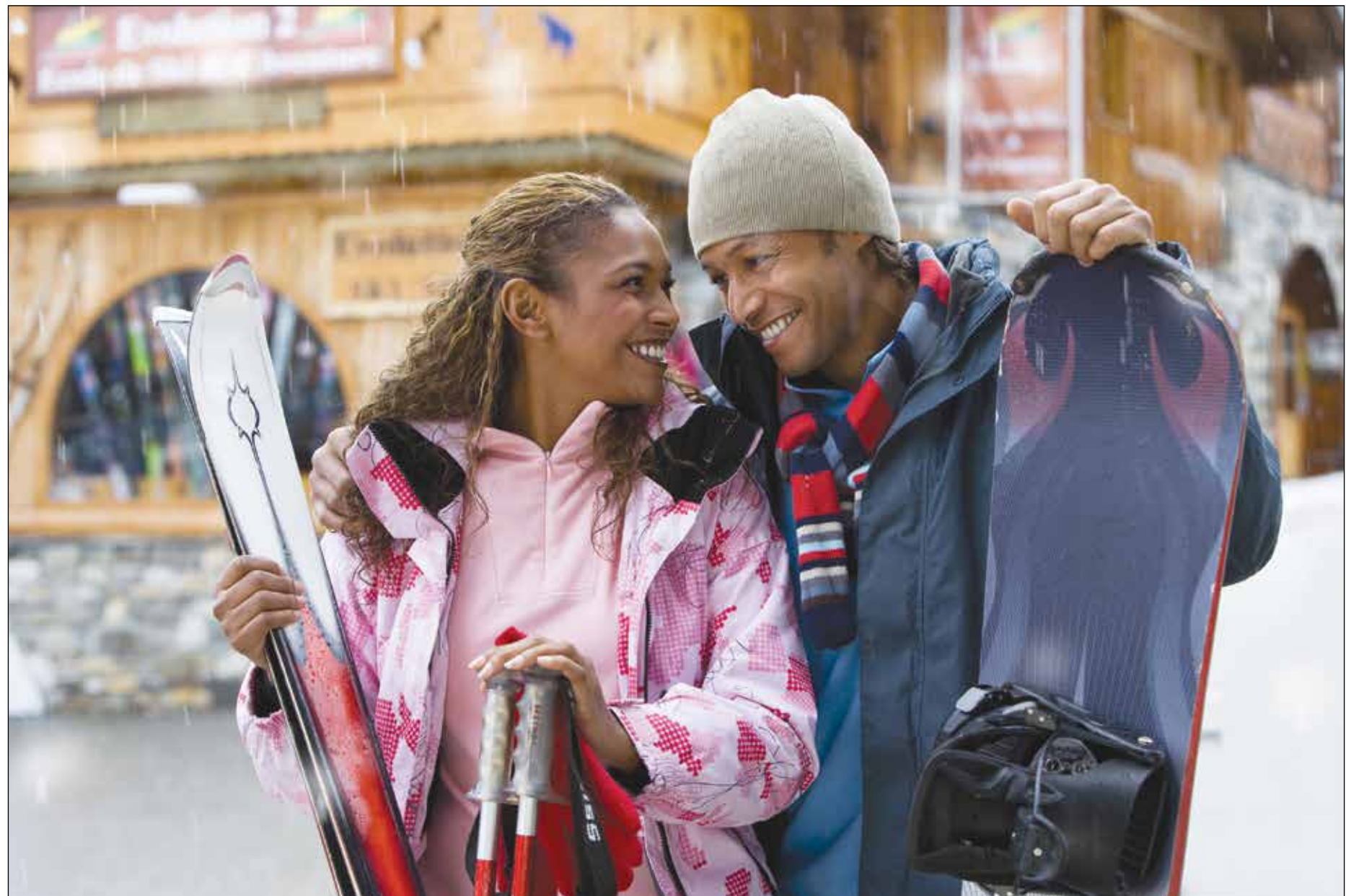
SKIING

Until you ascend slowly up the chair lift and take in the sights of the powdery white ground and the deep blue sky, you can't truly understand the thrill of skiing. The sport can be picked up quickly by beginners and mastered over many years of practice.

There are many types of skiing styles for athletes of all skill levels to enjoy. Alpine skiing takes place on steep hills, while cross-country skiing and free-style also have gained popularity. Most resorts feature a beginner's trail for new skiers to hone their skills before taking to the mountain.

SNOWBOARDING

Snowboarding's main differentiator from skiing is the fact that riders do not use poles to keep their balance but rather strategically shift their weight. Snowboarders also frequently have to take a seated position



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or put forth energy to maintain momentum.

Snowboarding was recognized as a Winter Olympic sport in 1998. It has rapidly grown in popularity due to its skateboarding and surfing techniques, as well as recog-

nizable athletes like Shaun White, who have advanced the sport to new heights.

RULER OF THE SLOPES?

A recent Florida State

University study reported that both skiers and snowboarders benefited emotionally and physically from their respective activities but that skiers rated their own level of pleasure around five times higher than those who primarily

snowboard.

Passionate snowboarders may not agree with these study results, but both sides at least can agree that there's no feeling that can compare with barreling down a snowy hill on a cold winter day.

Ice Skating

Ice skating offers the perfect combination of exercise, fun and family togetherness. It is truly an activity for all ages and gives people a means of getting the exercise they need for a healthy lifestyle.

Like other forms of physical activity, ice skating also can be a way to release chemicals within your body that help reduce stress hormones.

FUN FOR ALL

Indoor ice rinks allow for skating fun – even during the hot summer months. And skates of every size are available to rent if you don't own your own pair. Parents can relive their younger years by gliding down the ice, while young skaters can form a passion for a new sport.

Finding an activity the whole family enjoys can be a challenge. Ice skating can strengthen family bonds by bringing you all together in one place more often.

AVOID INJURIES

New skaters or people who don't skate very often can be prone to injuries on the ice rink. The Child Development Institute recommends teaching ice safety to new skaters.

Children are urged to always wear a helmet to protect their head, as it is possible they will be traveling at high speeds. One fall could cause serious damage during what is intended to be a safe, enjoyable experience.

Other tips from the Child Development Institute:

- Check your skates for the proper fit. If skates are too large or small, they can fail to properly support the ankles. This will increase the likelihood of a fall.
- Learn how to fall correctly by bending your knees and squatting down whenever you think you're going to hit the ice. Ice skate blades are sharp, so protect your fingers by putting your hands in your lap during a fall.
- Wear knee and elbow pads while learning to skate. They will protect you from bruises and breaks.
- Also wear gloves, which can be considered safety equipment because they safeguard the fingers from injury and keep hands warm.



Warm Up in the Gym

Nothing cures the wintertime chills like working up a good sweat in your local gym, and medical experts say it also may help protect your immune system from colds and flu.

Whether you sign up for cardio classes or prefer to spend your exercise time in the weight room, joining a gym is a great way to kick-start your health for the spring.

FIGHT THE POUNDS

The wintertime is chock full of holiday get-togethers, which means one thing: Food. You can almost feel the weight add up as you work on your second plate at Christmas dinner or your loaded appetizer tray during a New Year's party.

One way to work off those pounds is to join a gym. Don't wait until the damage has been done. Sign up during the fall season to get yourself in a nice routine by the time dietary challenges come along.

GET YOUR CARDIO

Running through snowy sidewalks and slushy trails may bring up memories of "Rocky," only without the exciting soundtrack and hoard of passionate supporters. So why not join a gym to make sure you're working in your cardio in warm, dry conditions?

Gyms have the advantage of being able to purchase a wide array of workout machines, so you will be able to find one that aligns best with your body. Can't jog because it hurts your knees? Your gym will likely feature many stationary machines that will be easier on your joints. Prefer an incline when you run? You will probably be able to find a treadmill with options for increasing your climb.

FIND GREAT DEALS

Knowing that peak exercise season is during warmer months, you may be able to find great deals on gym memberships when the weather begins to turn. Gym owners are always looking to entice new members, and discounted services are a go-to strategy.

Before settling on a gym, look around to find one offering a trial membership. You never know what you'll like or dislike about a gym's atmosphere and facilities until you actually experience them first-hand.



Ice Fishing

If you think fishing is intended solely for warm, sunny days with cloudless skies, then you have been led astray. For many anglers, thick ice covering the lake means one thing: It's time to grab the fishing gear!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Besides your favorite pole and bait, there are some tools of the trade you must remember for ice fishing. First you'll need an ice auger. This tool will drill your fishing hole into the ice. Keep it less than 12 inches in diameter to avoid the danger of you or your fishing partners falling in.

A skimmer and dip net are essential for scooping out slush and bringing in fish, respectively. Other items you may consider are a heavier, special-purpose gaff hook, an ice chisel and, of course, a stool.

WHERE TO GO

If you have the luxury of a personal pond, you can use a sled to haul equipment onto the ice. Many fishermen head to "shanty towns" for ice fishing, which come equipped with personal shanties transported on runners.

Wherever you decide to fish, understand the local and state regulations. You can bring a copy of the rules pamphlet to consult during your trip to be sure you stay within various laws and limits.

HOW TO STAY SAFE

The most important safety rule for ice fishing is that no one can really judge ice as 100 percent safe. Ice strength is based on a combination of several factors, according to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

These factors include appearance, age, thickness, temperature or whether the ice is covered with snow. Your best bet for judging ice strength is to consult your local bait shops, fishing clubs and resorts. These organizations are experts on their water systems and have the most updated information on both safe and dangerous conditions.



Look Good in the Snow

Just because you're all bundled up during your winter adventure doesn't mean you can't look good at the same time. Staying stylish and warm at the same time doesn't have to be a struggle.

Fashion-forward brands have made a healthy profit launching products in the winter fashion market.

Everything from fuzzy boots to trendy mittens can be found in your local clothing shop or online retail store.

HYDRATE HAIR & SKIN

Before your skiing vacation, be sure to ready your hair and skin.

The air in the winter is much dryer than it is during the summertime, and many resorts are located at high altitudes, where the atmosphere is thinner and the UV stronger.

A treatment that includes soothing, moisturizing shampoo will keep your hair from becoming brittle on the slopes.

Treat your face, arms and hands in a similar fashion ahead of your big trip, making sure to keep them consistently moisturized.

Sunscreen with an SPF factor of at least 30 also is crucial to protect your skin from premature aging or skin cancer.

MAKE LAYERS LOOK GOOD

What is the first vision that comes to your mind when you read the word "layering?" A puffy, marshmallow man looking awkward and uncomfortable in the snow? It doesn't have to be that way.

The best layering strategy includes the use of a base layer against your skin, an insulating layer that protects you from the cold and a shell layer that shields you from the elements.

The key to looking great on your winter adventure is choosing a fashionable shell layer that accentuates your body features instead of hiding them.



Be a Good Steward

Being a good public steward is not difficult. Besides being courteous to other park-goers around you, there are many other ways you can practice good stewardship while enjoying your winter recreational activities.

The U.S. Forest Service helped develop an outdoor code of ethics – a list that includes promises to not damage natural features, respect other people’s property and rights, obey all regulations and lend a helping hand when you see someone in distress.

DON'T LITTER

Nothing can ruin a park’s natural beauty like an empty chip bag or soda bottle. Litter is a completely avoidable stain on our public lands and one that we can work together to remove. It also can be damaging to wildlife and compromise their habitats.

Bring along a trash bag or other receptacle for collecting your trash so you aren’t tempted to ditch your trash inappropriately.

Take pride in your environment by reporting any littering activities you see during your outdoor fun.

EQUIPMENT CHECK

Some areas do not allow certain winter recreation activities, such as snowmobiling or ice skating. It is always a good idea to check with your local land authority before risking a wasted trip or even a costly ticket for



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non-compliance.

Some trails will not allow certain activities, such as snowmobiling, if the snow isn’t deep enough.

These types of regulations are designed to protect both you and the land, so take

them seriously.

FOLLOW LAND LINES

Depending on where you plan to recreate, there may be

protected land around you on which winter activities or sports are not permitted. These areas are designated off limits in many cases to protect wildlife or vegetation, or for citizen safety.

Along these lines, be mindful

of local hazards that may pose a danger to your wintertime fun. Avalanche-prone areas or those with thin ice can be extremely dangerous, so avoid them altogether to make sure you can enjoy wintertime activities for years to come.