

Winter is what you make it ... so why not make it fun?

BY DAN CASSIDY
Ski Tracks Columnist

Wintertime in Maine can be long and boring if you're sitting around home all day playing with computers, cell phones or just wasting away watching re-runs and commercials on TV.

Or winter could go by in a heart-beat! Getting kids outside may sound a little difficult, but once they're out and enjoying something like sledding, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, tubing, ice-skating or building a snow castle or snowman you'll have happy kids - no boredom in sight.

In my generation, the only time we kids went into the house was to change wet mittens, and eat something before we hurried back outside to play.

Here in the Waterville and Augusta areas there are many things to do right outside your door, or within a short drive to places like the Viles Arboretum on Hospital Street in Augusta or the Quarry Road Trails in Waterville.

The Arboretum is a 200-acre farmland on the east side of the Kennebec River with wonderful views of the State Capitol located just across the river.

"They have interesting features along the trails where they have granite sculptures," said David Auclair, owner of Auclair's Cycle and Ski in Augusta and past board member of the Arboretum. "They make it interesting to follow the sculptures around. There's also a building with a function room, where they have other events that they share with the public," he said.

The Arboretum is open during the winter as well as during the warmer months in Maine. Trails are groomed for cross-country skiing and other trails for snowshoeing, biking, walking pets and horseback riding. There is also a hill for sledding for everyone to enjoy.

"The trails are all open and it's just a matter of being courteous to other people who are trail users there," Auclair said.

The grounds are open down to dusk daily at no charge. Smoking, weapons, motor vehicles, alcohol, fires, camping and all activities that could damage plants are not allowed.

Table tour and ski

Each winter there is an event called the table tour; a ski and snowshoe event that is held around the first of February on Super Bowl Sunday.

"There are vendors who come and provide food on the trail and you ski from point to point where you can enjoy soup or entrees along the way. It's a fund-raiser, it's not expensive to do it, and tickets are available at the Arboretum. It's usually a sell-out, and is held during the day from around 11 a.m. to 1 or 2 o'clock," Auclair said. For additional information, log onto mainetrailfinder.com/trails/trail/viles-arboretum

Waterville's Quarry Road

The Quarry Road Trails is located just off North Street are on the Quarry Road in Waterville. Activities during winter months include hiking, fat biking (using bikes with extra-wide tires), snowshoeing,

cross-country skiing, sledding down the old Colby ski slope, and dog walking, all just minutes from downtown Waterville.

There are currently six miles (10 km) of trails that have been designed and open for use on the Quarry Road Trails. Snowmaking covers 3 km of the Nordic ski trails for high quality skiing conditions throughout the winter months.

About 1.5 km of trails that are groomed in the meadow can be used for both skate and classic skiing and are suitable for beginners, intermediate and expert Nordic skiers. Many of the trails are wide and flat so that groups of skiers can ski side-by-side.

A network of trails including a world-class cross-country competition loop has been designed by two-time Olympian, John Morton.

The Central Maine Ski Club is offering an after-school program

open to students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Group lessons are for all abilities and runs three days a week, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3:30 p.m. to dark. The season runs from the first full week in January through February vacation week. The program is offered at \$40 per child.

Good for first timers on skis or looking to sharpen your skills, private and small group lessons are offered at \$10 per hour per person by appointment.

Day tickets or season pass is required for use of the groomed ski trails. No ticket is necessary to use the snowshoe trails or other ungroomed or backcountry trails.

For day ticket rates, call 207-446-7356. For additional information, log onto quarryroad.org

Always ski and ride safely. Use your head and don't forget to wear a helmet.



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