



# TRAVEL



## If you can't Ski, try your luck at snow tubing in West Virginia

By Angela Charlton  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

They're grooming slippery chutes of snow and inflating their waterproof canvas inner tubes. And West Virginia's winter resorts are hoping hard that their first foray into snow tubing is a success.

Some dismiss it as bobsledding for babies. It certainly doesn't demand the skill and stamina of skiing or snowboarding. But it doesn't require special training or gear, either, and it costs less than \$20 a day.

Snow tubing has been gaining momentum around the country, and four West Virginia resorts are joining in this year: Snowshoe Mountain Resort in Pocahontas County; Canaan Valley Ski & Golf Resort in Tucker County; New Winterplace at Flat Top, Raleigh County; and Coolfont Resort in Berkeley Springs.

"You don't think it's going to be too wild, it just looks like sledding. But it's a total rush if you go on your stomach, headfirst," said Doug Stapler, 14, of Charleston.

The teen-ager has been snow-tubing in Pennsylvania and plans to drag his parents and younger brother to Snowshoe this year to

check out the new runs.

A rider sits, kneels or plops stomach down on a truck tire inner tube covered with waterproof canvas or vinyl. Perched atop a chute that resembles a luge run, the rider then pushes off and whooshes downward.

There's no steering, no brakes and a good chance the tube will start spinning, sending the rider careening down backwards.

Then the craft hits a snow bank at the bottom and the 20-second ride is over. Riders then latch themselves onto a surface tow and are whisked back up the hill to start again.

"The whole family can do it, from the grandmother to the 3- and 4-year-old," said Joe Stevens, spokesman at Snowshoe. "It provides another opportunity for people to have fun at a resort."

Wanda Boster, co-owner of the Four Seasons Ski Loft in Barboursville, isn't sure how to prepare her business for the tubing trend.

"Everyone's talking about tubing," she said. "The ones who aren't will be as soon as they find out" about the state's new tubing parks.

West Virginia's resorts will provide their own tubes. And since

tubing requires no special accessories, Boster doesn't expect it to be the financial boon that snowboarding has been for stores like hers.

Martha Ashelman, president and chief executive officer at Coolfont, said, "The only investment tubers have to make is long underwear."

Tubing may not be as terrifying as skiing, but it comes with risks of its own.

The pillow-like tubes bounce over just about anything but are difficult to control and have tumbled more than a few riders. Injuries have dogged tubing parks around the country, especially among beginners and young people more likely to ignore guidelines and take bigger risks.

In response, tubers at West Virginia's resorts will have to sign liability waivers saying tubing is a dangerous activity that can cause serious and fatal injuries.

Snowshoe's four 600-foot-long, eight-story-high tubing runs are part of a \$12 million expansion it began this summer. Several hundred thousand dollars went to the tubing park, which is being installed on a former ski trail at Silver Creek, Stevens said. The park will open by Thanksgiving.



"This portion of the winter industry is still kind of new," Stevens said. "We'll find out how popular it is with our first season."

It's the second venture into snow tubing for Snowshoe's parent company, Intrawest Corp. of Vancouver, British Columbia. Its Copper Mountain resort in Colorado opened one last year.

Tubing at Snowshoe costs \$8 for a two-hour pass, \$12 for a four-hour pass and \$18 for a nine-hour day.

Coolfont, a popular destination for tourists from the nearby Washington, D.C., and Baltimore areas, will have 10 runs 800 to 900 feet long with a vertical drop of about 95 feet, Ashelman said.

Tickets will run \$15 for four hours.

Canaan Valley plans to offer 600-foot runs and 200 tubes when its tubing park opens the week-end of Nov. 15-16.

New Winterplace is opening eight 600-foot runs, but prices have not been established, said spokesman Terry Pfeiffer. The resort expects to open Dec. 5.

## Detroit announces new slogan

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT - Cars and the Motown sound don't figure in the phrase consultants have come up with to sell Detroit to the world.

The city's new slogan is: "It's a great time in Detroit."

The Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau developed the line - at a cost of \$400,000 - as part of an effort to promote the region as a destina-

tion for business and pleasure.

The slogan best conveys the feeling that the area is undergoing "tremendous positive change," Rick Binford, president of the convention bureau, said.

More than 3,500 consumers and 1,000 meeting planners nationwide were surveyed as part of the creation of the slogan, logo and marketing campaign. Irma S. Mann Strategic Marketing Inc. of

Boston developed the theme.

The initiative will be officially unveiled Nov. 18 and officials are asking local governments, businesses and attractions to use the new Detroit trademark in marketing efforts.

John Dechart, area director of sales and marketing for Marriott Lodging, says he plans to use the theme in brochures and correspondence for 22 hotels and inns.

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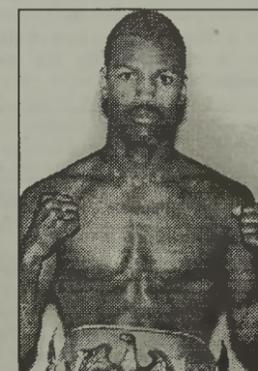
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