

Still Skiing in Northern New England



by Vicki
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The warmer than usual snowless winter makes many New Bedford area residents smile. No shoveling, no cancelled school and work days, no traffic concerns and no snow covered streets. Kids may not be as happy as their sleds sit idle and their dreams of making a snowman or even a snowball melt.

Local skiers, snowboarders and snowsports enthusiasts are dealing with the frustration locally but know there is snow in the mountains as long as they travel about three hours or more, to the north.

In spite of the lack of natural snowfall this winter, the larger resorts throughout New England have been able to use their snowmaking capabilities to cover most of their trails. The base depths aren't as deep as desired, to extend skiing well into spring, but for now, the trails are snow covered and skiers and riders are enjoying their sport.

Alice Pearce, president of SKI NH representing alpine and Nordic areas throughout the Granite State, says that business in New Hampshire ski areas is off 18 -35% from last year's snowy ski season.



"We have had three months of snowmaking and since most resorts have 96-100% snowmaking ability, there is snow," Pearce said.

But the reality is the number of skier visits is down and this has a huge economic impact on our northern neighboring states that rely on this winter revenue. It seems that when people don't have snow in their own back yard, they assume there is also no snow elsewhere and they are less likely to go skiing.

Although winter snowsports have been affected by the lack of natural snowfall, there is still plenty of snow fun to be enjoyed throughout northern New England. The next two weeks of school vacation (Massachusetts followed by New Hampshire) will be critical to the resorts' bottom line.

So why not consider heading northward to enjoy some winter recreation? There is cross country skiing at well-known resorts such as Bretton Woods and Jackson Ski Touring Center where they are able to groom and maintain their trails. Many resorts have added zip lining activities to their recreational offerings and these are open year round. Snowtubing continues to be very popular and with the help of snowmaking, is still available.

If you want to ski or snowboard, don't worry...there really is snow and conditions are generally good. The key is to get out early and enjoy your runs while the conditions are maximized by the overnight grooming. If the weather is warm, the snow will get wet and heavy as the day progresses. If it is cold, the surface may be firm. Keep your equipment well-tuned and

pay attention to weather and snow reports.

As New Englanders, we are used to variable and changing weather. The true skiers are praying for a good snowstorm to dump a foot of snow in the mountains soon. We all know March can be a very snowy month and although the current weather pattern seems, stubborn, hope has not vanished for a snowy March to set up spring skiing into April.

Local skiers and riders know the benefit of their winter passion. We feel better getting outside and being active. Don't let the lack of snow in your back yard keep you from enjoying winter. You just have to travel a little and you will find the winter you have been missing.

See you on the slopes.

Vicki Bancroft is a longtime skier who enjoys the slopes throughout New England whether there is snow in New Bedford or not.