

Time for a ski trip, even if you're a non-skier

By Doris Scharfberg
special writer

CAN FLAT-GROUNDERS find happiness near slippery slopes?

As a hard-core non-skier, past adolescence and still afraid of bunny hills, I plead guilty to a love/hate relationship with ski resorts.

I love crystalline landscapes and small, cozy lodges where warm fireplaces and steaming vittles warm up the chills. Winter or summer, I grab every opportunity to ride chairlifts. Ski clothes are terrific. In pointed caps and vivid colors, the lean bodies of skiers remind me of new Crayolas come to life.

Hate comes with feeling like a barge among yachts; a slush among otters. I am unmoved to see toddlers zip past as I find desperately to trees while I take pictures. Why won't I trust my bones to little bunnies and go downhill too?

To otter in this same mental closet, there's good news: ski resorts are wooing us too. Swimming pools, fancy lounges, game rooms, are among the lures. Exercise hikes and hiking trails keep such guests from turning into toneless lizards. Samples:

For skier-non-skier families with enough time, a weekend in Chicago followed by a few days at a western U.P. Peninsula resort can be great. The U.P. has the highest, longest runs in Michigan as well as kitchens staffed by ethnic cooks who know how to pile up a marvelous meal.

AT WAKEFIELD's classy Indian-head resort, steam hovers over a heated pool, thumping sounds rise from the health and racquet club without stirring you can see ski action from the dining room. Everything except slush is under one long roof.

This Powderhorn Mountain and Blackhawk resort, near Bessmer, are two of the U.P.'s mecca where top Midwest skiers train and non-skiers collapse happily. Loaded with lodges, U.P. hubs offer skiing until April, post or tough-it-out accommodations. Visitors' choice. The U.P. Tourist and Recreation Association can help with plans. 800-774-5480.

travel

Closer to home in the upper western Lower Peninsula, Boyne Mountain at Boyne Falls has enlarged and redecorated its rooms... the better for reading in bed. Summery greens of the restaurant contrast nicely with wintry whites beyond the windows. Both Boyne - Mountain and Highlands (Harbor Springs) - have heated outdoor pools paired with jacuzzis, saunas, ice skating, sleds in a sleigh or give in and join a class of beginners.

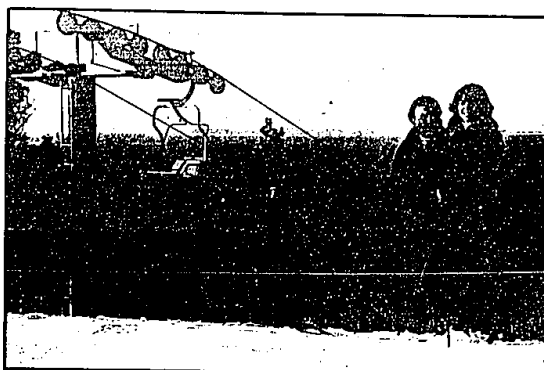
After-hours talented college-level entertainment is turning the region into a refrigerated Catskills. The Homestead, tucked in next to Sleeping Bear and fronting on Lake Michigan, has a view from the top (three chairs and a tow to get up) that skiers will simply have to learn to share. On a clear day the cold blue of the lake makes a dazzling temptation for photographers, especially when an orange-suited skier is about to take off down one of the eight runs.

Non-skiers can slide bare toes across the green carpet of a luxury condo and pretend its southern grass, or shop and eat in the mini-village cafe, deli, restaurant. French cuisine next to a fireplace in Andre's is anybody's treat.

Cross country skiing reigns at Grand Traverse Resort; the Midwest's longest, night-lit trail winds through its acreage. Slip, swim, play indoor tennis. Dining table stays winterized, dog steds or ice fishing. Other topics cool fast.

AT SCULDS Mountain (between Belaire and Mancelona) which has a new restaurant and meeting center, non-skiers hold conventions. In the Innanof, as it is called, you can sip vintage wines, dip fondue, then slip into a warm indoor pool.

In the same neighborhood, even spoiled types feel pampered at Hilton Shanty Creek. Several enclosed pools, game rooms and play pens for every age. Sometimes the distances to walk



— even down enclosed hallways — can be a chore, but we have to do something vigorous.

Caberfae, oldest ski resort in the state, near Cadillac, has 44 ways to go downhill... not counting the head first approach. The schedule is full of sleigh rides and treasure hunts, hearty meals. Eating well helps that feeling of belonging.

Up in Gaylord country, the Hidden Valley facilities of the Otsego Ski Club are now open to the public, which means you too can sit in the big dining room with picture windows all around and gaze at vistas once held as private domain. Suites, rooms, etc.

In our own backyard is a surprise. "Riverview Highlands" defies geography by standing in the formerly flat region west of Riverview and Trenton. A member of the National Ski Areas As-

sociation, R.H. has chairlifts, night skiing, and snow-makers to help Mother Nature. Shows what bulldozers, and landfill can do.

For those who can't believe what they're seeing, there is a restaurant and lounge at the base of the hill. Tilt drink to that, Off I-75, east of Sibley.

NORTH OF Metro Detroit, a heartache restaurant looking toward the slopes, and cups of hot spiced wine, keep customers happy at Mt. Holly, east of Dixie Highway on Grange Hill Road.

Michigan ski resorts draw hundreds of thousands annually. Clearly non-skiers are a dwindling minority. To be on the outside of a sport in which even game-sized humans excel is bleak. Everyone looks so healthy.

Envy is a great sales pitch. Maybe next year.



The Homestead at Glenn Arbor offers skiing with a view (left). This slope allows skiers to look over Lake Michigan. At Grand Traverse Resort Village, a couple enjoys night skiing.

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