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Skiing!

Why wait for snow? You can do it on grass

By Iris Sanderson Jones
special writer

TRAVELERS ARE bringing back reports of a new sport called grass skiing, available in nearby areas but not yet professionally developed in metropolitan Detroit.

Grass skiing was first practiced by avid snow skiers who couldn't wait for the first flakes. They skied on grass to get themselves in shape for the big white winter hills.

Now it has become a sport in itself for skiers like Kay and Bill Semion of Canton, who have checked out the slopes in Port Huron, Michigan and Kimberly, Ontario, and are wondering when southeast Michigan is going to get into the act.

"THE SKIS are heavy rollers, about 2 1/2 feet long, which caterpillar across the grass," Kay Semion said. "They are used with regular snow-style ski boots and poles, and make a perfect sport for autumn."

Her enthusiasm is shared by Pattie and Jeff Trim, of Davisburg in northern Oakland County, who won medals in downhill snow ski racing before winning medals in grass ski racing. The Trims are board members of the United States Grass Skiing Association, a racing group headquartered in Baye, Va.

The finals of the American Cup of grass skiing are held annually in Baye, under the care of Horst Lucher, who is credited with importing the sport from Germany.

According to Locher, grass skis were invented by a sewing machine designer called Josef Kaesler of Stuttgart, who decided to "make skiing a year-round sport."

Most Michigan grass skiers practice on private hills, walking up and skiing down, but both Trims and the Semion family advise lessons, even for advanced skiers, because the heavy, short "skis" require precise turns.

The Trim family recommends visiting Don Thomas Sporthaus at Maple and Telegraph in Birmingham, where grass skis can be rented in a demonstration program for \$10 a day, with the rental fee going towards the purchase price of the skis (\$175 to \$219 a pair).

IF YOU WANT to try a professional grass ski resort, the closest is Black Forest near Port Huron, which is open 2-10 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays at least until November. Lease rate is \$4 for skis. Toll fee is another \$4.

Also offering grass skiing until November is Talisman Resort in Kimberly, Ontario, a six-hour drive from Detroit. The resort, just east of Canadian Highway 10 and south of Georgian Bay, is staffed by three members of the Canadian Grass Ski team.

Bryce Mountain near U.S. Grass Skiing Association headquarters in Baye, Va., is open until Thanksgiving.

If you are going north and west, Cascade Mountain in Portage, Wis., is open for grass skiing on weekends through autumn until snow time. They give lessons.

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travel log

Iris Sanderson Jones

contributing travel editor

Travel provides insight to events

TELEVISION NEWS pictures recently showed a skirmish in Jerusalem. Orthodox Israeli Jews were being driven by Israeli police from the archaeological excavations known as the city of David.

The scenes brought back memories of an autumn weekend in Jerusalem and reminded me again of a truth I regularly relearn: Travel, however superficial, helps educate you to understand current events.

A brief trip does not qualify any traveler to be an expert on a complex land; it is presumptuous to believe that you can understand a country by merely driving through it. But some things are simple and evident enough to give you insights that were not available beforehand.

WHEN YOU drive through Israel, you constantly confront the word "tel." A tel is a mound or hill that covers the remains of an old settlement or city.

Tel Arad, for example, covers the remains of the early Bronze-age city of Arad in the Negev desert; the modern city of Arad rises on a hill nearby. Archaeologists are digging at Tel Arad as they are in the tel known as the city of David, which rises on a hill overlooking the Kidron Valley, on the edge of the old walled city of Jerusalem.

This is believed to be the site where King David built his city 1,000 years before Christ was born. It was the site of the before the temples were destroyed and the Jews were driven out of Palestine.

Historians are eager to uncover the secrets of David's city, for academic reasons and to strengthen the Israeli claim to Jerusalem, but orthodox Jews object to the disturbance of ancient religious sites.

ORTHODOX JEWS constitute a small percentage of the Israeli population, but they have a powerful influence on Israeli life for at least two reasons. They are represented in small political parties who often hold the balance of power when a major political party fails to win a clear electoral majority. That was the case in the last election; Begin needs their support to run his government.

The second reason is that Israelis value their

Jewish heritage, which has been kept alive by strict religious observance around the world for centuries, so they put up with the inconveniences forced upon them by orthodox although they often complain about it.

A Jew cannot marry a non-Jew in Israel, for example. Tourists are likely to experience the results of orthodox power in more superficial ways — separate meat and dairy dining rooms in hotels, an unmanned Sabbath elevator that runs constantly so guests do not need to push the elevator button.

A recent newspaper article headlined "Israel: Braces for Stricter Sabbath Rules" indicated that the religious parties are making new demands on Begin's government, including banning of airline flights and cruise ship landings as well as the closing of entertainment facilities on the Sabbath.

A TRAVELER skimming across the surface of a complex land is not qualified to form opinions on such matters, and I have resisted doing so. But I can report the opinions expressed by Israelis I met. Two of them were young people walking around the wonderful Beit Hafeitzol, the Museum of the Diaspora, in Tel Aviv, which tells the story of Jews dispersed around the world and finally returning to Israel.

One of the young women complained loudly that "religious groups are forcing everyone to follow their rules, even though most Israelis are not orthodox Jews." The other young woman agreed but with reservations.

"As I walk around this museum, I can see that we would not have survived as a people if we had not followed those rules."

I WILL LEAVE the final judgment of such matters to the Israelis, but I repeat my original premise: Travel, however superficial, gives you a little insight into current events.

Those of you who like to combine work with travel might like to explore a vacation digging with experts in the city of David or in other archaeological digs in Israel. For information, contact the Israel Government Tourism Administration, 5 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, IL 60603.

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