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## **The Adirondacks - A Year-Round Vacation Destination**

The lands and waterways of the Adirondack region are an outdoor lover's paradise. The region offers year-round recreation, outdoor adventure and relaxation opportunities for visitors, all within a day's drive for 25% of the entire North American population; an easy vacation destination.

The Adirondack region is surrounded by beauty, filled with outdoor adventure, and rich with history. The Adirondack Park comprises over six million acres, nearly half of which is public land, accessible to everyone. More than 2,000 miles of hiking trails make up the largest trail system in the nation, guiding travelers past ponds, waterfalls and spectacular mountain vistas. In addition to the beautiful mountains and trails there are thousands of ponds and lakes, along with 30,000 miles of rivers, streams and brooks.

Most outdoor activities in the Adirondacks are not limited to one particular season. Mountain bikers can ride from early spring through late fall. Anglers fish the region's brooks, rivers and lakes throughout the year. In the winter, snowshoers and cross-country skiers can access trails, fields, state land and even the golf courses that are tucked under a blanket of snow. Hiking isn't limited to the summer and fall either, as there are many who take part year-round. Exploring local culture is something that visitors can do all year at museums, local history centers, within small community shops, restaurants and at the region's craft breweries, distilleries and cideries where residents and visitors mingle and share stories about their Adirondack adventures.

Springtime provides wonderful opportunities for lower elevation hiking, fishing, and learning about the region's history. The region's small towns begin to plan upcoming events, local businesses prepare for the upcoming seasons and many of the local attractions begin to open for the season. Leaves and flowers begin to emerge, filling in the landscape.

Summer is the region's busiest time of year, offering a variety of Adirondack adventures. Visitors can swim in a pristine lake, they can walk along the shore of Lake Champlain or scale one of the highest mountains in the state - visitors to these mountain summits enjoy some of the most beautiful views in the country. Hiking, paddling, mountain biking, camping, attending cultural events, visiting the natural and man-made attractions,



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or simply relaxing at one of the many resorts, romantic cabins or family-friendly motels all provide the perfect mix of scenery, adventure and easy rejuvenation.

Most summer activities carry right through the fall months, when the beauty of the Adirondack Mountains provides a stunning backdrop. Days are warm, nights are cool, the sun often shines and the leaves are awash with color. Many who visit during the fall hope to schedule their trip to coincide with the week that the leaves are at their most colorful - when the reds, yellows, golds and rich browns against a backdrop of pines and evergreens are at their most vibrant; also known as "peak." Fall is also an amazing time to take advantage of the region's dark skies, with stargazing on many visitors' agendas.

Interested in history? Travelers can visit Fort Ticonderoga, an historic site where the powers of the eighteenth-century fought for empire and the young American republic fought for freedom. Architecture? The village of Essex on the shores of Lake Champlain is often referred to as New York's most historic hamlet - the community contains one of the most intact collections of pre-Civil War architecture in America. The Adirondack Experience at Blue Mountain Lake showcases the history of the Adirondacks. Small museums and historical centers are located within many local towns and villages.

The Adirondack region embraces winter - this is no time to stay indoors. Winter activities include cross-country and downhill skiing or snowboarding, skating, mountaineering, snowmobiling and winter camping. Hiking the region's trails past frozen waterfalls and along the shores of frozen lakes offers spectacular scenery. Ice climbing for the adventurous and ice skating for those who prefer a more nostalgic Adirondack adventure. Deep snow lends itself to excellent snowmobiling throughout the area with the western and central Adirondack regions often boasting 12 to 15 ft of snow each year.

Throughout the Adirondacks, cross-country or "XC" ski trails traverse frozen lakes, dash along forested glades and circumnavigate every town from Lake George to Star Lake. It is one of the most easily accessible - and easiest to learn - winter sports. Trek along the famous Northville-Placid Trail, or XC ski from Keene to Saranac Lake exclusively on the Jackrabbit Trail. Grab a headlamp and enjoy skiing under the



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stars. Many cross-country ski trails are multi-use, offering Adirondack **snowshoeing tracks** parallel to XC ski trails. For a more adventurous excursion, Adirondack outfitters offer backcountry expeditions and overnight treks. Pack binoculars for wildlife viewing and a winter picnic to enjoy on a soft blanket of snow.

Cascade Cross Country Ski Center just outside of Lake Placid provides everything skiers need - from a fully outfitted ski shop to ski and snowshoes rentals, to lodging and an on-site restaurant and bar. A can't miss Adirondack event, Cascade's Full Moon Ski Party offers live music, bonfires, and refreshments. Enjoy the center's 20 kilometers of groomed trails that connect to nearby Mt. Van Hoevenberg, with miles of trails through towering, snow-covered forests. Part of the Olympic Sports Complex, Mt. Van Hoevenberg also serves as a biathlon training facility for Winter Olympic hopefuls. See if you have what it takes and sign up for the "Be a Biathlete" workshop.

Check out the Paul Smith's Visitors Interpretive Center trails, offering wildlife lookouts, or head to Dewey Mountain in Saranac Lake for their Friday night Ski Jams complete with live music and refreshments.

- **Lapland Lake Nordic Vacation Center** in Benson - Finnish-style resort offering lodging, dining, and shopping as well as a full-service Nordic ski center with plenty of trails. 139 Lapland Lake Road, Benson NY 12134. (518) 863-4974.



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- **The Adirondack Mountain Club's Cascade Welcome Center** in Lake Placid can not only help you with all your outdoor adventure planning, but features a 12-mile network of cross-country ski trails as well as gear rentals. The center's trails also connect to the Jackrabbit trail network. 518-837-5047.
- **Garnet Hill Lodge Cross Country Ski Area** in North Creek - Authentic Nordic ski resort offering four seasons of fun on 600 acres. Lodging, dining and family-friendly entertainment offered throughout the ski season. 39 Garnet Hill Road, North River NY 12856. (518) 251-2444.
- **Olympic Sports Complex at Mt. Van Hoevenburg** in Lake Placid
- Dewey Mountain in Saranac Lake
- Fern Park Recreation Center in Inlet
- Nordic Ski & Snowshoe Center at Whiteface Club & Resort in Lake Placid
- **Tug Hill Plateau Trails** in Lowville
- Otter Creek Trails at Otter Creek Lodge in Glenfield
- Paul Smith's College Visitor Interpretive Center in Paul Smiths
- New Land Trust in Saranac
- **Osceola Ski & Sport Resort** in Camden
- **Higley Flow State Park** in Colton. In the winter season, campground roads are all groomed for classic skiing with some portions including a skate lane as well when possible. Skis and snowshoes can be rented at the administrative building as you enter the campground. Cross-country skiing and snowshoe trails double as hiking trails throughout the remaining seasons.
- James C. Fernet Sr. Recreational Trails in Tupper Lake



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- Adirondack Interpretive Center in Newcomb

## Dewey Mountain Recreation Center

For all-around great cross country skiing, [Dewey Mountain](#) is my choice. It's a well-maintained and family-friendly touring center. Don't be surprised to find a group of preschoolers taking a fun ski lesson in the morning. Or you might be passed by teenaged ski racers doing an afternoon practice.



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### Dewey Mountain ski lessons

The trails are one-way loops of varying abilities. The higher you ski up the mountain, the more difficult the trails become. The ungroomed top of the mountain gives backcountry skiers or experienced tourers a chance to ski steeper runs. The view from the top of the mountain takes in the nearby Saranac Lakes. The lower, expertly groomed green and blue trails wander through a snow-caked woodland.



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During weeknights, the lights come on for magical night skiing from 5-7 pm. The golden hue of the snow makes for a gorgeous ski at night.



### Dewey Mountain night skiing

Dedicated snowshoe trails crisscross the property. Plus, there is a large warming center, ski and snowshoe rentals, and a very reasonable trail fee.

Dewey Mountain Recreation Center is located five minutes outside Saranac Lake on Route 3 West.



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# Paul Smith's College VIC



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## Paul Smith's side trails

With its dedication to experiential education and the outdoors, Paul Smith's College is my kind of place. What's more, its VIC is quite a winter paradise.

There is 20 km of groomed trails for skate skiing, classic skiing, and snowshoeing. Furthermore, classical skiers and snowshoers can enjoy 40 km of groomed trails. That's a whole lot of beautiful northern forest to explore by skiing.

I enjoyed cruising the easy, well-groomed Logger's Loop. Several ungroomed but well-tracked trails branch off the loop for special side trips. The Boreal Life Trail leads down to a magnificent view of a bog dressed in winter finery.



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## Winter Bog

There is a warming shelter with restrooms. Paul Smith's College VIC is located on Route 30 north of Paul Smith's College.

## Mt. Van Hoevenberg

Cross country skiing at [Mt. Van Hoevenberg](#) is in the shadow of Olympians. The world-class trails were designed for the 1980 Olympic Games held in Lake Placid. There are still international competitions held at Mt. Van Hoevenberg.



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Further, you can ski on the Olympic biathlon track and see the shooting range of the Olympians.

Now 50 km of expertly maintained trails await you. There is also 4 km of new World Championship caliber trails, ensuring that Mt. Van Hoevenberg is the premier Nordic destination in North America. Snowmaking also extends the season. The Mountain Pass Lodge is a huge warming facility with rentals and food service.



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Bodhi deciding which Mt. Van Hoevenberg trail to go on

The trail fee is more expensive than other nearby touring centers, but the Olympic vibe and many amenities make it worth it. Mt. Van Hoevenberg is located on Route 73 about 15 minutes south of Lake Placid.

## Cascade Cross Country Ski Center



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Cascade Cross Country Ski Center is just down the road from Mt. Van Hoevenberg on Route 73. However, it has a whole different character. You won't have any Olympians in training whizz by you. Instead, you will find 20 km of enjoyable up-and-down ski trails to glide through the forest and across the brook.



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The Jackrabbit Trail runs through Cascade Ski Center. You can jump on this historic trail for a mellow cruise through the area.

For those on a budget, the Bunkroom at Cascade has hostel-style lodging for cheap. Bring your own sleeping bag or blankets. For families, renting out an entire bunk room is a budget-friendly option. Wake up trailside for a morning ski.

There is a lodge with food and drink for apres ski enjoyment. Rentals of skis and snowshoes are available.

## Whiteface Club & Resort Nordic Center

The [Nordic Center](#) at the Whiteface Club & Resort has 15 km of gentle trails best suited to beginner skiers. The well-groomed trails for classical and skate skiing traverse the golf course and surrounding fields. Furthermore, the Jackrabbit trail intersects this property.

I found gliding along the undulating trails to be a wonderful time in beautiful conditions. It's a great workout without a lot of hill climbing, just constant swishing along the trails.



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Whiteface Club & Resort trails

The Nordic Center has ski and snowshoe rentals. The Cafe on the Green has healthy lunches after a vigorous ski. The Center is located on Whiteface Lane not far from the village of Lake Placid.

## Jackrabbit Ski Trail

The [Jackrabbit Ski Trail](#) was the creation of Herman “Jackrabbit” Smith Johannsen. Jackrabbit Johannsen was a Norwegian credited with bringing cross country skiing to the Adirondacks and parts of Canada. He pioneered many backcountry ski routes in the High Peaks and in Canada. He died at 111 years old but is said to have cross country skied until age 108.

The trail Jackrabbit Johannsen carved through the Adirondacks runs 35 miles. It meanders through villages, winds through cross country ski touring centers, and hugs the wilderness ridges of the Adirondacks. The trail starts in Keene and ends at Paul Smith’s College VIC There are parts of the Jackrabbit Trail for all abilities.



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## Jackrabbit Trail

My favorite section is the 5.5-mile Old Mountain Road section from Whiteface Inn Lane to McKenzie Pond Road. We left a car at either end and skied from the trailhead across from the Whiteface Club & Resort Nordic Center side. The trail climbs gently to the Placid lean-to at 1.5 miles. This is a great snack break area. After 2.5 miles it reaches the height of land. It's all downhill from there.



Placid Lean-to stop



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The 1.5-mile descent is challenging but doable on touring skis. You will need solid downhill technique on touring skis but the trail is wide enough to snowplow or crank turns. I enjoyed the continuous descent all way to the McKenzie Pond turnoff.

Make sure you do the short ski into the scenic winter view over McKenzie Pond. If you are looking for an out-and-back ski, start at the trailhead on McKenzie Pond Road and kick and glide into the pond on a section of the Jackrabbit Trail that is less intense.



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McKenzie Pond

## Marcy Dam Trail

Marcy Dam is a popular destination in the heart of the High Peaks Wilderness Area. It is a gateway to the surrounding backcountry peaks. Furthermore, it's a beautiful destination on its own with views of Mt. Marcy and the High Peaks.

The 4.2-mile out-and-back Marcy Dam Trail starts at the Adirondack Mountain Club's complex including the Adirondack Loj, cabins, and



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campground. The trail has some ups and downs so is rated for intermediate skiers. Keen skiers may want to continue to Avalanche Lake for an incredible 10-mile roundtrip scenic ski trip.

### Adirondack Loj

For a less rigorous loop, ski into Marcy Dam and then ski out on the Old Marcy Dam Truck Road to South Meadow. It's a mile road walk back to the Loj to make a 7-mile loop. You can also park at South Meadow for an easy out-and-back ski.

There is a fee to park at the main parking lot at the end of Adirondack Loj Road.

## Johns Brook Trail



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View from Johns Brook Trail

If you are looking for a quintessential Adirondack wilderness ski trail, the Johns Brook Trail has you covered. The trail up the Johns Brook Valley has gentle ups and downs as it climbs for 3.5 miles to the Johns Brook Lodge. It crosses several rivers that will test your balance on narrow bridges. The northern forest woods and house-size boulders scattered along the trail make for a fabulous ski.



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### Johns Brook Trail

While we winter camped on a recent visit, there are several [backcountry cabins](#) and lean-tos at the trail's end for overnights. Grace Camp and Camp Peggy O'Brien are rustic accommodations offered by the Adirondack Mountain Club.

The parking lot in Keene Valley at the Garden trailhead off Johns Brook Lane is crowded to overfilled on weekends so arrive early. There is a fee collected to maintain the lot and road.



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The Adirondack Mountains offer some of the best opportunities for outdoor recreation in a beautiful, natural setting, year-round and within a day's drive - an easy road trip to adventure.