

Hudson Valley **Explore**

Winter in the Valley 2023



hv1

Top ten free sledding hills in Ulster County

If it ever does snow, make it to these popular local sled spots



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

by Zac Shaw

THE BEST PLACE to go sledding is often the spot no one else knows about or can get to. If you're fortunately situated in Ulster County, there's a perfect hill on your property or a short trudge through the snow nearby. Some of us lucky locals grew up in just such a scenario, and sledding is in our blood.

The rest of us peasants are left to rely on Google searches and word-of-mouth

to find decent hills that are open to the public. This can mean a bit of crowding sometimes, but it also means witnessing many entertaining wipeouts and potentially capturing a viral TikTok video of an epic collision.

And don't forget the other best reason to go sledding. It's the best possible excuse to get hot chocolate afterward. Whether it's an artisanal, organic, non-dairy cacao concoction or Swiss Miss in a thermos, don't spare the mini-marshmallows.

Of course, first things first. It's gotta,

gotta snow this winter! It's been one of the most disappointing sledding seasons in decades. All we've had so far and all that's forecast this month is brief teases of wintry mix. So you might consider saving a copy of this article. The way things are going, you might be sitting on your mittens for a while before the white hills call your name.

Nonetheless, let's be optimistic. Someone could be finding this article from a Google search in 2026, reading with a foot of snow and a dream. Here are the top



ten free sledding spots open to the public in Ulster County, in no particular order:

1. Comeau property

Tinker St. / Route 212 • Woodstock

Spend anytime driving through a snowy Woodstock and you will see a crowd of kids and teens at the foot of the Comeau prop-

erty sledding down the squat but speedy hills set back off the main road. This is a long-time locals hill. It's the Woodstock Green of snow. If you don't know anyone here, prepare to make new friends. There are few signs more happy and wholesome than an idyllic woodland hill dotted with a kaleidoscope of color-

ful, puffy snow-wear and brightly-hued plastic sleds. This hill is postcard-perfect, appropriate for a town dedicated to the arts.

2. Hasbrouck Park

Delaware Avenue • Kingston

One of the most epic sledding spots is tucked away out of sight off Delaware Avenue in Kingston. You'll probably drive by the entrance once or twice thinking it's a driveway, but head up the narrow winding road and you'll eventually reach most Kingston residents' first choice for sledding after snowfall.

Overcrowding is not usually an issue here, as there are many different wide hills to sled. Some are small and short while others offer more dramatic dips, but they're all fairly expansive and high in quantity. The feeling of being nestled among the forest with gorgeous views at the park's apex mixes with the magic of knowing innumerable kids and adults throughout Kingston's history have descended these hills for well over a century.

Afterwards, head for hot chocolate and a freshly made donut at nearby Half Moon Rondout Cafe.

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3. Snyder's Farm Hill

Routes 212 & 32 • Saugerties

Right off Thruway Exit 20, situated in the vicinity of the Woodstock '94 festival grounds, you'll find one of the Hudson Valley's biggest and most beautiful sledding destinations. Stunning mountain views are the backdrop of one of the area's most popular hills, drawing snow enthusiasts of all ages. The landscape conducive to any number of unpowered modes of snow transportation, so bring your favorite. Just make sure you're also prepared to wait your turn and hike back up a mammoth hill once your ride is done.

4. Cornell Park

Wurts St. • Kingston

This small park has a big sledding hill with a distinctive double-dip slope. Though there are some smaller inclines for toddlers and younger kids, the main event is the big hill, where you can catch serious speed, and maybe even get a little air. Your heart will be racing on the way down from the inertia and the way up from the uphill hike. In both length and incline, this is almost the Platonic ideal of the sledding hill – just long and steep enough to send you zooming without landing you in the Hudson.

5. Marlboro Elementary School

Route 9W • Marlboro

A wide thirty-foot slope in front of the school makes for prime sledding in snowy weather. It's a race to see who can lay down the first fresh tracks. This is the perfect kids' hill – steep enough to produce a fun ride, but not so steep that

you need to worry about catching air or having catastrophic collisions. Parents often chill at the top of the hill to watch the heartwarming panorama of happily sledding students enjoying their nature-given day off.

6. Highland Middle School

71 Main Street • Highland

The dome-like hill behind this Ulster County school is perfect for casual sledding and regularly makes best-of lists. You'll get a slow start, a burst of speed down the incline, and a smooth finish. It's a social hub for families in the community any time the white stuff starts coming down in earnest, so expect to high-five a neighbor or two after an impressive plunge down the hill.

7. Duzine Elementary School

Sunset Ridge Road • New Paltz

Duzine's sledding hill has been known to launch a sled or two into the air, but there are also opportunities for less adventurous sledders to catch a thrill. The school itself is already secluded, providing a peaceful ambience of soft, pillowy snow absorbing the icy whoosh of careening sleds.

8. Thomas Felton Park

11 Patura Road • Modena

You likely won't get airborne here, but there is decent sledding to be had for younger daredevils on the park's sloped area. Lots of room and the relatively remote environs make for an uncrowded winter wonderland of wide open space. Snowball fights, snow angels and snow people have been known to make appearances.

9. Ashokan Reservoir day-use area

Off Route 28 • Olive

As a child, one of my top destinations for local sledding was the day-use area at the reservoir. The hills behind the old aerator are super-steep and super-fast. The bottom of the hill is abrupt – there's little air to be caught, only a harsh angle where the hill meets the flat ground and shoots you forward. It's great for racing to see who can go the furthest, if you go anywhere at all. The vast lawn is perfect for getting pulled around on your sled by an adult. All ages will enjoy the expansive views and wooded serenity of the surrounding area. It truly is one of the most peaceful places in all of New York. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection keeps a close and watchful eye on everything that goes on here, so don't get too crazy, and don't wander off without a recreational permit.

10. Cluett Schantz Memorial Park

1801-1805 Route 9W • Milton

The sledding section here is fun and accessible for all ages, leaning more toward the youngsters with its gently rolling hills. This historic park was a popular ice skating destination until town officials put the kibosh on that. You'll have to make do with a sled or snow tube and a short but satisfying glide down a wondrous white hill ... if it ever snows.

Hudson Valley Explore

Winter in the Valley

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Learn something new

You need to have no reason at all to enroll

by Genia Wickwire

WALK INTO A big, brick industrial building in Kingston known as The Shirt Factory. I have never been in this building before. I feel a little lost. It feels dusty and a bit impersonal.

Trudging up the metal stairs, I begin to feel a little queasy. Why do I suddenly feel like the new kid in class the same way I would entering a new school in the fifth grade? I'm 40-something. I should be over this type of feeling.

I wasn't actually planning on signing up to try something new. I signed up to write an article on trying something new.

I wholeheartedly think trying something new is a good idea. The Hudson Valley has a plethora of choices. Looking at filling the pages of our Winter Explore Magazine, I thought to myself, "Not ev-

"Working our brains out by learning a new skill is actually one of the key components of health as we grow older. Studies have shown that learning a complex new skill — a language, digital photography, quilting — may improve memory and slow age-related decline."

everyone likes to ski or sled or even go out into the elements in winter. However, that doesn't necessarily mean we want to sit in our homes endlessly." Winter's the perfect time to take an indoor class,

get your hands dirty, meet new people.

I have read many articles that illustrate clearly why learning new skills is important, especially for people getting into their older years.

"Working our brains out, so to speak, by learning a new skill isn't just good for impressing at parties," writes Sophie Putka in Longevity Hacks.

"It's actually one of the key components of health as we grow older. Education, research suggests, it might extend life—a year gained for a year educated. Studies have shown that learning a complex new skill — a language, digital photography, quilting — may improve memory and slow age-related decline."

I always try to put myself in the reader's shoes. What would I find interesting? What skill would I like to learn? That doesn't mean I plan to take up these activities. I'm just accumulating the options. As I reach out to creative studios and artists in the area, I begin to see a list coming together, a list solely for the reader.

The Internet alone is not enough. It contains outdated information, closed businesses, classes that have run their course and no longer exist. Contacting the studios is a key component to getting it right.

Lex, the owner of Kingston Ceramics Studio, is quick on the draw. She responds to me immediately. Her studio offers beginner classes year-round. I have considered taking ceramics classes over the years. It just seems like it would be fun and creative, though definitely out of my comfort zone. "If you'd like to try a class — you know, in the name

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The class at Kingston Ceramics Studio.

of thorough research — please use this code,” Lex writes.

And that’s it. I’m roped in. Not because I have to do it, but because I am doing research and I am recommending readers “learn something new!”

So I sign up. Here I am climbing dusty stairs and coming to a door with the unknown behind it. My head peeks through the door first. To the left are six- or seven-foot metal shelves containing objects wrapped in thick plastic. To the right are hooks with coats and bags. A light dust permeates the walls, chairs and every crevice of the pottery studio. There are metal chairs, pottery wheels, sinks.

Two women are talking quietly. One is putting on her coat and walking toward the door. Several people in the center of the room are working quietly and intently on clay already formed into shapes. A man stands pushing down a pile of clay hard, picking it up, and pushing again

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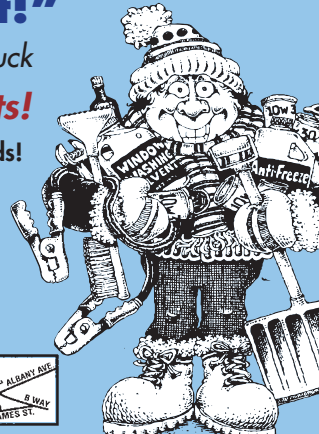
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Peaceful working on his bowl

and again in some sort of ritualistic process. The hall was bleak and uninviting, but on this side of the door there is a humming, an energy — creativity at work.

A pink-haired woman walks toward me with a cup of coffee in a handmade glazed cup. She introduces herself as Grace, the teacher for today. I introduce myself. I mention that I am writing an article. She has heard I was coming.

She brings me to one of the back tables, and sets me up with a giant piece of clay, ready for the ritual in which I had just witnessed the man take part. I'm left simply to keep pushing on clay.

For some reason, I think I am a failure even at this simple task. My mind fills with doubt. Am I pushing this right? Do I have enough arm strength for this? What am I doing?

It is the first time for a young woman placed beside me as well. Her name is Tenhai (pronounced like Renee but with a "t"). I am pleased to be with another newcomer. It gives me a chance to find out what drives people to try something new.

Tenhai tells me she used to dance. Ever since she stopped doing that, she has wanted to find another creative outlet. She spends the rest of her days at Newark Airport directing planes. She is one of those people with a large directive wands resembling a light saber who tells planes where to park. She also mentions a personal sad story. To myself, I hazard the guess that she wants both a creative outlet and a way to work something



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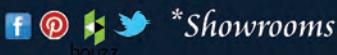
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through so I nod in agreement. Somehow, those things align with pushing this clay down over and over again.

I tell her I am writing an article. For some reason I feel the need to point out that I am not an artist. A soft voice behind us says, "Everyone is an artist."

Nearby, someone else questions this statement.

We look behind us to see how this very large man with dark skin and light eyes

responds. He is gently smoothing out wrinkles and curves on a giant clay bowl before him with tough, strong hands that could just as easily bend metal. "What I mean is you can be an artist as a plumber or an electrician or whatever you do in life," he says. "Everyone is an artist at what they are good at."

His name is Peaceful.

He instructs me that I don't need strength to push, just keep turning the clay over. I learn later that coming to the studio helped him work through a brutal beating that left him with brain damage so bad he couldn't form words. It has helped him physically and mentally cope with his experience. I am left speechless as to what I could say to that. Who knew that working with clay could be so deep?

Grace instructs Tenhai and me to form small balls of clay and shape them with our hands. We all talk while we work

on our small bowls and Peaceful works on his giant bowl. Grace is working on an interesting vase. Periodically, she comes around to show us new skills or to explain why we are doing something. She sees to other people who sit quietly, concentrating fully on their work and refraining from conversation. It is a nice mix of people, some who socialize and others who prefer solitude.

My doubt fades. It isn't really necessary. Nobody cares what I am making. Nobody is there to judge. Creativity can be expressed in a million different ways. Simple cups and pots with extravagant glazes, more elaborate vases with spikes, a pot that looks perfectly crooked as though it were planned that way, water bowls with images of the animals that will drink from them painted carefully in detail.

In the end, I feel comfortable in this studio. I understand why someone would



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want to come here and why someone would learn something new. People do it to connect with others or to prove they are artists or to remind themselves they have nothing to prove. They do it to let go of issues or to hold out their issues in a physical form. They do it to find themselves or to lose themselves.

It seems to me you need to have no reason at all. In the end, it was fun.

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Kingston Ceramics Studio. Classes for beginners offered every day of the week. Sign up online at: <https://www.kingston-ceramicsstudio.com/ceramics-classes>

Ulster Boces. Knit One, Purl Two. Want to take on a new knitting project of your choice? This is a series of open knitting workshops where each student can bring and work on their own knitting projects with the help from an instructor. January 24, 31 and February 7. Ulster Boces offers a lot of different class options. For information go to: <https://www.facebook.com/ulsterboces/> or call 845-255-1400.

Unison Arts life drawing. Meets every Tuesday night 7:30 to 9:30 and on certain Sundays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Online registration is available as soon as a model is confirmed, usually by the end of the month. Register here: <https://www.unisonarts.org/life-drawing>

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Grace smoothing the edge of her piece.

who can all sign up together, with the date of their choosing. For information go to: www.willowdeepstudio.com or call 845-658-0370.

Woodstock School of Art. Many art classes for all levels including Introduction to Oil Painting with Anne Crowley on February 4 and 5, printmaking with Kate McGloughlin on February 10,

17, 24 and March 3, painting Flowers with John Varriano on February 11 and 12, and Watercolor Weekend with Angela Gaffney-Smith on February 25 and 26. There are many more offerings on the website at <https://woodstockschoolofart.org/classes-workshops/>

YMCA Spanish Immersion Classes. Spanish is the second most spoken language in the world and the primary language for over ten percent of Kingston residents. Whether you want to learn Spanish to communicate better with friends, neighbors, customers, or for travel, doing so is a great way to bring our community together. Language immersion classes are proven to be one of the most efficient ways to learn a language quickly. Classes offered January 17 to March 4, Saturdays 10 to 11:30 a.m. and January 28 to February 28, Tuesdays 5:30 to 7:30 pm. If you have questions, please email: RTyler@ymcaulster.org or register at: <https://ops1.operations.daxko.com/Online/2186/ProgramsV2/Home.mvc>.



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Four awesome activities to beat winter boredom in Ulster County

Cabin fever got you down? Warm up to these unique ideas

by Zac Shaw

MANY OF US Northeast-ers reach our winter breaking point sometime in January. We've been inside too long. We mentally and physically cannot binge-watch another episode on Netflix. The crumbs on our one-size-fits-all fleece hoodie blanket are starting to cry out for a dustbuster. We've gotta switch it up, get out of the house, and break the monotony.

The problem is that most of the winter activities you'll find suggested to you by writers of articles like these are either pretty obvious or appealing to relatively few people. Did you know you could go skiing in winter? Oh, you're not a skier? Here are some winter hikes for you to test your susceptibility to frostbite.

Winter is not just for wintry activities that embrace the cold. Even though this winter has been warmer than some, most of us are not champing at the bit to freeze our butts off for entertainment. How to stay warm while finding a unique activity to break up the short days and long nights? Here are four unique ideas you might not have thought of:

Dine at a restaurant with a fireplace

Why does it please us to dine by the fire? Perhaps it reminds us of our evolutionary roots, congregating around fires for hundreds of thousands of years, enjoying the spoils of the hunt. You'll notice that many of the local restaurants that feature fireplaces also offer many rustic, farm-to-table cuts of charred meat. Coincidence?



One of the fireplaces at the historic Hoffman House restaurant and tavern in Kingston.

Maybe we're just hungry and cold.

You'll find fireplaces in numerous Ulster County restaurants. With fuel prices astronomical as they are, we can't guarantee they'll be functional or lit. But certain restaurants are famous for their fireside dining, and you'd be missing out if you didn't experience at least one this winter. Pro tip: Make a reservation and tell them you want to sit close to the fireplace. These are coveted seats that

get filled fast.

The Hoffman House in Kingston is an old-style inn with an antique gun mounted above its main fireplace. The stone building was built way back in the 1600s, and the hearty, homestyle meals served fireside create a sense of being transported to an earlier time.

The Stone House Tavern in Accord is the town's central restaurant. It has gone through several iterations over the

decades. Its new owners have created a cozy, classy space and an elevated menu that's a blend of steakhouse and pub.

Peekamoose Restaurant and Tap Room in Big Indian is a bit of a trek for many, but it's worth it for the artsy, rustic ambience and yes, multiple fireplaces. Bring some friends, as this restaurant can accommodate large parties for a dining experience you won't soon forget. The food is farm-to-table and high-end



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without being pretentious.

A fireplace is the central feature of the Phoenician Steakhouse dining room in (you guessed it) Phoenicia. Surf and turf abound on their menu, but there's also plenty for vegetarians to drool over.

There's also Garvan's in New Paltz, an Irish-style gastropub and favorite of locals and tourists alike. Like many of the restaurants on this list, the fireplace feels integral to the rustic charm of the

historic building. The food is hearty and refined, the staff friendly and inviting.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of all restaurants with fireplaces in Ulster County, but you can't go wrong with any of these options... unless you get seated by the door instead of the fireplace.

Go on a record store crawl and host a home listening party

You don't have to be a record collector

to appreciate vinyl. You just need access to a record player and some indoor time on your hands. The winter seems built for this purpose. There's arguably no better season to plant oneself in front of a couple of speakers and go on an epic journey of sound. Might as well be stuck inside with your favorite musicians.

A panacea for the digital-music age, the analog nature of vinyl will ground you to the musical experience. If you've been using Spotify for several years, playing a record will transport you to a bygone era where immersing oneself in the music was a built-in part of the listening experience, due simply to the fact that vinyl albums are continuous, linear and (if you're tuned in) uninterrupted. They also sound uniquely good, perhaps better than digital, as their sonic footprint is continuous and analog, whereas digital sound consists of countless imperceptible samples. Each local record store has its own flavor and unique offerings, and part of the joy of record shopping is the surprise of discovering something new or long-sought. We recommend you visit them all.

In Kingston, Rocket Number Nine Records and Rhino Records, just a block away from each other, offer excellent selections. You can sometimes find a good vintage platter at Kingston Consignments on the very same street. Planet Woodstock in the Town of Ulster is also a good nearby spot to dig in crates of budget vinyl.

Rhino Records also has a location in New Paltz, and has been a beloved mecca for music-hungry college students in the town for several decades. Parlor is a quaint and charming bookshop with a small selection of vinyl and occasional live performances in-store.

Further north, Woodstock Music Shop has a decent selection of records, including some sought-after gems.

There are other great record stores not too far out of the county: Darkside Records in Poughkeepsie, Hudson Valley Vinyl in Beacon, John Doe Records and Books in Hudson, Rhinebeck Vinyl Vault, Rock Fantasy in Middletown, and Spike's Record Rack in Catskill, to name a few.

If you'd rather not break the bank at a time when eggs cost \$8 a dozen, invite your vinyl-collecting friends over and let everyone DJ their favorite cuts and sides.

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Go thrifting

'Tis the season when everyone gets rid of stuff to make room for new stuff. 'Tis also the season of inflation, shrinkflation, recession and record corporate profits. One of the best ways to subvert all that is to hit our many excellent local thrift stores.

There's a distinction between thrift store and consignment/vintage store, though it can be a blurry line. Generally, thrift stores take donations, sift out the crap, skim the really good stuff, and put the rest on retail, gradually dropping prices of items that don't sell until they get donated elsewhere. Vintage stores and consignment shops are less likely to take donations and are more focused on marking up the best items sourced from thrift stores, flea markets, yard and estate sales and auctions, often in themed collections.

Kingston has a number of true thrift stores: Free to Thrift is jam-packed with great clothes and other thrift items priced reasonably. Fairly New Thrift Shop is

a volunteer-run affair associated with a nearby church. People's Place has a wide selection that's well-organized and focuses on items that have utility for low-to-no-income earners -- just one aspect of their multifaceted community outreach that helps thousands of residents each year.

In Kingston, you can also find three of the funkiest fusions between thrift store and junk store: Stan's Used Items & Antiques is packed wall-to-ceiling with odds and ends. Zaborski Emporium is a towering multi-floor warehouse of home fixtures and random items from every historic era. And P&T Surplus offers the most delightfully random collection of tools, materials and electronics.

The Salvation Army has two main thrift stores in Ulster County, one in Kingston and the other in New Paltz. The Kingston location is okay for clothes, but the New Paltz location is a two-floor thrift hotspot with great finds donated by college students and well-to-do residents.

Make sure you visit the lower floor in the back that features a huge room full of furniture.

Out on Route 28, the Tibetan Center offers an eclectic collection focused on furniture and larger items, as does the Ulster Habitat ReStore up the road.

Plan your garden with a local expert

During the pandemic, it seemed like everyone who lived adjacent to a patch of land was starting a garden. Many of us were humbled after a few YouTube tutorials failed to give us the green thumb we needed to produce more than a handful of undersized veggies.

This year, resolve to do it right. One of the benefits of being surrounded by nature in Ulster County is that you are also surrounded by nature experts. And the experts will tell you that the time to start planning your garden is fast approaching. The last spring frost is still months away, but you'll likely want to

start some seedlings indoors, which means procuring the necessary supplies and formulating a plan of attack.

The best advice for an Ulster County resident seeking to have a bumper crop in 2023 is to find a local gardening expert with whom to collaborate. We recommend searching for a garden center near you, as you'll be returning frequently for supplies and advice. Owners and employees are typically friendly and outgoing – after all, they care for thousands of living things each day. Make a friend and later this year you may find your garden overflowing with a bountiful harvest.

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Lake George's Winter Festival was one of the inspirations behind Saugerties Snow Moon festival

Winter wonderland weekend

Saugerties to host inaugural Snow Moon Festival February 3 to 5

by Frances Marion Platt

“WOULDN'T IT BE fun to do something like this in Saugerties?” That's what a group of friends from the Saugerties area, who first met while doing volunteer work together started asking each other after a trip to the Funky Ice Fest and Winter Carnival in Lake George. They liked to travel and attend events together, and talking about it they shared a feeling that the Saugerties downtown needed some sort of midwinter morale (and tourism) boost once the holiday festivities had faded and the equine excitement of HITS was still months away. Together, they began to brainstorm a big winter event as a way “to give back to the community,” according to Miriam Adams, proprietor of the Ren-

wick Clifton House Bed and Breakfast.

Inspiration came from the Sinterklaas celebrations in Rhinebeck and Kingston each December. “We thought we'd do a parade with puppets like they do in Rhinebeck,” Adams recalls, “but it has to be more than a parade.”

She and fellow organizers Sue and Victor Sachar, Kelly Myers, and Paul and Cheryl Van Schaack began asking around among their business and social contacts, and found “an outpouring of support” for a townwide blowout taking up an entire winter weekend.

Businesses lined up to become sponsors. The village and town governments endorsed the event. The Chamber of

Commerce and Kiwanis Club came on board, and schools, churches, key clubs, the Saugerties Artists' Association and other local organizations signed up.

That's how the first annual Saugerties Snow Moon Festival – set to take place from February 3 to 5, ending on the actual date of the Snow Moon – came into

“It's a first-year thing, a small-town kind of thing, but it just keeps growing.”

being. “It's a first-year thing, a small-town kind of thing,” says Adams, taking a break from her preparations in early January. At that time, the group of active volunteers already numbered 40 or more. “But it just keeps growing.”

“The Snow Moon is a full moon that shows up each February to beautify

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the sky during the snowiest and coldest months of the year,” the festival website explained. “This extraordinary celestial event sends a message of comfort and encouragement, lighting the sky with beauty and hope. A new and joyous season is upon us. The snow will soon melt from the mountains, the fish will swim in the streams, and the sun will shine bright and warm. Senses will be lifted, bringing positive energy and good luck in the months to come.”

This upbeat early-February theme then takes a more serious tone, noting that local indigenous tribes called this midwinter lunar cycle the Hunger Moon. “Given the current economic state, the rising cost of groceries and fuel, this winter will be tough for so many area residents,” the website continued. “As a result, we felt that it was fitting to donate the proceeds from the Snow Moon Festival to the Saugerties-area food banks.” Fundraising to fight hunger is the giving-back piece of the festival. While admission to the majority of the weekend’s many events will be free, a few will sell

tickets that will benefit the food banks.

A packed lineup awaits residents and visitors. Yes, a big parade will be the centerpiece. There will be craft markets; art shows, pop-ups and street installations; outdoor bars and indoor

warming stations; live music at a variety of venues; live comedy, hypnosis and magic shows; a chili cook-off, a bake sale, an all-you-can-eat breakfast, a scavenger hunt, a history lecture, and a full-moon hike and a stargazing party.



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Plus even a 5K run, weather permitting. Activities especially targeted to children include crafts workshops, wagon rides, free movies at the Orpheum Theatre, an obstacle course, face painting and games.

A raffle, with tickets selling for \$25 apiece, features a grand prize of dinner for eight at the Clifton House prepared by celebrity chef Ric Orlando.

You can see the full schedule in detail

at <https://saugertiesnowmoonfestival.com/events>, but here are some temporal highlights. On Friday, February 3 the festival kicks off at 11 a.m. with a winter art exhibit at the Newberry Artisan Market

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(236 Main Street), which will return on Saturday and Sunday. The Moonlight Market at SPAF (169 Ulster Avenue) gets under way with an opening reception for VIP ticketholders at 4 p.m. and opens to the general public at 4:30. The band Roadhouse will provide live music.

The first of several craft workshops for kids to make 3-D snowflakes to carry in the parade will start at 4 p.m. at the Saugerties Library (91 Washington Avenue). The Esopus Conservancy will lead a guided snow-moon hike beginning at 4:30 p.m. at the Esopus Bend Nature Preserve (10 Shady Lane). And SPAF will host a comedy show starring Linda Belt at 9 p.m.

The Snow Moon 5K Run takes off from the large pavilion at Cantine Field at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 4. From 10

a.m. on you can register at the Inquiring Mind Bookstore (200 Main Street) and get your clue list for the Snow Moon Scavenger Hunt, and at 11 a.m. at the same venue you can sign up to participate in the chili cook-off, roving to various restaurants to sample their entries before casting your vote.

Also on Saturday, beginning at 11 a.m., the Saugerties Boys & Girls Club (45 Partition Street) will host a crafts fair, and the Saugerties Reformed Church (173 Main Street) will offer a bake sale, indoor pom-pom snowball fights and cornhole games.

At noon, the Saugerties Public Library (91 Washington Avenue) will host a history talk on ice harvesting on the Hudson. More kids' crafts workshops begin at 1 p.m. at the Atonement Lutheran Church

(100 Market Street) and the Exchange Hotel (217 Main Street), while a farm tractor pulls a wagon for free rides around the village. Dancers will perform in the window of the Newberry Artisan Market at 3 p.m.

The flagship event of the Snow Moon Festival, a parade of lights, will launch at 6 p.m. on Saturday from the Sawyer Savings Bank on Market Street. A star party with a bonfire, plus telescopes provided by the Mid-Hudson Astronomical Association, will start at 7 p.m. at Cantine Field (19 Smallworld Avenue). Peter Einhorn's Sounds of Samba will wrap up the day's festivities from 9 p.m. to midnight at the rooftop bar at Salt & Fire (124 Partition Street).

If you didn't party late on Saturday, you might want to start Sunday early with the VFW all-you-can-eat breakfast beginning at 8 a.m. at the American Legion (30 John Street). At 11 a.m., you'll have to choose between a hypnosis show with illusionist Jace Strongin or a movie matinee for younger children, both at Upstate Films' Orpheum Theatre (156 Main Street).

A decoupage lantern-making workshop for all ages starts at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday at the Saugerties Methodist Church (67 Washington Avenue). At 5 p.m. the Saugerties Reformed Church (173 Main Street) will cap off the weekend with a candlelight concert featuring Niall Connelly and Marji Zintz.

Paid events include entry to the moonlight market (\$26 VIP, \$10 general admission), the comedy show (\$25), the hypnosis show (\$8), the full-moon hike (\$5) and the lantern-making workshop (\$24). Tickets can be purchased at <https://saugertiessnowmoonfestival.com/purchase-tickets>. Pay at the door for the VFW all-you-can-eat breakfast.

In addition to the scheduled fun, the organizers of the Snow Moon Festival have been reaching out to Sawyers with a special plea to help brighten spirits on the weekend of February 3 to 5: "We're asking residents to keep their lights up, turn them off after the holidays are over and then turn them on again for the celebration," says Miriam Adams. "It's going to be spectacular!"

To learn more about the Saugerties Snow Moon Festival, or how to become a sponsor, a market vendor or a volunteer, call 914-388-2375 or e-mail info@saugertiessnowmoonfestival.com.

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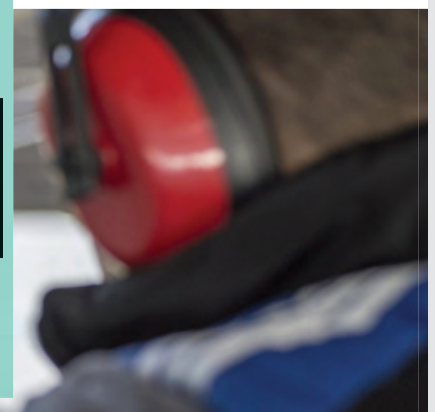


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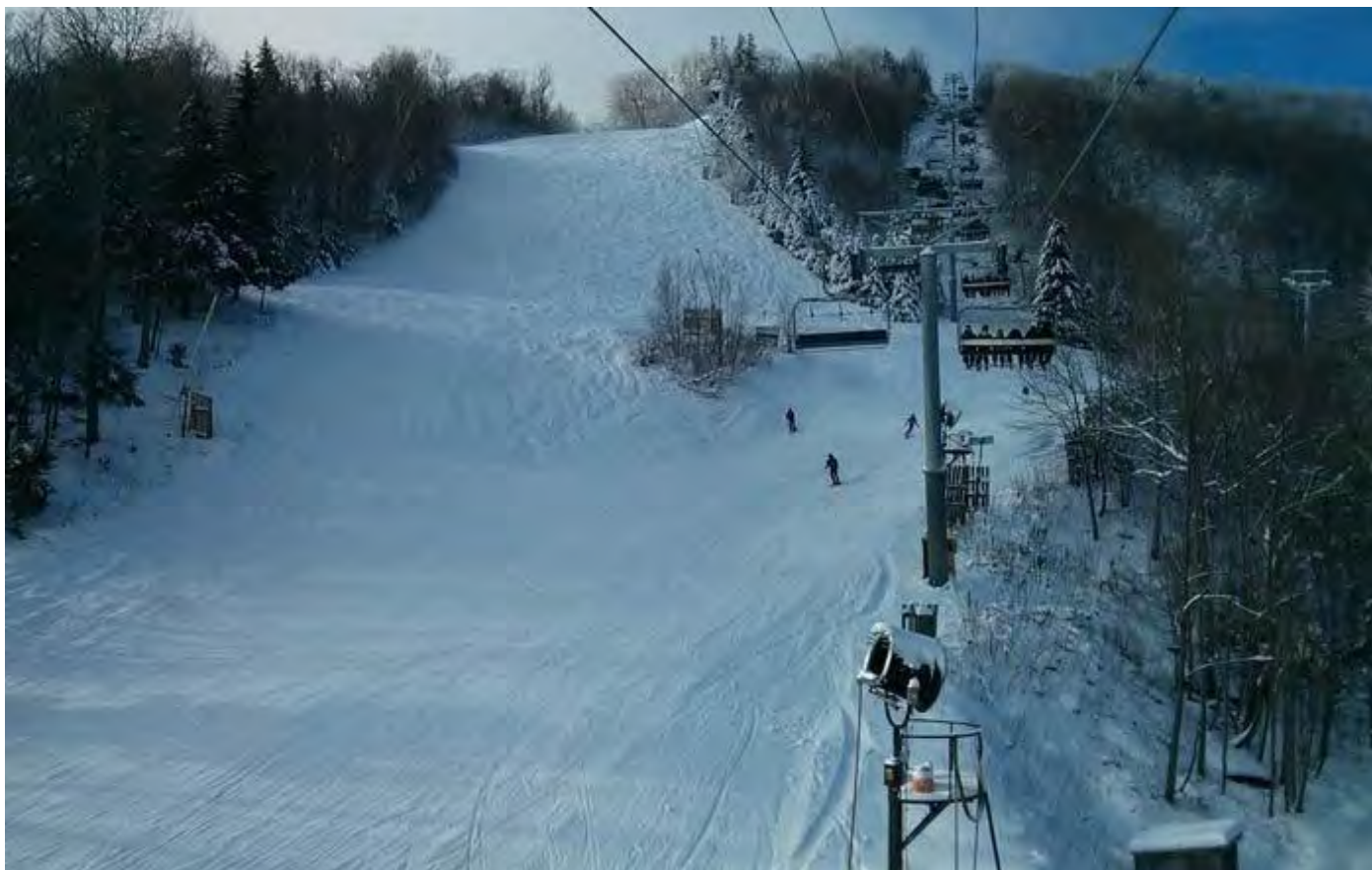
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Powder to the people

Ski weekend nightlife is staging a comeback at Hunter Mountain



Hunter Mountain Ski Bowl.

by Zac Shaw

IT'S HARD TO find good nightlife in Ulster County these days, especially in the dead of winter. Unless you're part of a wedding re-

ception, Kingston's night scene all but died after BSP was unceremoniously shuttered. New Paltz is decent, but only if you're a college student. Woodstock caters to well-to-do music fans. You're in and out. Where can a regular

person do some down-and-dirty bar hopping and hanging with fun-time locals and tourists late into the night?

You have to get a little out of county limits and head north to the famous Hunter Mountain, the foot of which is dotted with bars and restaurants that mostly cater to skiers and snowboarders. And let's just say skiers and snowboarders have been known to party. Pre-pandemic winter weekend nights here are legendary.

Yes, Hunter took a big, multi-year hit from the pandemic, and the scene is still in recovery. A lot continues to work against the area. The lack of natural snow and colder temperatures, a dearth of local service workers (due in part to lack of affordable housing) have been challenging. So far this year, fewer trails

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and services have been available. Despite these challenges, the Hunter's lodging is booked solid on enough weekends that life is finally starting to surge back (at least on Friday and Saturday night).

A rollicking and well-attended New Year's party ended 2022 on an optimistic note, and a colder forecast for upcoming winter weeks offered some hope the party was just getting started.

The sprawling Hunter Mountain resort is ground zero for the good times in town. With a few different restaurants and bars to post up at, you'll find the not-so-outdoorsy people staying warm here throughout the day, ready to receive the cold masses from the mountains looking to warm up with a tasty meal and beverage.

Many Hunter Mountain patrons opt to remain on-property during most of their stay, with the convenience of many amenities packed into one general location. But don't forget what the rest of the town has to offer at the foot of the mountain: Small-town charm and big-party energy.

Ronnie Mac Gregor's Pub is the local's choice. The pub menu runs deep with fried classics, perfect for soaking up the wall of alcohol behind the bar. It's stripped-down, bare-bones and divey. The jubilant chaos of a packed Ronnie Mac Gregor's has no parallel

on the mountain. If you come to indulge and be a gracious guest of the late-night stewards of this town, there's a good time to be had at Mac Gregor's. One-star Yelp reviewers wouldn't understand.

Van Winkle's is another no-frills bar and pub, a throwback to a simpler time when the only expectations of patrons was a cold beer, a hot meal, and welcoming service. If you're a foodie looking for an Instagram-worthy dish or a craft cocktail, read on. But if you want to immerse yourself in Hunter local culture, this is where the characters come out. The menu is a grab-bag of nationalities, the portions are generous, and the undistracting ambience puts the focus where it should be: on socializing.



New Year's Eve at Hunter Mountain was a success.



The dining room at Prospect in Hunter.

Jägerberg Beer Hall and Alpine Tavern is a mouthful to say and to experience. Their menu is full of well-reviewed German fare like Bavarian pretzels, sausage and schnitzel. Their beer selection could make a Berliner weep tears of joy. Its early-ish closing hours mean it's not exactly a party destination, but it's one of the best bites in town, and the perfect pregame place to knock a few back.

Hunter Mountain Brewery is yet another solid choice for cuisine and libations in Hunter. A respectable lineup of house-made microbrews is nicely rounded out with a couple of tasty hard seltzers made on the premises. At a glance, the menu looks like your standard pub/brewery fare, but upon closer inspection it's

full of delightful surprises. Bacon-wrapped homemade meatballs slathered in a special sauce? They're called Voodoo Balls. Selection of savory Indian Bowls and naan? Yes, Indian food makes a strong appearance. There's a good selection of gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options. They even love animals so much, they're generally cool with you bringing your dog.

Hilltop Bar and Grill in nearby Tannersville skews more toward the Irish pub category of

bar/restaurants, with a menu of savory snacks and entrees. If Hunter is overflowing with people, this is a good spot to get a little off the beaten path for some shots and solace.

Prospect, the restaurant at Scribner's Lodge, is the sophisticated choice. Patrons enjoy well-crafted plates of high-end cuisine framed by floor-to-ceiling windows. The vibe is chic rustic, and the space buzzes with refined excitement.

Wow, we just crawled a lot of ski bars. After a night like that, may we suggest Hunter favorites Fellow Mountain Cafe or M&J Bagel Store to get you fed, caffeinated and back on those slopes in no time? Now, when was the latest we could check out?

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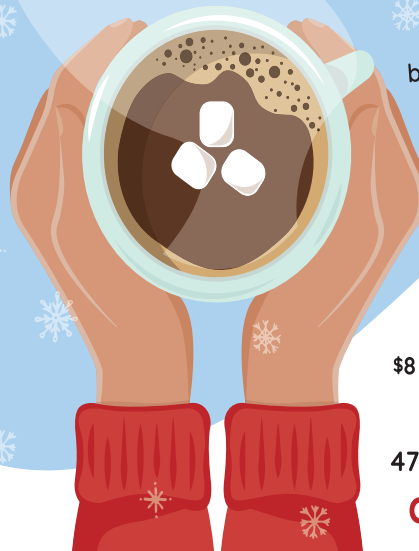
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Winter walk

New Paltz experience combines insights into history, nature, climate and physical fitness

by Erin Quinn

DESPITE THE ONE snowfall and cold snap back in December and last week's modest dusting, winter has yet to unveil her full majesty in the Hudson Valley.

With warming winters and decreased snowfall on the ground most years, it's becoming harder to know when one might be able to strap on cross-country skis or snowshoes and hit the trails. That makes it all the more important to guard those groomed trails for the Nordic ski lovers and enjoy the plethora of paths in the Valley that are dazzling with or without snow.

One of the classic walks in the region that never disappoints, regardless of weather, begins at the Testimonial Gatehouse trailhead, part of the 8000-acre Mohonk Preserve off Route 299 in New Paltz, just past the flats west of the Wallkill River.

The trail's signature feature, the 113-year-old tower, a stone edifice with a large archway that served as the formal entryway to the mountain hotel until 1945. The gatehouse was constructed and completed in October 1908 in honor of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of mountain house co-founders Albert Keith Smiley and Eliza Phelps Smiley.

The trailhead allowing preserve visitors to enjoy the original gateway to the Mohonk Mountain House only opened in May 2020. Prior to the use of auto-



PHOTOS BY ERIN QUINN

Glory Hill and Oakwood Drive Intersection.

mobiles for transport, hotel guests would arrive via train or trolley in downtown New Paltz, where they would take horse-drawn carriages across the Wallkill River and the flats to check in at the gatehouse tower and then be led along carriage roads to the hotel.

Because it's not located top of the ridge, the trailhead is almost never closed due to inclement weather. It's easily accessible and has ample parking.

This walk is stunning right from its beginning. Its stone tower and archway provide an iconic presence in the region's landscape, turning the visitor into a time-traveler back in the splendor of the late nineteenth century.

The pin-oak allee is lined by trees in such symmetry that it's breathtaking. On either side are meadows with red-tailed hawks floating on the wind currents above, looking for field mice. Frosted or

frozen wildflowers and grass make one feel as though they're parting a wave walking toward the mountain.

This walk can be as short or long as one wants it to be — a half-mile, a mile or the beginning of an epic walk through the Mohonk Preserve and Minnewaska State Park and beyond. Those looking for a gust of winter wind and a hardy, invigorating stroll do not have to commit to an arduous hike to get the benefits of being outside.

Beyond the formal entrance to the foothills is the bridge that takes the carriage road across Butternut Road onto Lenape Lane. From there, the options are limitless. Walkers can loop around a 1.5-mile trail that passes two farms and curves back by an old barn, or they can continue up to Duck Pond, Forest Drive and Glory Hill — and beyond.

If it snows, one can slide along, put



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Above, Duck Pond; left, Lenape Lane.

on hiking boots with some treads, slip on traction like yak tracks or microspikes, or if winter unleashes its white powder do some postholing or strap on snowshoes.

This trailhead is less utilized by tourists, which makes it a bit more magical for local folks. It does not disturb groomed ski trails that the Mohonk Preserve and Minnewaska State Park help maintain when the snow accumulates up on Trapps Road, Overcliff and various loops at lakes Minnewaska and Awosting.

While the carriage roads make for smoother hiking and running, those who want single-path trails can enjoy two different size and styled single-track footpaths that are accessed just to the right of Duck Pond.

One is the short but worthwhile hike through the woods that wraps around Duck Pond. The other Duck Pond trail can take winter hikers up a steep and

rocky ascent to Oakwood Drive and eventually Forest Drive, from which they can decide to go back down the path or continue on the carriage roads. This peaceful, quiet hike is a bit on the rigorous side and requires careful footwork when there is snow and ice. If you're up for the challenge, it's a very worthwhile trail that follows along a mountain stream.

Any or all these trails can be found on the Shawangunk Trails map set created by the NY-NJ Trail Conference www.nyn-jtc.org. They can be purchased online or by stopping in Rock & Snow in downtown New Paltz or the Mohonk Preserve's visitors' center on Route 44/55.

Visitors must have a Preserve membership and/or purchase a day pass. For more information on memberships, day-passes, trails or closures go to www.mohonkpreserve.org





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