

OZAUKEE TOURISM

Enjoying Ozaukee County as a winter wonderland

Winter is upon us, but why hide inside and peer at the glistening snow from your couch? Nobody does winter like Wisconsin.

Here, winter is not a time for hibernation, it is a time for outdoor recreation. And there is no need to travel north to enjoy a day in the great outdoors — Ozaukee County has many recreational activities for you to become a winter adventurer conquering the trails, slopes and bodies of water.

Ozaukee County has a treasure trove of public parks that offer something for everyone, year-round, but provide a special kind of beauty in winter.

Walking and hiking

Many picture Cedarburg's beautiful Cedar Creek as a warm-weather opportunity, but anyone who loves nature can take a look at the creekside views at Covered Bridge County Park and not only relish the architecture of one of our area's oldest attractions, but also the beautiful water.

Nothing pops against a bright white, snowy backdrop quite like a red cardinal or bluebird. Winter views of Cedar Creek from downtown Cedarburg are also a treasure, whether it's racing between snow-covered rocks or frozen solid into a picture perfect waterfall over one of the city's two dams.

Lime Kiln Park in Grafton offers scenic postcard winter views with the row of three towering kilns just south of the meandering Milwaukee River. Take the time to tantalize your senses by seeing and hearing the rushing water and ice blocks as they descend over the large rocks.

More sweeping water views are available from the bluffs at Virmond County Park in Mequon, where a newly-constructed public access staircase that will take you down to the beach should be completed later this year.

In the meantime, a hike through the picturesque Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve County Park may be all it takes to drive away those winter blues. Over 1/2 mile of 100-foot bluffs look out onto Lake Michigan, offering tremendous viewing opportunities. Lion's Den Gorge is also adjacent to a 44-acre wetland complex owned by United States Fish and Wildlife Service, giving winter hikers a chance to capture a picture of migratory birds and other wildlife.



Submitted photos

Above, the Ozaukee Interurban Trail is a cleared for a refreshing winter run. **Right**, a haze hangs over Cedar Creek as the Cedarburg Grist Mill looms in the backgrounds.



Harrington Beach State Park in Belgium remains an attraction in the wintertime, with a fantastic architecture of ice rims lining the shore of Lake Michigan. So whether you choose to hike, snowshoe or cross country ski through the park you will feel the snow crunch and soften under your weight, and hear the whispering canopies, creaking tree trunks and chirping cardinals from all around.

Continue your outdoor recreation on the Ozaukee Interurban Trail, a 30-mile paved trail that spans the entire length of Ozaukee County. The municipalities south of Port Washington keep the trail cleared of snow near their urban centers for walking and running, but north of the city of Port Washington the trail offers miles and miles of beautiful cross-country skiing, when there's snow cover.

Winter biking

And don't put your bikes away too soon — with the right tires even novice riders can have a blast biking along a snow trail. The majority of the trail is off-road and perfect for family enjoyment; not to mention you are sure to see lots of wildlife along the way!

Wrap up your day on the trails

with a trip to Tendick Nature Park in Saukville, with its flowing groomed trails for cross-country skiing. The park is also known for its professional 18-hole disc golf course, which is open year-round!

Interested in taking a hike with your dog? All Ozaukee County Parks are dog friendly, as long as your furry friend is leashed! Local favorites include Virmond County Park, Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve, Tendick Nature Park and Hawthorne Hills County Park.

Sledding

For many families, happiness is fresh snow and a sled ... Lime Kiln Park in Grafton boasts a nice sledding hill that offers loads of fun. Access the hill via the parking lot on Green Bay Road, directly across the street from Muttland Meadows. Mee-Kwon County Park in Mequon boasts a popular sledding hill (locally known as "Mule Hill") that has a long shallow grade, perfect for sledding and snowboarding. There are also groomed cross country ski trails at Mee-Kwon County Park and Golf Course.

Ice skating

Typically, in January and February, you can find ice skaters at

both Grafton's Veterans Memorial Park, located on 13th Avenue and Highway 60, and Lion's Park, located on Keup Road, just south of Highway 60. In addition, Mee-Kwon County Park in Mequon offers ice skating on the pond during park hours and as ice conditions allow. A warming house, located at the pond, may also be available during open skate and for those using the sledding hill. No skating or sledding is allowed after dark.

Snowmobiling

Another popular winter activity is snowmobiling. When the ice is thick enough, snowmobilers can often be found on the Milwaukee River between Grafton and Saukville. There are some amazing snowmobile trails throughout the county. The county website offers trail maps and conditions at www.co.ozaukee.wi.us/561/Trail-Maps.

Partner SnowRunners LTD Snowmobile Club is a small group of enthusiasts based in Port Washington who created a trail system to benefit its members, their families and the public. Their 60+ miles of snowmobile trails are located in both Ozaukee and Sheboygan Counties. If you are inter-

ested in learning more about their group, visit them on social media and their website at www.snowrunnersltd.net. For official Trail Conditions call the Snow Phone at 262-238-8259.

Cedarburg Winter Festival

Looking for outside organized family fun? Don't miss Cedarburg's Winter Festival on Feb. 18 and Feb. 19. Peruse the downtown area for outdoor fun like ice sculptures, bed and barrel races on the icy creek, outdoor snow golf, a dog weight pull competition and a community outdoor ice rink in Cedar Creek Park.

There are also ample opportunities to warm up indoors, including shopping, merchant activities, vendors and family fun in the community gym, a Saturday night Battle of the Bands competition and a Sunday morning pancake breakfast.

For information on all these activities and more, go to www.ozaukeetourism.com and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping to make Ozaukee County a wonderful place for all to live, work and visit.