

Weather-Watch on MOUNT WASHINGTON



**MOUNT WASHINGTON OBSERVATORY
PINKHAM NOTCH, NH**

Mount Washington, as the saying goes, makes its own weather. In summer, a quarter-million tourists visit the 6,288-foot summit for the gale-force winds and subfreezing temps as much as for the view, but winter is when New England's tallest mountain—with a top recorded surface wind speed of 231 mph and wind-chill readings of minus-50 degrees—truly earns its formidable reputation. Observatory staffers are so proud of being the “home of the world's worst weather,” they've trademarked the phrase. Even better, they've been sharing the experience for 17 years.

The observatory hosts overnight weather-watching trips through the end of March. Up to nine people pile into a snow tractor for the 90-minute ride to the summit. All visitors get a tour of the 78-year-old observatory and learn how three storm tracks and the mountain's steepness combine to create the notorious conditions. Then specialized lectures and workshops begin, led by guest instructors—perhaps meteorologists, ecologists, or artists—on topics such as weather basics, mountaineering, and outdoor photography. Participants spend time outside experiencing the elements for themselves, then retreat indoors for hot drinks and a meal. They bed down for the night in common-area observatory bunks and wake early enough to watch the sun rise. Then there's another workshop and lunch before everyone heads back down in the snow tractor. You'll come home with a story about New England weather conditions that put Siberia and Antarctica to shame. *\$459 per person for members/\$499 nonmembers, inclusive; trips begin at the base of the Mount Washington Auto Road, Pinkham Notch, NH; 800-706-0432 x225, mountwashington.org.*

SUGAR SOME MAPLES

**TRAPP FAMILY LODGE
STOWE, VT**

Around early March, the maples start to thaw, and at the Austrian-style Trapp Family Lodge—well, we won't annoy you by singing, “The hills are alive with the sound of sap.” The von Trapps, of *The Sound of Music* fame, make their maple sugar the old-fashioned way: They pick up the sap in buckets via horse-drawn sleigh and deliver it to the sugarhouse, where they boil off the water to create Vermont's “liquid gold.” The lodge's 1,200 taps produce 300 gallons each season through late April. Get in on the fun on Saturdays in March, at the traditional Sugar-on-Snow party, where they make a sort of maple taffy of hot syrup and snow and serve it with doughnuts and dill pickles. For the full experience, book a weekend at the 96-room lodge, which dates to 1950 and is convenient to the skiing at Stowe Mountain Resort (but also offers plenty to do on site, thanks to spectacular grounds and recently expanded cross-country trails). *700 Trapp Hill Rd., Stowe, VT, 800-826-7000, trappfamily.com.*



...And for Experts Only

SKI THE CCC TRAILS

Starting in 1933 the Civilian Conservation Corps designed and cut by hand the first ski trails on Vermont's highest peak, Mount Mansfield. When Stowe Mountain Resort installed its first chairlift seven years later, many of these backcountry trails were overshadowed. Hard-core backcountry and telemark skiers still frequent the trails, though, and today these treasures are not simple loops around ponds but rather grueling uphill and exhilarating downhill runs (skilled skiers only, please). Starting near the Octagon, a café and bar reached by Stowe's Forerunner Quad chairlift, the three-mile-long Bruce Trail descends 3,000 feet and ends at the resort's cross-country center, a few hundred feet from the Matterhorn après-ski bar. This is backcountry skiing at its historic best. But be warned—the trails are unpatrolled, so if you get lost or hurt, you're responsible by law for the cost of rescue. Be careful out there!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FREDERICK MCGRATH; MAPLE TAPPING (TOP RIGHT); COURTESY OF MOUNT WASHINGTON OBSERVATORY (BOTTOM LEFT)

HOW TO...



MAKE A SNOW CAVE

Courtesy of the Appalachian Mountain Club, publisher of the *AMC Guide to Winter Hiking and Camping*.

1. Pick a flat spot with deep snow.
2. Using skis or shovels, tamp out a solid surface of more than 8 by 5 feet. Let it set (about 20 minutes).
3. Shovel out the perimeter and pile the snow into a mound about 6 feet high. Pack the mound with the back of a shovel.
4. Stick an avalanche probe or ski pole down through the center of the dome, to mark the center. Let it set (about an hour).
5. With the edge of a shovel, mark an arched entrance (away from the wind), and dig out the dome. (Always post a friend on lookout, in case of snow collapse.) The lookout should circle the dome, watching for thin walls. If you break through, pack on more snow.
6. Dig to a thickness of 1 or 2 feet. A hut this size will fit six or seven very close friends.

To see AMC guys build this shelter, go to outdoors.org/publications/books/snow-shelter.cfm.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES SCHREIBL (SHOWING DEE); COURTESY OF STRATTON MOUNTAIN RESORT (BOTTOM)

SNOWBOARD AMONG CHAMPS

**STRATTON MOUNTAIN RESORT
STRATTON MOUNTAIN, VT**

Don't worry if you couldn't snag those coveted halfpipe and snowboard cross tickets at Whistler—2006 Olympic medalists Shaun White, Hannah Teter, and Lindsey Jacobellis are headed back east for the 28th U.S. Open Snowboarding Championships at Stratton Mountain Resort in March. White is scheduled to perform his signature 1080s (three full rotations) on the new Olympic-sized superpipe (22-foot walls) and advanced terrain park, which moved this year to the Sunrider Supertrail at the Sun Bowl.

Cheer them on, dude, but don't just be a spectator. There's a reason why *Ski* magazine consistently votes Stratton the East Coast's best terrain park. Stratton put snowboarding on the map—it's where Jake Burton inaugurated the sport and where a young Jacobellis took up boarding after her family's vacation house caught fire, burning all the ski equipment.

Little rippers can test their freestyle skills on Burton's Parkway, a kid-friendly area. One step up is Tyrolienne, featuring neophyte tabletops to catch air, and wider, lower rails for grinding. Master Tyrolienne and it's on to Bee-line. Easy-style it (check out the jumps first) or you'll be doing some serious face-plants. Or follow Jacobellis's lead and sweep along the banked turns and rollers on the Bymefide boardercross course. *U.S. Open Snowboarding Championships, 3/15-3/22; 5 Village Lodge Rd., Stratton Mountain, VT, 800-787-2886, stratton.com.*



Get a Local Edge

THE "COMMONWEALTH" BY BRIGHTON'S BEAN SNOWBOARDS



The snappy, Everyman board is a “quiver of one for all conditions and terrain” designed by Northeastern engineering graduates Collin Murray and Mike McGraw, who started building snowboards in their basement in 2006 and selling them last winter. The Commonwealth's newest incarnation includes stainless-steel, rust-proof edges, for sharper carving out there on the New England ice. *\$450, beansnowboarding.com.*

• **FYI** Arnold Arboretum runs a botany class on identifying Boston-area deciduous trees, from buckeyes to hornbeams. *2/27 and 3/6, \$65 members/\$75 nonmembers; 125 Arborway, Jamaica Plain, 617-384-5277, arboretum.harvard.edu.*