

Snowshoeing: Quiet Solace on Boyne Mountain

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When one hears the words “Michigan skiing resorts” the image of downhill skiing likely comes to mind first. But guests of Mountain Run at Boyne also enjoy the splendor of snowshoeing through the pristine snow-covered countryside of northwest Michigan’s Charlevoix County. Because Mountain Run at Boyne is situated on the property of Boyne Mountain Resort, Bluegreen guests have full access to all the Boyne Mountain Amenities,

including the Boyne Nordic Center.

Boyne Mountain, which already had 24 miles of cross-country ski trails, has just added about 3 miles of dedicated, marked snowshoe trails. The property – one of the most beautiful in the nation – also offers many areas which aren’t marked, in which to go snowshoeing. Picture the solace of slowly passing mountain streams and snow-covered hardwood forests, your breath often the only sound to accompany nature’s sparkling white splendor. Postcard-pretty terrain rolls out in every direction, beckoning you to explore. Will you follow someone else’s tracks or be the first to press through new snow?

If you’ve never tried snowshoeing, Boyne Mountain is the ideal place to experience this popular sport. Trekking poles and snowshoes are available for rent on property; the only items you must pack or acquire include a backpack, the right clothing, and a good set of outdoor winter boots: waterproof, insulated, and high-top. If you don’t have your own, boots like this are sold at Boyne Country Sports, the resort’s ski and snowboard shop. Dress warmly in layers, and take energy snacks and plenty to drink. A few paper towels and a camera are also a great idea. As for your cellphone, it will work on the property, so if you want to take it for safety reasons, that’s not a bad idea. “But we recommend turning it off,” says staffer Kirk Ikens, “to enjoy being in the woods.”

Ikens and the rest of the crew at the Boyne Mountain Cross Country Center provide maps for the trail system. “We recommend the buddy system for safety,” he says. “Get out there and enjoy that time with other people. If you’re going by yourself,” he advises, “stop in here and we’ll give you a trail pass. It helps us know the number of people who are ‘out there’ so that all of a sudden if we’re missing somebody at the end of the day we can go look for them.” If you’re going by yourself, explains Ikens, it’s a good thing to always let someone know where you’re going, and how long you plan to be out.

Snow-shoeing is not difficult beyond the endurance needed for longer treks. “Once you get snowshoes on your feet,” says avid snow-shoer and staffer Collin Stackus, “it’s like going for a walk, there’s no lesson required. There’s a binding that attaches to your foot. You strap them to your feet and you walk. There’s no gliding. It’s just a larger platform below your foot.”

There are warming huts throughout the woods, Stackus explains. “You snowshoe out to a warming hut,” he says, “get a fire going, have a sandwich and a drink. It’s a great way to get out and enjoy the

north woods wilderness without buying a lift ticket. It's very popular here. It's just a great way to be able to get out onto the hiking trails and enjoy the wilderness quietly." Wildlife sightings are not uncommon for snow-shoers. Last year, a great horned owl frequented a portion of the trail. It's possible to see wild turkeys, deer, woodpeckers and other birds.

Wonderfully fun as a friends-or-family activity, or a great way for couples to make memories, this rejuvenating sport is good for the soul and body. Until now, you may have imagined that to experience the best of winter, you should ski Michigan. But to see Michigan in all her quiet majesty - snow-covered hills, deep green pines, bright red cardinals and searing blue skies – strap on some snowshoes. With minimal impact on the feet, and very little impact on the environment, snowshoeing is a winter activity in which the only drama is the scenery.

Boyne Mountain's average winter temperature of 26 degrees is comfortable for snowshoeing, and has its own reward. "On the weekends we'll have hot chili and hot chocolate going all the time," says Ikens. "Stop back by for a cup of tea or coffee. Snow-shoeing is one of those things that really makes hot chocolate taste really good," says Ikens. "Wrapping your hands around a nice cup of hot chocolate after you've been outside is a winter treat."

Tips for a Better Snow-Shoeing Experience

Stretch and warm up before you start out

- 2) Take small steps and walk slowly and naturally. Don't lunge.
- 3) Look ahead as you walk.
- 4) Go in a small circle if you need to turn around; don't back up.
- 5) If you are breaking a new trail, switch off; the lead person will tire more easily.
- 6) Use poles to take the load off your legs and knees.
- 7) Wear sunscreen. Reflection from the snow increases the sun's power.
- 8) Always tell someone where you're going, check the weather before you leave, and allow plenty of time to get home before dusk.

Much in the same way a bad sunburn at the beginning of a beach vacation can waylay plans, an overly aggressive snowshoeing trek can cause sore ankles, calves or feet in novices or those who haven't exercised in a while. Use moderation if you're at risk for soreness so you can stay happily mobile during your vacation.

Boyne Mountain Cross Country Center

231-549-6088

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