

NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS • DEC. 13/14, 2025

NEW HAMPSHIRE GUIDE TO WINTER

Activities, events
and destinations
that make our
snowy season fun

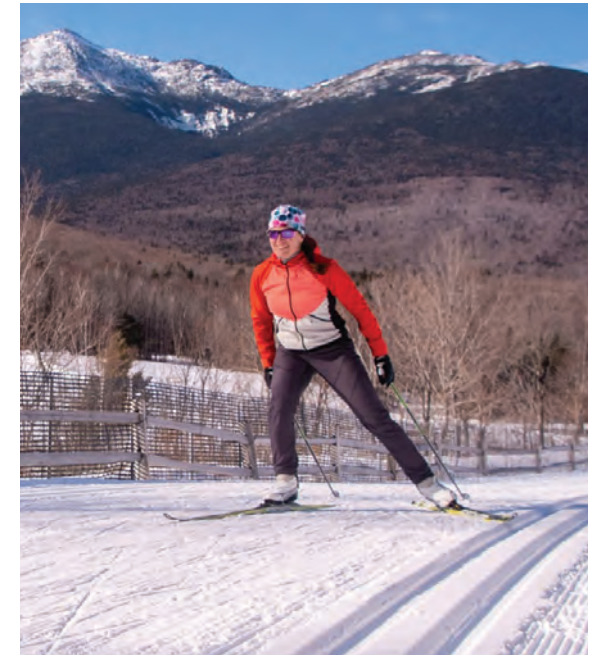
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PHOTO PROVIDED BY SKI NH

Cross-country skiers enjoy the trails of the Jackson Ski Touring Foundation (jacksonxc.org) in the Mount Washington Valley.

Welcome to winter!

Into skiing? Snowmobiling? Skating?

Maybe you prefer spending the day on a frozen lake dangling a baited hook through a hole on the ice.

Or maybe you'd rather enjoy winter from inside a cozy, warm condo or lodge.

No matter how you like your winter, New Hampshire has you covered.


In this section you'll find plenty of ideas to help you enjoy the next few frosty months in the Granite State.

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❄️ **LAKES REGION** ❄️



JOHN KOZIOL

First Day Kayaks on the Winnepesaukee River has become a New Year's Day tradition in Franklin.

No surprise: Ice plays a big part in winter fun around the lakes

By **John Koziol**
Special to the Union Leader

The Lakes Region has a lot to offer this winter, both for participants and spectators, and ice plays a big roll in all of it. Family-friendly, easy to get to and often free or low cost, these events stand out as reminders of why New Hampshire is a special place year-round, but especially in the winter.

Franklin First Day Kayaks and Mill City Park's Annual Polar Plunge: Jan. 1. The festivities technically begin at 10 a.m. but the first kayakers/rafters will be on the Winnepesaukee River at Cross

Mill Road put-in at 8 a.m., floating down the icy Winnepesaukee River and into Trestle View Park in downtown Franklin.

At high noon, volunteers from Mill City Park, which is shaping up to be the first whitewater park in all of New England, will dive into the Winnepesaukee at Trestle View Park for a quick and chilly fundraising dip.

The event features a chili cook-off competition and a beer garden. Proceeds will benefit Mill City Park at Franklin Falls.

For more information, go to www.franklinnh.gov/community-organizations/events/

◆ **17th annual New England Pond Hockey**

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❄️ **LAKES REGION** ❄️

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Classic: Jan. 30-Feb.1 on Meredith Bay.

More than 275 teams from across the U.S. and Canada compete in 500-plus, four-on-four no-goalie games across 26 rinks on Lake Winnepesaukee. Although slap shots are not permitted, the action is fast and furious and the energy levels are high.

Located in the heart of downtown Meredith, the Pond Hockey Classic offers lots of options for dining before and after the competition.

The event was founded by Scott Crowder, who played hockey at the University of Massachusetts. His dad, Bruce, played for UNH and then for the Boston Bruins and Pittsburgh Penguins.

For more information, go to www.pondhockeyclassic.com/newengland

Great Meredith Rotary Fishing Derby: Feb. 7 and 8.

It's based in Meredith, but this Lakes Region tradition is unique in that contestants can land their fish on any freshwater body of water in the state, and, along with ticket-buying non-competitors, can win a chunk of the

\$80,000 in prize money.

Since 1982, the Derby has raised almost \$3 million to benefit local nonprofits.

For more event details and registration information, visit: icefishingnh.com

World Championship Sled Dog Derby: Laconia, Feb. 13-15.

Since 1929, the World Championship Sled Dog Derby has been held in Laconia, weather permitting, and managed by the Lakes Region Sled Dog Club.

The event draws the best mushers from the eastern U.S. and Canada who compete for one of the largest purses in the sport. These are sprint races, which are shorter and feature different dogs (hounds mostly) than in distance events like the Iditarod

Plenty of parking off Old North Main, which is a short walk from start/finish line.

For more information, go to lrsdc.org.

Lakes Region Ice Racing: Sundays from January through March in Moultonborough.

There are, arguably, few things more entertaining than watching cars and trucks racing around a frozen

ice track. The Lakes Region Ice Racing Club offers that, featuring six classes of cars each year on Berry and Lee ponds in Moultonborough, on the northern end of Lake Winnepesaukee.

Find Lakes Region Ice Racing Club on Facebook.

Alton Bay Seaplane Base and Ice Runway: Open weather permitting, usually February into April, Alton Bay on Lake Winnepesaukee.

A bucket list item for all aviators, the Alton Bay Seaplane Base and Ice Runway is the only ice runway located in the lower 48 contiguous U.S. states to be charted by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The ice runway boasts several nearby restaurants that offer flyers the chance to buy a metaphorical "\$600 hamburger" — which represents the cost of time, maintenance and fuel to fly in for the day.

Open and with plenty of parking motor vehicles, the ice runway is a great place to watch planes come in and take off at what the New Hampshire Department of Transportation describes as the busiest airport in the state for its short, chilly season.

For more information, go to <https://tinyurl.com/5a66bbne>



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Enjoy winter in the Queen City – indoors or out

Staff Report

Finding winter fun doesn't require a trip to the ski slopes in the White Mountains. There's plenty to do here in southern New Hampshire, and especially in and around Manchester.

Here's a quick look at some of the highlights:

Live performances

The **Palace Theatre** (palace-theatre.org) on Hanover Street has a busy lineup into February, with several long-run shows.

The Palace's annual musical production of "A Christmas Carol" continues through Dec. 28 with performances Thursdays through Sundays.

Next up is another annual fixture: Recycled Percussion brings their rocking, high-energy spectacle to the stage for nightly performances Dec. 31 through Jan. 4 and Jan. 9-11.

"Rock of Ages," the musical homage to '80s hair bands, takes over for Friday-through-Sunday shows from Jan. 16 through Feb. 8.

Then there's the Palace Youth Theatre's production of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" for four weeknight shows in January.

And you'll find short-run and single-show tribute concerts at the Palace and its little sister, the Rex Theatre on Amherst Street, featuring the music of Michael Jackson, Taylor Swift, the Beatles and more. Plenty to see, hear and experience.

For smaller theater experiences, check out the **Majestic Theatre** and **Theatre KAPOW**.

Majestic (majestictheatre.net) is presenting the comedy "Always a Bridesmaid" with four performances Jan. 23-25 on its home stage at 880 Page St. in Manchester.



PROVIDED BY THE PALACE THEATRE

The Palace Theatre's beloved version of "A Christmas Carol" runs through Dec. 28 this year.

TheatreKAPOW (tkapow.com) is taking its production of "What the Constitution Means to Me" on the road in February for performances at the Win-nipesaukee Playhouse Feb. 6-8 and the BNH Stage in Concord Feb. 13-15.

It's been a long time since the **SNHU Arena** (snhuarena.com) was packing in hockey fans several times a month, but the arena will be hopping this winter with several big events.

The Jonas Brothers will bring their long-running pop act to the arena this week, on Thurs-

day, Dec. 18.

The Harlem Globetrotters bring their hoops hijinx to Manchester for two games on Sunday, Dec. 28.

The arena goes back to its frozen roots to welcome Disney on Ice for a total of eight performances over four days from Jan. 8-11.

Finally, the Ringling Bros. Circus rolls into town for seven shows between Feb. 26 and March 1.

Getting active

It may only have a 200-foot vertical drop, but **McIntyre Ski**

Area (mcintyreskiarea.com) is a winter gem. Thousands of kids have learned to ski or snowboard on this city-owned hill, and it's a pretty good spot for inexperienced grownups to work on their skills in a close-to-home, low-pressure environment. As an added benefit, lift tickets for adults 65+ are free.

If you're not into skiing and riding, McIntyre's eight-lane tubing hill will take you back to your sledding or tobogganing childhood.

If ice is more your thing, public skating is generally offered

two weekday mornings and weekend afternoons at the city's **JFK Arena**. Hockey players have several chances a week for stick-and-puck practice at the **West Side Ice Arena**.

And for those who'd rather have their feet solidly under them, several of Manchester's city parks have recreational trails open for walking, running, fatbiking and cross-country skiing. For details on Manchester Parks and Recreation facilities, go to <https://tinyurl.com/manchrec>.

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❄️ **MANCHESTER** ❄️

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There are also miles of trails available on Manchester Water Works property around Lake Massabesic as well as just down Route 28 Bypass at the Massabesic Audubon Center.

Getting some culture

Manchester’s four top museums have joined forces to offer members of any of the four discount admission to the others. For more information on that deal, visit manchestermuseum-snh.org.

At the **Currier Museum of Art** (currier-museum.org), current exhibits include “Embellish Me” (through March 15) featuring works from the 1970s and ’80s by artists affiliated with the Pattern and Decoration Movement, and “Joined Together” (through Feb. 8) celebrating the 30th anniversary of the

New Hampshire Furniture Masters. The **Aviation Museum of New Hampshire** (aviationmuseumofnh.org) at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport is marking the 60th anniversary of the now-closed Daniel Webster College in Nashua, which had a major aviation program. The museum, which houses an eclectic exhibit of New England aviation memorabilia, will be hosting a DWC reunion in March.

SEE Science Center (see-sciencecenter.org) has a variety of programs and exhibits for kids, and its 2,200-square-foot LEGO model of the Millyard may be more impressive to adults than to the kiddos.

The Millyard Museum (manchester-historic.org), located two floors down from SEE at 200 Bedford St., tracks the history of the Queen City, with a particular emphasis on the great textile mills that put the city on the industrial map of the 19th century.



Skiers make their way through the spray from snowmaking at McIntyre Ski Area in Manchester. McIntyre should be seeing plenty of action during the holiday vacation weeks.

MARK BOLTON/
UNION LEADER FILE

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 ❄️ **NORTH COUNTRY** ❄️

Head north, where winter is a celebration

By John Koziol
Special to the Union Leader

Northern New Hampshire shines in the winter. Beyond being a magnet for skiers and snowmobilers from around the Northeast, there are many special events for outdoor enthusiasts of all stripes.

Here's a sampling:

The Dave Rothstein Jackson Snow Sculpting Event at the Great Glen Trails Outdoor Center, Jan. 30 and 31.

Beginning at noon on Jan. 30, a dozen or more teams from across the Northeast will compete at the Great Glen Trails Outdoor Center, located several miles north of Jackson Village on Route 16, to create a winning snow sculpture from an 8-foot-high, 4-foot-wide cylinder of compacted snow. The sculptures will remain in place, weather permitting. Spectators are welcome; admission is free.

For more information, go to <https://tinyurl.com/jaxsnowsculpt>.

The Nansen Ski Jump State Historic Site, Milan: Various events in January and February.

When it was built in 1936, the 171.5-foot-long "Big Nansen" was the largest steel ski jump of its kind in the U.S. Named in honor of Fridtjof Wedel-Jarlsberg Nansen (1861-1930), a Norwegian polymath and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the "Big Nansen" in 1938 hosted the first U.S. Olympic tryouts.

It later hosted the FIS World Championships in 1939; four U.S. National Ski Jumping championships; a North American championship; Eastern championships, and numerous



JOHN KOZIOL

Ice Castles New Hampshire in North Woodstock is tentatively scheduled to open Jan. 23.

international competitions. It held its last event in March 1985 and was officially abandoned in 1988.

On March 4, 2017, as part of a promotion with Red Bull Media, "The Sleeping Giant" was re-awakened when Olympic ski jumper Sarah Hendrickson, preceded by her teammate Anna

Hoffmann, jumped off the Big Nansen.

Since then, the state and the Nansen Ski Club have worked to bring the jump back to life, building both 20- and 10-meter jumps, with an eye to eventually resurrecting the "Big Nansen" itself and the sport of ski jumping both in New Hampshire and

the Northeast.

On Jan. 17, from 1 to 3 p.m., the Nansen Ski Club will host a free Introduction to Ski Jumping clinic, open to anyone 6 and older.

On Jan. 24, the club is hosting its annual "Art Sled Rally," and on Jan. 25 the jump is the venue for a Junior National Ski Jump-

ing Qualifier.

The Nansen will host a New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association high school jumping meet on Jan. 28.

For more information, go to www.skinansen.com.

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❄️ **NORTH COUNTRY** ❄️

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Ice Castles New Hampshire: Clark Farm Road, North Woodstock. Tentatively scheduled to open Jan. 23, weather permitting.

Icicles are grown in place, drip by drip, to form walls, spires and structure.

The New Hampshire Ice Castle will feature caverns and archways, crawl tunnels, a “Mystic Forest Light Walk,” snow tubing, a “Winter Fairy Village,” sleigh rides and a “Frozen Tap” that will offer adult beverages.

For more information, go to icecastles.com/new-hampshire.

Mt. Eustis Ski Hill, Littleton: Opening soon, weather permitting.

The rope-tow at Mt. Eustis hauled its first skiers in 1939 and remained in service through the 1980s.

In 2016, the ski area was reopened as a com-

munity ski hill thanks to the efforts of Littleton-area residents to “provide affordable access to snowsports in the White Mountains.”

The ski hill, which is funded solely by donations, features a main run, a terrain park, and several off-piste glades.

A suggested \$5 donation covers the cost of a single day of skiing; season passes for children and adults are available.

For more information, go to www.mteustis.org.

Mount Washington Valley Ice Fest: Feb. 5-8 at various locations in the North Conway area.

Billed as “the premier ice-climbing event in the Northeast for over 30 years,” the Ice Fest features clinics and guided climbs.

The clinics and climbs, according to organizers, are “led by professional athletes, certified guides, and seasoned veteran climbers,” to help “broad-

en and develop your climbing skills.”

For more information, call 603-356-7064 or email to guides@climbimcs.com. The Ice Fest is also on Facebook and Instagram.

PRKR MTN Trails, Littleton: open year-round.

Along with the Mt. Eustis Ski Hill, PRKR MTN Trails Inc. is the second nonprofit organization in Littleton offering recreational opportunities. Its mission is to provide “a community-based, professionally maintained multi-use trails for residents and visitors to the Littleton area.”

During the winter months, PRKR MTN grooms 15 of its 25 miles of trails for almost any non-motorized activity, including fatbiking, Nordic skiing and snowshoeing.

The trails are a mix of “classic New England old-school tech trails with a mixture of machine-built



JOHN KOZIOL

Billed as “the premier ice-climbing event in the Northeast for over 30 years,” the Mount Washington Valley Ice Fest features clinics and guided climbs.

flow trails.”

For more information go to www.prkrmtn.org

Team O’Neil Rally School, Dalton: Winter Driving School, Jan. 3, 9, 23 and Feb. 21.

Offering a “car-control and racing school with our own private 600-acre purpose-built mountain facility,” Team O’Neil will help you to better operate your motor vehicle and offers a special program for winter driving.

“Never confuse confidence with competence,” Team O’Neil says. “After a short classroom session, you’ll be driving your own vehicle (on winter tires please!) on our safe and open skidpad and slalom areas through a variety of exercises. You’ll learn how your particular vehicle handles and reacts on snow and ice, as well as

how the safety systems installed in your vehicle (ABS, Trac, DSC, etc) function for and against

you in different situations.”

For more information, go to teamoneil.com.



JOHN KOZIOL

Fatbike riders have plenty of room to ride on the 25 miles of trails at PRKR MTN Trails in Littleton.

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Training in the snow

The **Conway Scenic Railroad** is offering two wintertime excursions this season.

The **Snow Train** is a one-hour round-trip to Conway, running daily during school vacation weeks and weekends into early March.

Prices start at \$27 for adults in coach class, up to \$52 for Premium Dome car seating.

The **Winter Mountaineer** is the snow-season version of the railroad's Crawford Notch train, offering spectacular views of the White Mountains on a four-hour, 50-mile round trip.

Offered weekends into early March, prices range from \$83 for coach class to \$198 for Premium Dome seating.

Info and reservations: conwayscenic.com

Stroll or skate though history

A Christmas-season fixture on the Seacoast, the Candlelight Stroll at Portsmouth's **Strawbery Banke Museum** continues Friday through Sunday evenings through Dec. 21. This year's theme is "Mid-winter Melodies." Admission for non-members is \$35 for adults and \$17.50 for kids 3-17.

Meanwhile, the museum's Labrie Family Skate rink is open for the season for public skating (\$16 for 90-minute blocks) at various times every day.

During the Candlelight Stroll, Currier & Ives skating shows take place at 6 and 7:30 p.m.

Info and tickets: strawberybanke.org

The Cog in winter

Throughout the winter, the **Mount Washington Cog Railway** runs multiple daily trains to its Waumbek Station, located in an Alpine meadow below tree line at roughly 4000 feet elevation.

On a clear day, passengers can take in spectacular panoramic vistas from the southern Presidential Range to the Canadian border during their 25-minute stop at Waumbek, where they can also enjoy complimentary hot refreshments, warming huts and a blazing fire pit.

Tickets for the one-hour round trip start at \$54 for adults and \$40 for kids 4-12.

Info and reservations: thecog.com

Ice & Snow fun in Keene

Downtown Keene's 23rd annual **Ice and Snow Festival** takes place Saturday, Feb. 7, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a full day of family-friendly fun.

Professional ice carvers will be working their artistic magic in Central Square while scavenger hunts, children's train rides, pony rides, buskers, roaming circus acts and more entertain visitors.

Look for updates on Facebook

Gunstock by torchlight

Gunstock Mountain Resort in Gilford will be hosting a torchlight parade and fireworks display, open to the public, on Sunday, Dec. 28, from 4:30-7 p.m.

As soon as darkness falls, a serpentine formation of skiers and riders carrying torches will make their way down the mountain. A grand fireworks display will follow the torchlight parade.

Gunstock's Barrel Bar & Grille will be open for dining and drinks, and feature live music leading up to the event.

More info: gunstock.com

Snow Coach to treeline

The **Mount Washington SnowCoach** — driven by four tracks rather than wheels — brings guests on a narrated tour up to the tree line on the Mount Washington Auto Road starting from Great Glen Trails Outdoor Center.

Sit warm and cozy inside the coach as you gain 3,000 feet of elevation, but hop out at the top of the tour to experience and photograph the amazing views.

SnowCoach tours are offered multiple times daily, weather permitting, and last about 90 minutes. Tickets for adults are \$79 (\$69 for seniors 68 and up), \$49 for kids 4-12, and \$20 for little ones 3 and under.

Info and reservations: greatglentrails.com

Skiing after dark

Can't get away during the day to hit the slopes? Several New Hampshire ski areas offer night skiing on a regular basis. The most offerings are at:

Crotched Mountain in Bennington: Tuesday through Saturday until 9 p.m.

Gunstock in Gilford: Tuesday-Thursday until 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday until 9.

Pats Peak in Henniker: Nightly except Sundays starting in January until 9, Fridays and Saturdays until 10.

Other ski areas offering night skiing with more limited days or hours include **Cranmore, Granite Gorge, McIntyre** and **King Pine**.

More info: skinh.com/activities/night-skiing

Winter Fest in Concord

Intown Concord makes the most of the season with its eighth annual Winter Fest on Saturday, Jan. 24 from 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

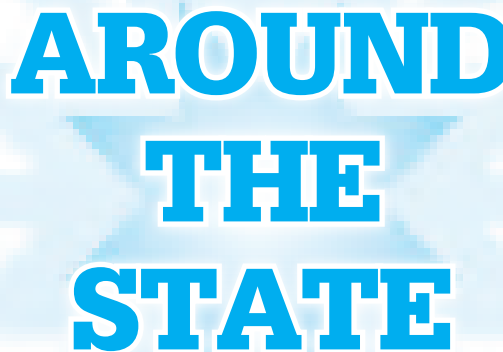
Ice carving, food trucks, and an ice bar sponsored by Arts Alley will be part of the fun.

The ice carving begins Friday outside the State House with a preview from 3-9 p.m.

On Saturday, Red River Theatres hosts a showing of the animated adventure "Balto" at 10 a.m. (tickets \$5) before the rest of the activity starts at 11.

Other events in Concord that week include the Concord Garden Club's Art & Bloom exhibit (Thursday through Saturday at Kimball Jenkins) and the Black Ice Pond Hockey Tournament (Friday through Sunday at White Park).

More info: members.intownconcord.org



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