

Go out and play!

Embrace the cold and do something fun

By David Manweiler

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Winter in Indiana doesn't have to trigger grouching about icy car windows, grumbling about snow depths and threatening — again — to move to Florida.

Outside your home are a variety of winter activities for families and students of all ages on holiday break or later. A little cross-country skiing along a quiet trail is good for the body; the beauty of what's out there is good for the soul.

Check out these familiar and some not-so-well-known winter recreation opportunities. Just make sure to call ahead for snow and weather conditions before piling into the car:

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2004 Star file photo

DOWHILL RACERS: A toboggan drops from the start of the run as others wait their turn at the toboggan run at Pokagon State Park near Angola.

Zoom, zoom, zoom!

These are the numbers: 30 seconds; a half-mile; two lanes; 50 and 35 mph.

It would take a new Hoosier or a non-Hoosier to not know the topic is the toboggan run at Pokagon State Park in northeast Indiana. It's been an Indiana institution for 70 winters.

Roughly 90,000 people a year rent a toboggan — for \$10 an hour — and risk sore backs or very tired legs lagging it up steps to the top of a wooden tower for a 30-second, half-mile, gravity-aided ride down a refrigerated lane, reaching a top speed of 35 mph. Then, if there's time, they'll carry the 45- or 55-pound toboggan up for another trip.

Here's some advice: Arrive early, as in

9 a.m., an hour before the run opens. Show up at 10 a.m. and you could be on a waiting list. The park rents 60 toboggans for one hour, so everyone should get at least one ride during the hour.

Other restrictions: No cameras, no food, no more than four on a toboggan and no charge cards.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekends through Feb. 26 and daily for holiday-breakers from Dec. 22 to Jan. 3 except for 5 p.m. closings on Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. Closed Dec. 25.

◆ Pokagon State Park, 450 Lane 100 Lake James, Angola, (260) 833-2012, www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/properties/park_pokagon.html