

IOWA LIVING Skiing facilities in Iowa

By JULIE HOPKIN
What? You say, skiing in Iowa? That's right. And just the kind of skiing usually associated with flat ground — cross-country skiing or ski touring as it is called.

There's downhill skiing in Iowa, too. The sport of presidents (everyone watched Jerry Ford establish ski at Vail over the holidays), remains the country's most popular winter sport. It's downhill skiing in Iowa, too. The sport of presidents (everyone watched Jerry Ford establish ski at Vail over the holidays), remains the country's most popular winter sport.

has come to the Hawkeye state. "We've experienced a 15-20 per cent increase in downhill skiing over the past year," says Mrs. Leo Stutz, operator of the Ski Valley resort in Boone. Similar figures are cited by other Iowans.

"We've had a regular increase year after year," says Jerry Zimmerman, operator of the Hamburg Winter Playground in Hamburg. "In fact, I'd say the number of intermediates has doubled over the past five years. We now have about 120 persons a day skiing on slopes."

The interest in skiing in the Des Moines area has been on the upward trend, according to Bob Bigger, director of parks and recreation for the city, which runs the two-Ski House. "Last year we had 1,850 skiers and our runs were open 52 times."

He attributes the increased demand for ski facilities to "a number of factors, including good home programs which help beginners grasp the fundamentals right away, television, the Olympic word of mouth, and social factors. Whatever it is, more people get the bug, and get to be like those who, right now, are having a terrific time in it."

Linda Bryan, from Pine Valley Resort in Montezuma, says they "average 400

skiers a weekend, 200 a day." Many of them are regulars who come every weekend from around Des Moines where they are newcomers who have heard about the sport and want to give it a try.

Springing cross-country
Operators of sporting goods shops around the state agree with the upward assessment of the skiing trend.

Mrs. William Pugh, operator of the Ski Racquet in Omaha, the only such store in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area, says "skiing activity has increased 15 per cent over last year, with retail sales even higher than last." She attributes much of the interest in the area to downhill skiing, with the ratio "about 85 per cent of sales in downhill equipment, 15 per cent of sales in cross-country," adding, "I've had to depend on cross-country skis to live, we'd starve."

The Peoria-based owner of Kuebler's Sports Center in Des Moines, says "this is a strong season for ski equipment sales far greater than last year." The interest in his area is reflected in his club membership, with "the Skisiders Ski Club having a total membership of almost 400 members."

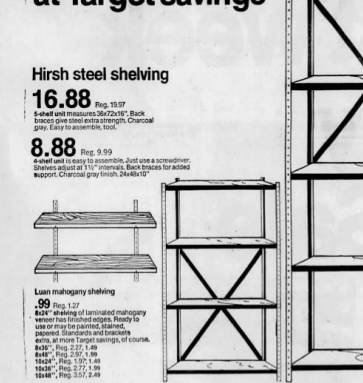
The Sioux City area sales are "on the



Map showing locations of skiing facilities in Iowa: Hamburg, Waterloo, Boone, Council Bluffs, Des Moines, and Mount Mansfield.



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