

Winter Fun In The Ozarks

(By The Star's Travel Editor)

Lake Ozark, Mo.— Spend a winter vacation in the Ozarks? A decade ago the proposal would have seemed improbable. But a few seasons have brought a big difference.

Now, during what used to be a very off season at the Big Dragon, you can:

- Ski at a series of slopes for beginners and intermediates.
- Ice skate at two rinks.
- Fish for crappie and other catches at 23 heated docks.
- Swim at an indoor pool—or relax at sauna baths.
- Enjoy excellent food and first class entertainment at several lodges or motels.

Indeed, the winter season at the big lake begins Thanksgiving and extends into March. For some key weekends, and the Christmas period, reservations have begun to roll in at various resorts. Among major resorts open all year are Tan-Tar-A, Lodge of the Four Seasons, Wulff Harbor, Mai Tai and Holiday Inn.

The bulk of activity at the lake is centered at Tan-Tar-A resort simply because more winter vacation facilities have been constructed there. The latest innovation is an indoor skating rink built at a cost of \$200,000. It opened last month.

"This is one of the finest rinks, we believe, in the Midwest," commented Burton Duenke, owner and developer of Tan-Tar-A. "We've hired a professional instructor and operator and installed a big supply of rental skates for everyone."

On a recent weekend, the rink seemed to me to be quite busy during the three daily sessions. It appears likely to become much more crowded as the season progresses. Johnny Ray, the pro, formerly skated in Ice Capades.

"We have a great many people coming here to skate from surrounding communities on the lake," he said. "The rink is open both for guests of our resort and the general public."

ANOTHER NEW rink will be operated at the Lodge of the Four Seasons on the Horseshoe Bend peninsula beginning later in the season. This will be an outdoor facility; skaters will be able to look out across the big lake. The Lodge, most luxurious resort in the region, stays open all season and also offers skeet shooting, horseback riding (and some sleigh riding) through most of the winter.

Skiing which began last winter at Tan-Tar-A expects another big season. New are a 1,200-foot slope for novices and intermediates and a 500-foot



SILVER SKATES IN THE OZARKS—This is the new \$200,000 ice rink at Tan-Tar-A resort near Osage Beach at the Lake of the Ozarks. The facility has begun to attract crowds of winter vacationists.

beginners slope. In addition, other slopes include two of 800 feet each. Tow ropes and T-bars are available. A professional ski patrol is on duty. Manager of the ski area, Ernst (Toni) Krasovic, says skiing will begin Thanksgiving week depending on temperature. The lodge uses snow-making machines, but the mercury must be below freezing for satisfactory operation.

"We run the machines 24 hours a day when the weather is right," Krasovic said. "We can get a good hard pack of snow. Of course, any natural snow we have supplements that. We expect to have as many as 1,000 skiers on our busier weekends."

Tan-Tar-A ski lodge features a cafeteria, ski shops for rental and sales of clothing and equipment. A team of instructors headed by Luggi Baer of Innsbruck, Austria, assists beginners and novices. The ski area will be open every day of the week. There's a first aid room, too.

But skiing here (as elsewhere) can hardly be regarded as inexpensive. A weekend of ski activity at Tan-Tar-A can run from \$30 to \$100 or more depending on accommodations, rental and your general schedule of activity on the slopes.

BUT EVEN if you don't ski or skate, you can have a pleasant time at an Ozarks lodge during the winter. Special Saturday and Sunday night buffets with real gourmet selections are specialties. (A few years ago, who ever heard of caviar at the Lake of the Ozarks?) Bars

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and restaurants feature bands, combos and singers. A fashion show and special acts also are presented at Tan-Tar-A on occasion. The Lodge of the Four Seasons has bingo and bridge tourneys.

Of course, many warm weather attractions have closed down for the season. Outdoor swimming, boating, water skiing and similar pastimes have ended. But you can still tour area caves and museums.

Overall, the new "off-season" emphasis at the big lake seems a happy development for Middlewesterners who seek a close-by weekend vacation retreat. Much more development, of course, would be desirable—perhaps an ad-

ditional ski facility. Maybe even such novelties as a winter carnival or sled dog races. Why not?

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