

Ski slopes beckon all

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The state's "Mountain Removal Project," spoofed on highway billboards, did leave behind a few slopes long enough for ski runs.

But after Bottineau Winter Park, Fort Ransom Ski Area, Frostfire Ski Resort near Walthalla and Lake Region Winter Sports Inc. near Devils Lake, area skiers look to the south and west.

To the south there are Deer Mountain and Terry Peak in the Black Hills and Great Bear Ski Area near Sioux Falls.

But it is Montana that draws the biggest crowds of skiers, including plenty of North Dakotans.

The Big Sky state dominates the regional ski scene with hundreds of miles of Rocky Mountains covered in snow for six months of the year.

Red Lodge Mountain, about an hour's drive southwest of Billings; Bridger Bowl, just north of Bozeman; Big Sky Ski Resort, about 35 miles south of Bozeman; and Big Mountain at Whitefish are some of the most popular Montana resorts.

Ski North Dakota

Back home in North Dakota, Bottineau Winter Park usually offers the first skiing of the season. The ski area is located eight miles north and a mile and a half west of Bottineau.

Winter Park manager Craig Larson said the slopes will be open today.

Winter Park (telephone 263-4556) has natural and machine-made snow. An adult, weekend lift ticket is \$11, and \$7 for kids 13 and under.

Frostfire Mountain near Walthalla has been open for a week, according to owner Richard Johnson. It is located six miles west of Walthalla with three of nine runs and one of three chairlifts open on natural and manmade snow.

Frostfire (telephone 549-3600) offers ski rental and lessons. A lift ticket is \$15.50 on weekends and holidays for adults, \$6 for ages 6 through 12, and is free for preschoolers.

Lake Region Winter Sports Inc. will open when more snow has fallen — probably in December.

LRWSI is sponsored, managed and operated by the service clubs of Devils Lake and is located 8.5 miles south of Devils Lake on Highway 29. For more information, call 662-5618 or 662-2295.

Ski hours will be from noon to 5 p.m. on weekends. A day of skiing costs \$16 and includes a lift ticket, boots, poles and skis, according to Cliff Olson of LRWSI.

At Fort Ransom Ski Area about 15 miles west and north of Lisbon, the opening of the ski season depends on Mother Nature. That's usually before Christmas.

The ski area is open Wednesdays from 4 to 10 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tow tickets are \$7 for adults, \$6 for juniors and \$3 for children. On

Wednesday, tow tickets are \$1 less.

Ski rental packages are \$7 and there is a cafeteria open during ski hours. For ski information at Fort Ransom, call 282-5733.

For information about the snow conditions in North Dakota, call the Frostline at 1-800-472-2100 in North Dakota and 1-800-437-2077 out of state. The Frostline is updated each Wednesday.

Off to Montana

Snow is already piling up in the Rockies and ski conditions should be great this year.

Red Lodge Mountain opened Wednesday. Lift tickets are \$18 per day for adults, and \$9 for ages 12 and under.

"We're a family ski area," said Marcella Manuel of the ski lodge. "We have a Ski Wee program for children ages 3 to 6. It's a learn-to-ski program, not a daycare. It costs \$25 for a full day, \$20 for a half-day and includes lessons, equipment and a lift ticket."

Red Lodge has a 2,016-foot vertical drop, four double chair lifts, one triple chair lift and a handle tow for more than 30 slopes and trails. One of the best-known trails to Bismarck-Mandan area skiers is the Lazy M, a 2.5-mile intermediate cruising run, which is already open, Manuel said.

If you want a little personal attention, Manuel said Central Reservation 1-800-444-8977 will take care of you.

"You basically call them and tell them how long you want to stay," Manuel said. "They can book rooms, ski rental, lessons, have discounted lift tickets and can even make a dinner reservation downtown for you."

Big Sky of Montana, located south of Bozeman, opened for daily skiing a week ago. It has 40 slopes, half for intermediate skiers.

Lift tickets are \$20 per day or \$22 per half-day for adults, \$15 per day or \$12 per half-day for ages 12 and under.

Lodging, meals, lessons and rental equipment are available. For more information, call 1-800-542-4498.

Bridger Bowl, 16 miles northeast of Bozeman, will open Dec. 15 with weekend skiing by the end of November. "We had some pretty good snow but a 60-degree day at the base of the mountain melted away much of it," said Holly Little of Bridger Bowl.

There's still two feet of snow at the mountaintop and we're looking for more, Little said.

Lift tickets at Bridger Bowl will be \$20 for adults, \$9 for children 12 and under and \$12 for those 62 and over.

Little said reservations for skiing, lessons and rental equipment, travel, food, lodging and other winter recreation can be made by calling 1-800-225-9606.

The 35th annual Jim Bridger Days will be one of the highlights of the ski season at Bridger. Scheduled for Jan. 12 to 15, they celebrate the opening of the resort.

Big Mountain at Whitefish, Mont., will be open Friday, snow permitting. The western Montana ski resort has undergone extensive renovation and the final touches are being added to the \$4.8 million

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