

Make the most of winter with outdoor adventures



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Meet the Huskies: Explore the winter countryside with a team of Siberian huskies. Winterdance Dogsled Tours organizes half-day and multi-day dogsled tours near Haliburton (from December to March) for about \$190 per person, hot-chocolate and snacks included. Share the track with moose, foxes, deer and bears. Winterdance is Canada's only Siberian Husky kennel to finish both Alaska's 1,000 mile-Iditarod and 1,000-mile Yukon Quest. See winterdance.com. (Handout)

Christmas is over and now we settle in for winter -- a time to either hibernate, head south or embrace the cold and snow with sense of outdoor adventure. Here are a few winter-friendly ideas for getting active outside in Ontario and beyond:

GOING TO THE DOGS

-- Meet the Huskies: Explore the winter countryside with a team of Siberian huskies. Winterdance Dogsled Tours organizes half-day and multi-day dogsled tours near Haliburton (from December to March) for about \$190 per person, hot-chocolate and snacks included. Share the track with moose, foxes, deer and bears. Winterdance is Canada's only Siberian Husky kennel to finish both Alaska's 1,000 mile-Iditarod and 1,000-mile Yukon Quest. See winterdance.com.

-- Wilderness Camps: North of Huntsville, Ont., South River's Algonquin Dog Sled Adventures feature one- to five-day mushes through the Algonquin region from \$199. Trips cover 30 to 50 km per day to wilderness camps, where participants sleep in heated tents. Round-trip transportation from Toronto is available. See wildernessadventures.ca.

SKIJORING

-- Bring Your Dog: Skijoring -- a cross between cross-country skiing and traditional dog sledding -- sees skiers pulled by dogs along a track. Near Toronto, King City's Dog Paddling Adventures teaches the basics of the sport. The group will also teach your dog how to pull you on skis through the snow. Day tours start at \$120, including breakfast, lunch and snacks for you and Fido. See dogpaddlingadventures.com.

-- Find a Quiet Bay: Overnight skijoring tours are organized by the Quiet Bay Log Motel near Magnetawan, Ont. Packages include instruction on working with the dogs, plus breakfast and use of the hot tub. All tours are out of the motel, which calls itself Magnetawan's "action headquarters" for not only skijoring, but also cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and dogsledding. See quietbaylog.com.

SKIING

-- ALPINE SNOWPASS: The Canadian Ski Council's annual Snowpass program is back with some changes this year. The Snowpass offers free skiing and snowboarding for Canadian kids in Grades 4 and 5. While there used to be regional restrictions, new this winter, kids can use their passes at participating ski areas anywhere in Canada. Children born in 2002 or 2003 are eligible for the pass, which offers three free lift passes at each participating ski area, plus discounts on lessons and equipment rentals. There are 149 ski areas participating in the Snowpass program this season. Apply online at snowpass.ca.

-- CROSS COUNTRY: The Haliburton Highlands Nordic Trails Association maintains 70 km of trails throughout Haliburton County, an approximately 2.5-hour drive northeast of Toronto off Hwy. 35. For overnight stays and equipment rentals, Sir Sam's Inn has reduced rates in early January. The inn's Jump into January package (Jan. 1-20, from \$185 per couple) includes lakeside accommodation with fireplaces, full country breakfasts, and access to indoor and outdoor facilities. See skihaliburton.com and sirsamsinn.com.

ICE-CLIMBING

-- Beyond Skiing: For winter adventure beyond the skis and poles, consider ice climbing in British Columbia's Coast Mountains. Canada West Mountain School near Whistler organizes single-day frozen-waterfall climbs led by members of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. Focus is on technique, skill and confidence-building. See themountainschool.com.

-- Muskoka Ice: Muskoka Outfitters near Bracebridge lead Introduction to Ice Climbing adventures from January to March. Climb ice falls along the granite of the Canadian Shield, about two hours north of Toronto off Hwy. 11. Equipment is included; single-day packages start from \$149 per person. See muskokaoutfitters.com.

SNOW-CATting

-- Something new: Kimberley Snowmobile Adventures near Kimberley, B.C., is using "snowcats" for Rocky Mountain wilderness journeys. These massive vehicles -- most often used for trail grooming and "cat-skiing" -- have been repurposed for 2.5-hour Snowcat Cruises. Passengers ride in a heated cab wrapped in a warm blanket while exploring the Columbia Valley. Add-ons include bonfire roasts and steak dinners. See snowmobilekimberley.com.

OUTDOOR ODYSSEYS

-- Do it all: Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve is a privately owned, 28,000-hectare swath of wilderness in the Haliburton Highlands offering snowmobiling, winter camping and snowshoeing. Its Wolf Centre includes a 6-hectare enclosure, home to two alpha wolves, their offspring and their siblings. Accommodations are available at Haliburton Forest's Base Camp--lofted log cabins with fireplaces and cooking facilities. See haliburtonforest.com.

-- Learn Winter Camping: Kingston's Frontenac Provincial Park will host a winter trip planning workshop on Jan. 12. The session will cover winter back-country trip planning, including route selection and assessment, safe forms of winter travel, shelters, clothing and equipment. A daily vehicle permit is the cost of admission; preregistration is required. See frontenacpark.ca.

OUTDOOR PACKAGES

-- Ontario Tourism has dozens of outdoor packages listed at ontariooutdoor.com. For winter adventure suggestions throughout Canada, see the Adventure and Sports section of canada.travel.

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