

WINTER OUTDOOR RECREATION



Sledding

It's one of the joys of childhood, but please remind the young ones to sled down the middle of the hill and walk up the sides to avoid the dreaded "bowling alley" scenario and potential injury. Here are the go-to hills:



Lincoln Park: Located at Russell Avenue and Lakewood Place in Aurora, this is a gentle hill suitable for young children and beginners.

McCullough Park: Launch from the Prisco Community Center parking lot at 150 W. Illinois Avenue and enjoy Fox River views on the way down.

Waubonsie Lake Park: A bit steeper, this sled area at Montgomery and Kautz roads is rated as intermediate.

Oakhurst Forest Preserve: The big hill on Fifth Avenue, just west of Kautz Road, offers the fastest and steepest sledding in the area and is maintained by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County.

Ice Skating

The Park District maintains two outdoor skating areas – one on each side of Aurora – and keeps the surfaces clear of snow.

East: Wheatlands Park pond – Located at Barrington and Spinnaker drives.

West: Splash Country Water Park pond – 195 S. Barnes Road, next to the water park.



All skaters must heed the flags at each site. A green flag signals safe conditions (ice thickness of 6 inches or greater), but if a red flag is flying, skating is prohibited.

Snowshoeing

Snowshoeing makes it possible to walk on top of the snow without falling through - no matter how deep the snow. Snowshoeing is permitted in any of the District's 159 parks and throughout the 44-mile network of trails. Enjoy the peace, beauty and serenity of winter in the parks.

Snowshoe rentals at Red Oak: Whenever there is three inches or more of snow on the ground, snowshoes are available for rent seven days a week at the Red Oak Nature Center. For \$5, you can rent a pair of Atlas 925 snowshoes – poles included – to navigate across the white stuff.



Reserve a pair by calling 630-897-1808. Rented snowshoes may be used anywhere, but must be returned 30 minutes before Red Oak closes. Rentals must be reserved by someone 18 years or older with a valid driver's license; a waiver form needs to be filled out as well. Payments may be made by cash or check at the time of rental; no credit cards.

Cross Country Skiing

Where there's snow, there's skiing. Unlike downhill, Nordic skiing requires no expensive lift ticket. Free fun is literally right out the door. Here are some local favorites that involve minimal road crossings:



***Fox River Trail:** Start in North Aurora on either side of the State Street Bridge and stride northward. Both sides are wooded, peaceful and beautiful. The more ambitious can travel a loop to Batavia, crossing the river at the Clark Island bridges.

Virgil Gilman Trail: Either trailhead at Prairie Street or Galena Boulevard is a good starting point. Heading westward, skiers will enjoy a rustic glide, all the way to Waubensee College. Blackberry Creek parallels much of the route, further enriching the scenery.

Waubonsie Lake Trail: This popular network of trails can be accessed at Waubonsie Lake Park (off Kautz Road) and from the parking lot at the Eola Community Center. One tour around Waubonsie Lake on skis is all it takes for this destination to be added to the favorites list.

Stuart Sports Complex/Jericho Lake – A sprawling expanse of snow – 190 acres worth – provides plenty of room for skiers to roam to their heart's content.

The above trails are not groomed, relying instead on skiers to carve tracks – so, the more skiers who use the trails, the better the tracks.

*On the east side of the Fox River, classic tracks will be groomed between State Street bridge and Lippold Park when there are six inches or more of snow.