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Playing in the snow

Hoboken Ski Club takes winter to exciting heights

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Whether they're skiers or snowboarders, or if they just like getting out and meeting new people, members of the Hoboken Ski Club (HSC) are cutting up trails across the northeast with yearly adventures into the mountainous west and even Europe.

With an estimated 500 members in the Hoboken-based club, there's no shortage of skiing aficionados to be found in the area.

Skiing in a winter wonderland

Ever dream of gliding down a snowy mountain in a picturesque location? How about Breckinridge, Colo.; Jay Peak, Vt.; or Cortina, Italy?

The HSC offers local weekend trips and longer excursions to Europe as part of their winter season.

And even newbies to the club, or the bunny trail for those new to skiing, will be in good company. Members cover a wide range of experience levels and are always willing to help. And there's no disadvantage to being new to the club - friends are made very quickly.

"My first trip to Jay Peak I think I knew two people in the club," says Adam Weissman, now second term HSC president.

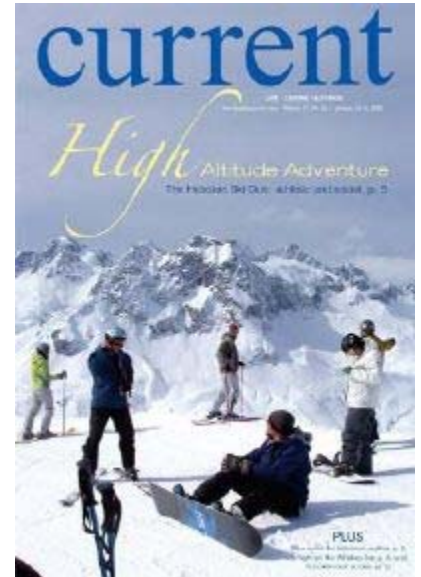
Weissman says that Jay Peak is a favorite because "it's really a great, hardcore skier's mountain."

He's been skiing most of his life, but while he lived in Hoboken for two years, he didn't get out to the slopes until he discovered the Hoboken Ski Club.

And from his first trip experience through his time as president, Weissman can attest to the fun and friendly rapport the club's members share.

"By the end of the trip, you probably know most of the people," Weissmann says, adding that most of the trip people are talking and just having fun together. "My idea of a successful trip is not having to put a movie in going up (on the bus)."

As Weissman explains, the advantage is clear. "Besides skiing and snowboarding, we are part of a greater club called the New Jersey Ski Council, and one of the great benefits of



SKIING ABROAD - The Hoboken Ski Club takes to the slopes wherever the best "powder" may be, including the international slopes high in the beautiful snowy mountains of Austria, Italy, and Canada.

being a member of the council is that we're allowed to get discount vouchers, where instead of people going up and spending \$70 or \$80 for a ticket, the council buys bulk tickets, and you easily save 25 percent on most of the mountains ... If you buy two lift tickets through our voucher program, you've basically paid for your membership."

Melanie Cini, a 26-year-old saleswoman, joined the HSC soon after moving to Hoboken in October 2005.

Cini went on her first trip after being a member for only three weeks, and she says it was a great vacation and the people were wonderful. "After the first trip, I wanted to get more involved."

According to Weissman, "The best way to get involved and to meet people is to run a trip, and we encourage it."

In that spirit, Cini is running her first trip - Stowe, Vt. on President's Day weekend. She's very excited that the trip sold out as soon as it went on sale.

Cindy Kirk, who joined the HSC a month ago, has only been skiing twice. She enjoys the sport's athletic and challenging nature, and her first skiing getaway with the club will be the Stowe trip.

"I just moved to Hoboken in mid-November from Alabama, and I didn't know anybody here, so I joined because I thought it would be a good way to meet people," says Kirk. "It's been fun. The people are really nice there, and everybody was really open to meeting me."

More to the club than just skiing

Not into skiing? No problem!

"Believe it or not, we have people in our club who don't ski, who will go on [one of our trips] to Italy or Austria and have no desire to ski," says Weissman.

And why would someone join and go on their trips if not to take to the slopes? "It's a great way to make friends, go shopping or sightseeing," said Weissman.

And the name shouldn't deter potential new members based on their interests or location. The snowboarders out there are more than welcome at the Hoboken Ski Club - two past presidents of the club have been snowboarders.

Ski Coordinator Gene Sackman is a snowboarder.

"I've been a snowboarder my entire life. I've never skied," says Sackman, pointing out that the percentage of skiers to snowboarders in the club is approximately 50/50. "The skier-to-snowboarder relationship within the club is so intertwined that we've never felt it to be a concern. People just want to enjoy themselves on the mountain."

Sackman says the snowboard lets him "float on powder" and do some things that skiers can't.

"I moved to Hoboken and I didn't know anybody to go ahead and snowboard with, and I

ended up doing a search online and found the HSC," Sackman explains, saying that since he joined seven years ago, he's formed lifelong friendships there, which is an encouraging factor he tries to keep going. "The passion that I try to build within the club is to ensure that everyone's happy."

Year-round activities

With activities running year-long, spring and summer events include trips to see Mets and Yankees games (home and away), a spring getaway to a dude ranch, horseback riding, rafting, kayaking, rifle shooting, wine tasting tours, paintball trips, and anything else members can think of and are able to gather enough interest to organize.

Also, membership spans more of Jersey than just Hoboken, as well as New York, and there are even a few members living in Colorado who mail their fees and meet up with the club at their destination.

The only restriction is that members must be at least 21 years old - there are fun outings to area bars, cocktail parties on the trips, and the weekly meetings are Tuesdays at Willie McBride's, 616 Grand St. in Hoboken, at 8:30 p.m. in the back room. For more information, visit www.hobokenskiclub.com.

HSC upcoming trips:

Sugarbush, Vt.: Jan. 18 to 21

Jay Peak, Vt.: Feb. 7 to 10

Cortina, Italy: Feb. 22 to March 1

Killington, Vt.: March 7 to 9

Lake Placid, N.Y.: March 28 to 30

Comments on this story can be sent to Mpaul@hudsonreporter.com.

Interested in snowboarding? Here's what you'll need to know...

First, you'll need to determine **what type of snowboarding** you'd like to do. There are three basic categories the sport falls under: freeride, freestyle, and freecarve/race. Freeride snowboarding is for the average person riding down terrain. Freestyle is an extreme-sport inspired style of snowboarding where athletes incorporate ramps, half-pipes, rails, etc. Freecarve, or race inspired snowboarding, is a type reserved for the dedicated speedster looking to ride down the mountain as fast as he/she can. The Olympics Association recognizes freestyle and race snowboarding as sports included in its worldwide competition.

Secondly, you'll need **equipment**. Some snowboards and bindings (the locking mechanism that attaches the boots to the board) differ according to what type of snowboarding you'll be doing so it's important to determine ride type *before* attacking the slopes. Most snow resorts have comprehensive packages that include equipment rental and lift tickets. There's a long list of accessories that boarders have, but the necessities are: snowboard, boots, bindings, pants, jackets, and goggles. Rentals usually run about \$50 and \$35-\$50 for lift tickets. Most resorts will combine the two and offer packages ranging from \$80-\$100. The specialized equipment is crucial; with waterproof clothing and eye-protective goggles, they insure your body remains comfortable as you manage your way down the mountain.

After choosing the type of snowboarding you want to do and securing your equipment, you'll

need to determine how you'll stand on the board. Comfort is *imperative* to snowboarding. As a result, you'll have to figure out your **stance**. Stance is all about strengths: which foot feels stronger and which direction you feel more comfortable traveling in. With the snowboard pointing down the hill, **goofy** riders will find their right foot in front of them whereas **regular** riders place their left foot in front. Stance, however, is only one aspect of foot placement. Because very few people walk with their feet perfectly straight, bindings on a board can be clocked a certain number of degrees to assure ultimate comfort. A "duck" orientated foot placement will clock the back foot, and front foot, a certain amount of degrees in a more open, or positive direction. Usually, riders dial in between +15/-15 degrees. Again, comfort is *key*, so it's important to sample equipment and toy with binding settings that assure the rider an absolute sense of comfort.

Beginners will find themselves learning quicker if they go on their first snowboarding trip with someone experienced or take lessons as offered by some lodges. The "bunny hill", a grate reserved for first-timers, will be the training grounds for novices. The first lesson should be how to stop. Stopping requires the rider to dig the board into the snow via two different directions: heel edge or toe edge. The heel edge, the edge closer to your heels, requires the rider to stand facing the bottom of the slope. With feet placed shoulder-width apart, knees bent, and balanced weight distribution, practice lifting your toes. This will cause the heel edge of the board to dig into the snow, thus braking. Facing up the slope, riders can also brake by lifting their heels and digging the toe edge into the snow to slow down. It is very important to remember to never lean too much *down* the slope. It is much safer (barring wrist injuries) falling up the mountain rather than down.

A good way to start off is by sitting with the board in front of you, perpendicular to the slope. Try standing and maintain yourself motionless by applying the braking method above; remember, your feet will determine speed and control. Think of the back foot as the brake/gas pedal and the front foot as the steering wheel. It's a delicate balance, but carefully placed pressure on your heels and toes will navigate the board. A good note to remember is face where you want to go. The body will take you wherever you're directly facing. Bend your knees, not your waist and remember to stay low and stand tall. First-timers should practice braking before attempting to ride down the hill. The learning curve with snowboarding is quick, usually within three days. By the end of the first day, beginners should have a basic grasp of the mechanics of snowboarding and be able to navigate the board - **Nicolas Millan**