

Be a tourist in your own backyard

Enjoying Ozaukee County as a Winter Wonderland

A lot of us move at full throttle during the holidays – but once the hustle and bustle is behind us, we'll be looking for ways to relax and enjoy this beautiful season. Winter is a great time to bundle up the family, get out, get active and enjoy the beautiful parks and trails we have available in Ozaukee County.

The southern part of the Ozaukee Interurban Trail is plowed in the winter for walking, running and even winter biking, but did you know north of Highland Drive in Port Washington the trail is left unplowed for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing? The trail winds through beautiful countryside, but offers a number of stops along the way where you can grab a cup of coffee or hot chocolate as you're passing through one of our small downtowns. Visit the Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department website for more information, or www.interurbantrail.com for a great interactive trail map to help you plan your trip.

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust owns and maintains more than 600 areas of public preserves in Ozaukee County. All have excellent opportunities for winter hiking and snowshoeing, and some areas lend themselves well to cross-country skiing. Trails are marked and tend to be quiet and almost private. You may find yourself first on the snow and have to break the trail for others behind you.

Belgium offers 700-plus acres at Harrington Beach State Park along the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan. The park offers wonderful nature trails for hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing around Quarry Lake, which highlights the history of Stonehaven, a mining community that was once located in the park. The entire park is a great place for birdwatching.



Shady Lane

Another county park worth highlighting is the Shady Lane Natural Area located within Hawthorne Hills County Park and Golf Course in Saukville. This natural area offers miles of beautiful trails along the west bank of the Milwaukee River with spectacular views, and is the

perfect spot for a peaceful hike through the woods or for some birding.

Riveredge Nature Center in Saukville offers 10 miles of trails, which are open to the public year-round from dawn to dusk. Enjoy the beauty of these wonderfully restored natural sanctuaries, where you will find prairies, ponds, woods and more than a mile of Milwaukee River shoreline. You can snowshoe, ski and hike. Bring your own equipment or you can rent from Riveredge Nature Center.

Tendick Nature Park in Saukville is named after Donald Tendick Sr., who donated the woods and farmland to the county in 1999 for year-round enjoyment. Across from Tendick Park, the Blue Heron Wild Life Sanctuary's 92 acres are privately held but open to the public. Bordering the Milwaukee River, it has seemingly endless maintained trails for hiking year-round and cross-country skiing in winter. The trails move through different habitats, including wooded areas and grasslands.

Just north of Port Washington are acres of rolling terrain and trails that pass through



Lion's Den



woods, prairie and grasslands, as well as the Huiras Lake Preserve in the northwest part of the county. This area offers a wonderful winter experience, whether you're cross-country skiing, hiking, snowshoeing or birding.

Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve, part of the Ozaukee County Park System and located along Lake Michigan in the town of Grafton, is a one-of-a-kind experience for passive winter recreation. Called an "ecological jewel" within the Ozaukee County Park System, Lion's Den offers striking views of Lake Michigan and undeveloped 130-foot high clay bluffs. The preserve includes 73 acres of trails, boardwalks and bridges, and when clear, a staircase that weaves along the bluffs, over significant ravines, through the wetlands and down to the shore of Lake Michigan. It's stunning any time of year, but particularly so in the winter, and a perfect location for birdwatching and nature photography.

Bratt Woods in Grafton has a lovely loop trail which is wonderful for a short ski trip (just over 15 acres in all) as long as the snow is fairly new. It is popular for walking so after a few days, the snow on the trail can get pretty packed. It is always beautiful for winter hiking as the trail runs close to the Milwaukee River. This official birding hotspot offers parking at both ends of the preserve.

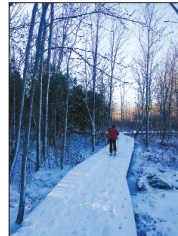
Kurtz Woods in Grafton has interesting and beautiful topography and majestic old trees. It is best for hiking because of the rocky terrain - being in Kurtz Woods is much like being in a mini-Kettle Moraine forest. Don't forget your camera!

Further south near County Line Road, the Mequon Nature Preserve provides 444 acres of fresh air and beautiful vistas from the five-plus miles of hiking trails, and a 40-foot observation tower. Trails are free and open to the public 365 days a year from sunrise to sunset. Mark your calendar for February 1st for the eighth annual Winter Frolic!

Also in Mequon is Mee-Kwon Park, where you can cross country ski on groomed trails, or enjoy a fun family afternoon on a favorite County sledding hill!

Many of our parks and natural areas offer classes throughout the year - before heading out, consider visiting websites for special events, pet-friendly areas, classes, fees or seasonal updates. Then get out and enjoy the beauty of the trails throughout Ozaukee County. For information on all these activities and more, pick up a copy of the Ozaukee County Tourism Guide available at area chambers and visitor

centers, visit www.ozaukeetourism.com and follow the Ozaukee County Tourism Facebook page. On behalf of the Ozaukee County Tourism Council, thank you for helping make our County a great place to live and play!



Tendick Park