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Powder Play

New wrinkles on the old moguls.

By Sara Bernard

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Let's say you're one of those warm-blooded winter-wonderland types who can't wait for the first flurries and considers the spring thaw to be the sad end of fun rather than a reprieve from the deep freeze. But maybe you've done just about everything a person can do on snow and ice-or so you think. Think again. Here are some offbeat ways to become one with the drifts.

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Credit: Kevin Sprague

Skate skiing

This sport, decidedly swifter than typical Nordic skiing, offers a fantastic full-body workout and speed. Lots of speed. Skate skiing is also known as freestyle, because this hybrid movement allows for more variation in technique (if you know what you're doing, that is). Skate skis are shorter than backcountry or telemark skis and, as with speed skating, require a V-shape stance and stride. The poles are longer, the boots are higher and stiffer, and the technique is specific: If you're a beginner, stay off the trickier terrain and get some lessons. Easily done, because many cross-country ski centers these days offer skate-skiing equipment and classes.

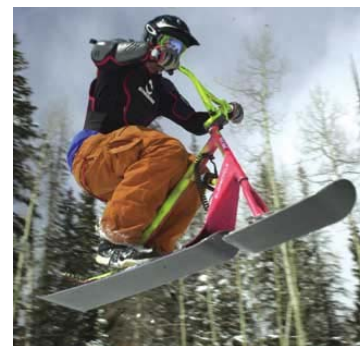
www.boltonvalley.com A ski resort in Vermont with extensive trails well groomed for cross-country and skate skiing.

www.royalgorge.com The largest cross-country ski resort in North America, near Lake Tahoe, with nearly 300 kilometers of groomed trails.

www.whitepinetouring.com This Park City, Utah, company offers beginning, intermediate, and advanced skate-skiing classes for kids and adults.

Ski-biking

It's a bike. It's a ski. It's a ski-bike (or skibob, according to Europeans, who have been at this hybrid sport in significant numbers since about 1950). Ski-biking-sharing most of the attributes of regular downhill skiing but without the potential for knee problems-is easy to love. A ski-bike has handlebars, a seat, and two bike-skis, and the rider wears short skis. The learning curve is no steeper than a bunny slope. The best part may be the ability to hit up all sections of a ski resort, including-and especially-the wooded areas (even beginning bikers can dip and dodge around the trees, whereas alpine skiers had better be Olympic material to try it). You can buy, rent, or at least ride a traditional ski-bike at between 50 and 60 ski resorts around the United States, or try a Winter X Bike



Credit: Kevin Rochford

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Kit, which transforms your regular mountain bike into a snow machine.

www.ski-bike.org Background, history, discussion forums, lists of ski areas that allow ski-bikes, and more.

www.skibiker.com Lots of information, plus first-person narratives, and Winter X Bike Kits for sale.

www.skibob.org World competitions, race results, photographs, and other information (in German).



Credit: Getty Images

Skijoring

Let's not forget our restless, winter-bound domestic critters. If Rex the Wonderhorse or Fido the frantic foxhound needs an outing with you, strap a harness on the animal, put on your skis and strap a skijoring rig around your waist, and off you go. Though a dictionary definition of the Norwegian term *skijoring* (literally, "ski-driving") indicates that a horse or a vehicle

is dragging the skier, skijoring with dogs is also popular; dozens of competitive races are held worldwide. Because it's always a challenge to keep in line with a dog or a horse (or two or three), this is hardly just a ride: It's an intense aerobic sport. Sign up for lessons in Moretown, Vermont, where Gail Breslauer, of Atii Sled Dogs, will show you and your best friend(s) how it's done. Breslauer discovered skijoring in 1984 without knowing it already exists (her Siberian husky couldn't bear to stay cooped up if she was going skiing), and now this former public school teacher not only skijors and sleds but also takes her dogs and their equipment into classrooms for hands-on history and science lessons.

www.atiisleddogs.com Information about Atii Sled Dogs skijoring lessons and dogsledding rides.

www.sleddogcentral.com An excellent resource for skijoring and dogsledding venues across North America.

Dogsledding

This isn't a sweaty winter workout, but it's not mush ado about nothing, either. The thrill of the ride is worth braving the cold for. Besides-if you listen to the advice of experienced sledders, that is-you'll be bundled under thick layers of fleece. The ancient mode of transportation offers a range of exertion from recreation to hardcore competition (the difference often being a trot at 10 miles per hour versus a 30 mph sprint). Dogsledding can cost anywhere from a few dollars for a short ride to several thousand bucks for a true wilderness trek. Hundreds of venues are scattered throughout Alaska, Colorado, Utah, Minnesota, and New England and across Canada. If you'd like a quick spin, for instance, Husky Power Dogsledding, in Maryland, offers ten-minute tastes; others provide several hour runs complete with mushing instruction. If you're ready to make a real backcountry trek, check out Alaska Dog Sledding's multiple-day journeys.



Credit: Wilderness Adventures Dog Sled Tours

www.alaskadogsledding.com Expertly guided eco-adventures, some of which coincide with the Iditarod.

www.huskypowerdogsledding.com Dogsledding tours, plus group outings, and even off-season dogsledding rides on wheels.

Credit: Butternut Ski Resort

Snow tubing

Much like water tubing, except that the water is very cold, and white. Don't bank on having any control over your pumped-up chariot, so it makes sense to snow tube on slopes where there's not much to run into. Many skiing and snowboarding areas have tube chutes, separate lanes designed to keep you from careening into the paths of more serious snow-sport enthusiasts. Look for snow-tubing opportunities at a ski center near you, or at designated tubing areas such as Maryland's Bear Claw Snow Tubing Park.

www.patspeak.com/snowtube.htm Just \$16 for four glorious hours on the slopes of the southern New Hampshire hills.

www.polarwavesnowtubing.com An upstate New York area with discount packages and extended hours for groups.

www.skisodasprings.com One of the first California ski areas to offer snow tubing; located near Lake Tahoe.

This article is also published in *Edutopia* magazine's February 2006 issue.

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