

Traveling with Kids

By LIBBY CARTY MCNAMEE

Massanutten: A winter sports paradise

Massanutten Resort is a winter sports paradise for novices and experts alike. Skiing and snowboarding and tubing – oh my! For a second year, there is ice-skating, too. The resort is located just two hours from Richmond in rural McGaheysville, right outside of Harrisonburg in the picturesque Shenandoah Valley. Spectacular views of the surrounding Blue Ridge Mountains are a feast for the eyes.

Massanutten has excellent youth programs for skiing and snowboarding. Its Pathway Program is geared specifically to first-timers. Kids participate in two separate one-hour sessions, both on the same day. After the first hour, they get a chance to practice their new skills on their own. When ready, they receive their second hour of instruction. The price includes a lift ticket and equipment rental. Minimum age for a group lesson is 7 years old.

Slope Siders is another successful program, a full day of skiing and snowboarding for kids of all abilities. From 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., kids receive top-notch instruction. Then they have free access to the slopes until 5:30 p.m. The program includes rental equipment, lunch, and a snack.

For the adventurous types, there are also two terrain parks featuring man-made obstacles such as jumps and rails. While Easy Street caters to novices, CMB is the more advanced option. They are both open to snowboarders and skiers.



Photos by Loretta Sherwood



Nearly everyone can enjoy tubing down a snow-covered mountain. At the Peaked Mountain Express Tube, there is a 900-foot long hill, sure to thrill. Extremely popular, these two-hour tubing sessions sell out quickly, especially on weekends. If possible, try to purchase tickets in person the previous afternoon.

On the second level of the Ski Lodge, the Ski Lodge Cafeteria offers a casual hot lunch and snack items. This is the ideal place for a quick meal before heading back to the slopes or out tubing. Encounters Lodge is also in the Ski Lodge with a bar and evening entertainment. The General Store is right next door, filled with clothes, ski gear, snacks, sundries, and souvenirs.

There is yet more winter fun to be had gliding around the outdoor ice-skating rink. With a roaring outdoor fire pit and piped-in music, the rink is 4,250 square-feet, accommodating up to 132 skaters at a time. The sturdy fence around the perimeter comes in quite handy for the newbies.

Located next to Le Club Recreation Center, the rink remains open until mid-March. Each session lasts for 90 minutes, conveniently starting whenever you do. In addition, lessons are available for kids ages 5 and up. Inside Le Club there is an arcade, foosball and pool tables, an indoor swimming pool, as well as lock-

ers. Le Club also plays kids' movies several times a day at no charge. For some good old-fashioned sledding, Hopkins Park by the Guard House is a great spot.

For some indoor fun, spend a day at the massive Massanutten WaterPark, a year-round destination set at 84 degrees.

The Teddy Bear Factory in Piney Mountain Gifts is also well worth a visit. Similar to Build-a-Bear, kids choose an animal, select an outfit, and then help stuff it. In addition, kids receive a birth certificate and a cradle for their new friend.

As spring and summer come around the bend, no worries! This 5,200-acre thriving resort remains a family-friendly destination with a wide variety of activities for every season. Depending upon your fancy, try hiking, golfing, fishing, tennis, swimming, or a scenic chairlift ride.

For another unforgettable option, try the Zip Line and Canopy Tour. For ages 5 and up, the Kids' Zip Line is 100 feet long with a net traverse, Burma plank, log crossing, and swinging vine bridge. The adult version has four zip lines up to 450 feet long, a Burma bridge, and a hanging vines crossing.

Within the Woodstone Meadows Complex, Woodstone Pizza serves casual Italian food and kids meals. (What menu is complete without chicken nuggets?) Set up cafeteria-

style, the food is hearty and ready in a jiffy. Next to Le Club, Fareways Restaurant & Lounge is an upscale dining option with an inviting ambiance, serving three meals a day.

In addition to traditional hotel rooms, Massanutten offers one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom condos for rent with kitchens. As another option, there are a slew of chain hotels (and fast food places) down Route 33 in Harrisonburg about 15 minutes away. **RPM**

Libby McNamee is a writer, lawyer, and mother who had a blast skiing, tubing, and skating at Massanutten.

WANT TO GO?

Massanutten Resort

Address: 1822 Resort Drive, McGaheysville, VA 22840

Website: www.massresort.com

Resort info: (540) 289-9441
Snow sports info: 800-207-MASS

Best route: Take I-64 West to Exit 136 onto Route 15 North. Continue onto Route 33 West. The resort will be on your right, approximately 110 miles total.

Pricing: Prices vary, but weekdays are generally cheaper. Also check out the combination park passes.