

RALEIGH, N.C. — November's chill arrives with celebratory notes for skiers and snow boarders planning to visit [North Carolina](#) ski areas. The Farmers' Almanac forecasts promising conditions for powder days, the highest ski area in the Eastern United States celebrates its 50th anniversary, and festive events will run throughout the season.

"The Southeast will see below normal winter temperatures with an unseasonable chill reaching as far south as the Gulf Coast," [the almanac predicts](#). Those low temperatures will be all North Carolina's six ski areas need to keep the slopes covered, thanks to arsenals of snow guns.

[Beech Mountain Resort](#) plans to chill out this season as it celebrates its golden anniversary. The ski area, where the elevation reaches 5,506 feet, flashes back to 1967-68 prices for night skiing on Tuesdays (\$9 lift tickets for women) and Wednesdays (\$9 lift tickets for men). A Thursday "couple's night" bargain is \$16 for the first ticket, \$8 for the second.

Throughout the season, event weekends reward travelers who come for special prices and action on and off the slopes. Highlights include:

- **Cataloochee Ski & Snowboard Swap Shop**, Dec. 2-3, Cataloochee Ski Area, Maggie Valley: Skiers and riders can buy or sell slightly used clothing and gear at a consignment sale sponsored by the Cataloochee Ski Patrol. cataloochee.com
- **SugarFest**, Dec. 8-10, Sugar Mountain: The weekend features skiing and skating clinics with Olympic medalists Marco Sullivan and Paul Wylie; equipment demos; parties and fireworks; and the Edge of the World Mini-Games. www.skisugar.com/Sugarfest
- **Sapphire Valley Outhouse Races**, Feb. 17, Sapphire Valley. Three-person teams pilot homemade outhouses on a 40-yard run for glory. www.skisapphirevalley.com
- **Totally '80s Retro Weekend**, Feb. 22-25, Beech Mountain Resort: From ski apparel and music to vintage cars and video games, all things '80s are back in style. www.beechmountainresort.com
- **Meltdown Games**, March 24-25, Appalachian Ski Mtn, Blowing Rock: Competitions typically include the High Ollie Contest, Pond Skim, Trash Bag Downhill Race and a Chinese Downhill. www.appskimtn.com

For those seeking maximum time on the slopes, the North Carolina Ski Area Association offers a limited number of [Gold Cards](#). Priced at \$865, the cards cover unlimited skiing and snow boarding at all six resorts.

Here's a rundown on North Carolina's six ski areas. For more information on mapping a trip, stop by VisitNC.com.

Blowing Rock

The North Carolina High Country's first ski area, Appalachian Ski Mtn. is known for teaching beginners, families and groups. It's home of the French Swiss Ski College, the South's largest independent ski school; Burton Learn to Ride; and SKIwee and Cruiser Camp. www.appskimtn.com, www.appterrainpark.com

- **Projected opening:** Nov. 17.
- **Slopes:** 12.
- **Terrain parks:** Three (Appal Jam, AppalTop and Appaljack).

- **Peak elevation:** 4,000 feet.
- **Vertical drop:** 365 feet.
- **Longest run:** Half a mile.
- **Lifts:** 2 quads, 1 double, surface, 2 conveyors.
- **Night skiing:** To 10 pm nightly; midnight Fridays-Saturdays.
- **Other activities:** 6,000-square-foot ice arena for skating.
- **Off the slopes:** Bavarian-style lodge with restaurant, ski shop, gift shop, locker room, TV lounge and group meeting rooms. Child care is available.
- **Other:** Jackets, bib pants gloves and goggles are available for rent.

Beech Mountain

At 5,506 feet in elevation, Beech Mountain is the highest ski area in the East. A central alpine village, the 5506' Skybar and a resident brewery further distinguish the resort. It offers the Ski and Ride School; Burton Learn to Ride; and Traxx and Snow Kamp for children. www.beechmountainresort.com

- **Projected opening:** Nov. 24.
- **New for 2017-18:** Streamlined check-in process lets customers buy lift tickets and rent equipment at a central location. Multiday tickets and rentals will be available for the first time.
- **Slopes:** 17.
- **Terrain park:** Yes.
- **Peak elevation:** 5,506 feet.
- **Vertical drop:** 830 feet.
- **Longest run:** 1 mile.
- **Lifts:** 1 high-speed quad, 1 fixed-grip quad, 4 doubles, 1 conveyor, 1 surface tow in the terrain park.
- **Night skiing:** To 9 pm nightly; 10 pm Fridays-Saturdays.
- **Other activities:** 7,000-square-foot outdoor rink for skating; tubing with chutes up to 700 feet long.
- **Off the slopes:** Four restaurants, two sport shops, coffee shop, brewery and rental facility. Child care is available.
- **Other:** Bibs, pants and coats are available for rent.

Maggie Valley

At the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cataloochee opened in 1961 to become North Carolina's first ski area. It features one of the region's longest seasons with help from its advanced snowmaking system. Cataloochee offers lessons at the Ski and Ride Center and CAT Trackers for kids. Aspiring racers can test their times at public NASTAR competitions. www.cataloochee.com

- **Projected opening:** Early November.
- **Slopes:** 18.
- **Terrain:** Cat Cage Terrain Park.
- **Peak elevation:** 5,400 feet.
- **Vertical drop:** 740 feet.
- **Longest run:** 3,500 feet.
- **Lifts:** 1 double, 2 triple, 1 quad, 3 conveyors.
- **Night skiing:** Nightly to 10 pm.
- **Other activities:** Tube World in Maggie Valley.
- **Off the slopes:** Lodge with fireplace, restaurant, lounge and on-mountain shop. Cataloochee Ski & Sports Shop in Maggie Valley offers discounted rentals and lift tickets plus everything you need for the slopes.
- **Other:** Bibs and jackets are available for rent.

Sapphire

Sapphire Valley Ski Area is part of a 5,700-acre, four-season resort. It's especially attractive to families and beginning skiers who can take lessons and master the runs. The resort is also known for the Great Outhouse Races, to be held Feb. 17, 2018. www.skisapphirevalley.com

- **Projected opening:** Dec. 16.
- **New for 2017-18:** New moving carpet lifts at the learning center slope and at Frozen Falls Tube Park, which also has a newly expanded 500-foot run.
- **Slopes:** 2.
- **Peak elevation:** 3,400 feet.
- **Vertical drop:** 200 feet.
- **Longest run:** 1,600 feet.
- **Lifts:** 1 quad, 1 carpet conveyor.
- **Other activities:** Frozen Falls Tube Park, The Vordach zip line.
- **Off the slopes:** Lodge with fireplace, shop and the Four Seasons Grille.

Sugar Mountain

With 125 skiable acres, Sugar Mountain is North Carolina's largest winter resort, distinguished by the state's only double black diamond slope and a Doppelmayr high-speed, detachable, six-passenger chairlift. Lessons are available at the Ski and Snowboard School plus the Sugar Bear Ski School and Polar Bear Snowboard School for children. Aspiring racers can test their times at public NASTAR competitions. www.skisugar.com

- **Projected opening:** Early November.
- **Slopes:** 21.
- **Terrain park:** Yes.
- **Peak elevation:** 5,300 feet.
- **Vertical drop:** 1,200 feet.
- **Longest run:** 1.5 miles.
- **Lifts:** 1 high-speed six pack, 1 triple, 4 doubles, 1 surface, 1 carpet conveyor.
- **Night skiing:** To 10 pm nightly.
- **Other activities:** 10,000-square-foot rink for skating, tubing and snowshoe guided tours.
- **Off the slopes:** Base lodge with two cafeterias, the Last Run Lounge with full-service bar, locker room and shop. Child care is available.

Mars Hill

Thirty miles north of Asheville off scenic Interstate 26, Wolf Ridge sits just inside Pisgah National Forest. The Snow Sports School offers group and private lessons for beginning to intermediate skiers and snowboarders. www.skiwolfridgenc.com

- **Projected opening:** Early December.
- **Slopes:** 15.
- **Terrain park:** Yes.
- **Peak elevation:** 4,700 feet.
- **Vertical drop:** 700 feet.
- **Longest run:** 3,700 feet.
- **Lifts:** 1 quad, 1 double and 2 surface lifts.
- **Night skiing:** To 10 pm Monday-Saturday.
- **Off the slopes:** Base lodge with three large fireplaces, gift shop and food service.
- **Other activities:** Tubing.

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