Skiing

Modern downhill skiing was introduced to West Virginia in the mid-1950s. The first ski area was developed by the Washington Ski Club when member Bob Barton invested $15,000 in a 99-year lease for an area of Cabin Mountain known as Weiss Knob in the Canaan Valley of Tucker County. It was the first commercial ski area south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The ski complex at Canaan Valley State Park now encompasses this area. Barton is remembered as the father of West Virginia skiing.

In the 1970s, West Virginia's rugged Allegheny Mountains opened for development. Ski areas sprouted up at such a rate that the industry has now become a major component in the region's economy, bringing hundreds of thousands of skiers from all over the East each winter. With relatively high elevations, West Virginia's mountains get a good deal of natural snow, and they are within driving distance of a large part of the nation's population.

The first to see the full potential of these mountains was Tom Brigham, an Alabama dentist and developer of ski areas in North Carolina. In the early 1970s, Brigham began work on what is now Snowshoe Mountain Resort, created out of a natural bowl on Shavers Fork in Pocahontas County. Other sites soon developed, including Silver Creek in Pocahontas County (now part of Snowshoe Mountain Resort), Timberline and Canaan Valley resorts in Tucker County, and Winterplace in Raleigh County, in the southern part of the state.

West Virginia's downhill skiing industry generates more than $250 million for the state's economy and more than 5,000 jobs at the resorts and related companies. The ski season typically lasts about 130 days each year. All the areas have snowmaking capabilities on all of their slopes. Snowshoe's top elevation is 4,848 feet, with a 1,500-foot vertical drop served by 14 ski lifts. Canaan Valley's top elevation is 4,280 feet, with an 850-foot vertical drop served by three lifts. Timberline's top elevation is 4,268 with a 1,000-foot vertical drop served by three lifts. Winterplace's top elevation is 3,600 feet, with a 603-foot vertical drop served by nine ski lifts. Oglebay Park in Wheeling also offers skiing among its activities. The top elevation is 815 feet with a 168-foot vertical drop served by one ski lift.

All of the ski resorts are open year-round, providing other recreation and special events in the warm months.

In addition to downhill skiing and snowboarding at the major resorts, cross-country skiing areas are found throughout the eastern mountains of West Virginia. Two businesses, White Grass in Tucker County and Elk River Touring Center in Pocahontas, offer cross-country skiers the opportunity to see some of the state's wilderness areas. Other facilities, such as Blackwater Falls, offer cross-country trails and equipment rentals.

See WV: Skiing
Read Skiing from The West Virginia Encyclopedia

Answer the following:

1. When was modern downhill skiing introduced to West Virginia?
2. What ski complex now encompasses the first ski area developed in Tucker County?
3. What factors make West Virginia a major component in the ski industry?
4. What two resorts developed in Pocahontas County?
5. What two resorts developed in Tucker County?
6. What resort developed in Raleigh County?
7. What is the length of a typical ski season?
8. What are two cross-country skiing locations in West Virginia?