

# It's All DOWNHILL From Here

There's Diversity Among  
Traverse City's Ski Areas

By JIM NEFF



**Shanty Creek**

**Shanty Creek Resorts**

866-901-3149  
shantycreek.com

**Mt. Holiday Ski Area**

231-938-2500  
mt-holiday.com

**Hickory Hills Ski Area**

231-947-8566  
[www.ci.traverse-city.mi.us/Parks\\_and\\_Recreation/Hickory\\_Hills\\_Ski\\_Area/](http://www.ci.traverse-city.mi.us/Parks_and_Recreation/Hickory_Hills_Ski_Area/)



Alpine skiers of every level of skill and experience will find an amazing range of experiences in Traverse City's three ski destinations, from two folksy hometown ski areas to one of Michigan's largest destination resorts. Add the flexibility for lodging, dining and shopping options that only a real ski town can offer, and it's a combination unrivalled in Michigan and the Midwest.

**Shanty Creek Resorts**, a short drive to the northeast in the village of Bellaire, is a full service destination resort operation anchored by three villages and powered by two ski mountains with 49 downhill runs, seven chair lifts, and three terrain parks.

Shanty's *Summit Village* is dominated by the *Lakeview Hotel and Conference Center* which recently celebrated a \$10 million renovation. Taking advantage of panoramic overlooks of Lake Bellaire, its rooms feature warm colors and all the modern conveniences, while conference spaces can host groups as large as 1000.

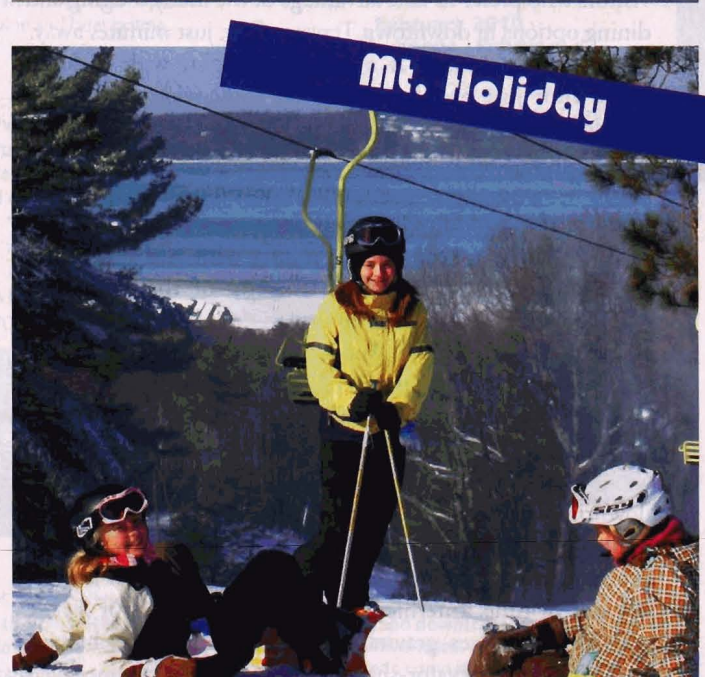
Because the Lakeview perches atop *Summit Mountain*, one of its signature experiences is being able to ski right out the door. Skiers can venture onto Crick Hollow or Sunlending for a bit of a challenge, or opt for Greenway for a more leisurely cruise. Later, rejuvenate in the Lakeview's spa and enjoy a sumptuous dinner in the *Lakeview Restaurant* while watching the night skiers on the slopes below.

Even more pampering is on tap in the *Lodge at Cedar River Village*, where in-room tubs and fireplaces add touches of elegance and the rustic setting provides a tranquil escape. With access to the backside of Schuss Mountain, Cedar River is an easy ski-in/ski-out stop, with dining at the *Weiskopf's Grill*.

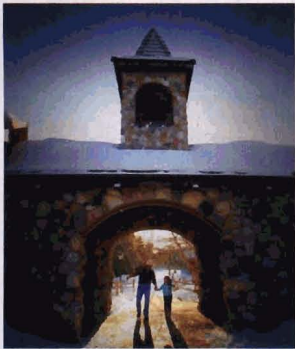
Reminiscent of an alpine hamlet with its town square, the charming European-inspired *Schuss Village* rests at the base of *Schuss Mountain* with a range of accommodations, including villas and condos. But the true keynote here is the collection of ski trails that make Schuss one of Michigan's best ski mountains.

On the front side start wide and work toward the middle. Loosen up with easy greens on the area's shoulders, Belle's Bottom and Concourse. Then edge farther inside with Sapporo and Good Knight. Finally, after checking all life insurance policies are up-to-date, do battle with the black diamond star of the Schuss show, the spine in the middle of the mountain aptly named Kingdom Come.

For a respite from the black diamond mayhem on the front of Schuss, pop over to the back of the mountain and slither down moderate tree-lined trails like Red Hot or Legend. A foray into the glade above Sally's Alley is also a hoot, especially if some powder has settled in.



Rated the Midwest's number-one ski destination in value, dining, lodging, weather and après ski activities by Ski Magazine, Shanty Creek offers something for every winter taste, including four terrain parks for snowboarders (top) and even dogsled rides (middle). But there's also great skiing and wonderful scenery at Traverse City's two community ski areas, Mt. Holiday (bottom) and Hickory Hills (top of facing page).



## Hickory Hills



*Ivan's Mountain Side Grill* is the place to go at Schuss after the ski day. Watch SportsCenter on the billboard-size flat screen above the bar while ordering an extreme treat, a deep-fried pickle wrapped in Swiss cheese and ham!

Impressive it may be, but Shanty Creek doesn't exhaust the area's downhill ski offerings. In fact, Traverse City is unique among Midwest ski towns because it's bracketed by two community ski areas -- **Mt. Holiday** to the east and **Hickory Hills** to the west. As day ski areas, both cater to visitors who prefer to take advantage of the many lodging and dining options in downtown Traverse City, just minutes away.

Mt. Holiday is a cruiser's delight, with a dozen broad runs just perfect for carving smile-wide arcs in the powder. Skiers love to slice giant slalom turns on Hal's Hollow, Holiday, and Round-A-Bout before descending into the black diamond clutches of Coffin Canyon or riding the rails in the terrain park on Oleson's Ridge.

Holiday keeps things rolling with two chairs and three surface tows --and from the top of the mountain, passengers are treated to stunning vistas of Grand Traverse Bay and the city below. Another treat is Holiday's vintage lodge -- with a real stone fireplace providing the warmth -- and stopping in the lounge for some chicken wings and a frosty ale.

If Mt. Holiday is modest in size Hickory Hills is downright self-effacing, but it packs a lot of credentials into a small package. Its eight trails are serviced by five retro-style rope tows, so skiers can rack up a lot of vertical in a short amount of time. Intermediates revel in the slants of Swede and Birch, novices gravitate to Bunny, and hard-chargers looking for an elevator-shaft steep should eye a run called Pete, with a 43-degree grade.

**JIM NEFF** is the senior Midwest contributor for *SKI Magazine*, webmaster/leditor of *MichiganSkier.com*, and a writer for the *Cadillac Evening News*.

# More Winter Fun

## Cross Country

### Skiing



The Traverse City area offers almost endless opportunities for snowshoe hiking and cross-country skiing, from the Sleeping Bear Dunes

National Lakeshore with its 13 scenic trails to the Grand Traverse Commons and its stunning hilltop views of the city. Deep in the forest, there's solitude and wildlife at the Muncie Lakes Pathway, Brown Bridge Pond and the Sand Lakes Quiet Area, while speed-skiers flock to the Vasa Pathway, one of the finest cross-country ski trails in the Midwest.

## Snowmobiling



Snowmobilers love to ride around Traverse City. With more than 200 miles of dedicated snowmobile trails, our enchanted Boardman and Jordan river valleys are the perfect setting for winter adventure. There's something for every taste -- whether it's twisting and turning through dense hardwood forests, touring over hills, bridges, and waterways, or racing across wide-open spaces with plenty of room to enjoy the fresh white powder.



## Tubing

Looking to unleash your inner child? Many of our ski hills offer you the chance to try the thrills-and-squeals sport of snow tubing: riding downhill on an inflated inner tube. Tubing is one of the nation's fastest-growing winter pastimes -- and it doesn't require much more skill than the ability to sit down, hang on tight and do a little high-pitched screaming as you hurtle downhill. It's great fun!