With more than 25,000 miles of pristine snowmobile trails, it’s no surprise the snowmobile is an important part of Wisconsin’s history. In fact, the first sled was invented in 1924 by Carl Eliason in Sayner, and it now resides at the Vilas County Historical Museum. There’s even a Snowmobile Hall of Fame located in St. Germain.

In other parts of the world a foot of snow dumped overnight, ice-covered highways and 40 below wind chill are sound reasons to pull down the shades, crank up the heat, and turn on the television. But to folks in Wisconsin, snow is a precious natural resource because it means one thing: snowmobiling.

So where should you plan to head this winter? Here’s a sample of a few of our favorite ideas. We invite you to check them out, then visit travelwisconsin.com for the latest snow conditions and even more winter fun!
Eagle River & Minocqua

Eagle River, officially registered as “The Snowmobile Capital of the World” in 1964, has five snowmobile clubs that groom 600 miles of trails daily. These trails weave through Vilas and Oneida counties, the Nicolet National Forest and around 2,400 lakes. Visit the city’s annual Ice Castle creation, an icy architectural wonder that has changed in design every year since it was first built in 1927. It’s built by a team of volunteers headed by area firefighters who put in more than 700 man hours to cut nearly 3,000 ice blocks from a local lake and haul them into place. Trail #13 passes right by it.

One of the favorite trails in the Minocqua area is the Bearskin State Trail that stretches 18 miles through the forests of Oneida County. Traffic is two-way with several rest spots along the way. This area also has more than 1,600 miles of trails that traverse 1,300 glacial lakes and 233,000 acres of public forestland.

For more information: eagleriver.org, minocqua.org

Where to Warm Up:
Pitlik’s Sand Beach Resort in Eagle River is almost a required stop. They offer traditional favorites like meatloaf, a Friday night shore lunch, and a selection of bison entrees. This resort also hosts the Northern Vintage Snowmobile Race Series throughout the winter. (715/479-4955)

Black Bear Bar & Grill west of Minocqua is known for its burgers, homemade pizza and live blues music many weekends. This rustic setting welcomes riders on Trail #10. (715/358-2116)

Headwaters Restaurant & Tavern near Boulder Junction is a great place to stop for a warm meal and a stupendous view of the Manistowish River. As an added bonus, this eatery is easy-off and easy-on the snowmobile trail. (715/385-2601)

More to Explore:
Every year in January, Women on Snow brings over a hundred women of all ages and riding abilities to the Northwoods. During this three day event, the women log roughly 200 miles while enjoying time together, good food, and lots of fun. This year’s event takes place January 27-29, 2012. (www.womenonsnow.org)

Hurley & Mercer

Who can argue this is the state’s snow capital with snowfall totals known to top 300 inches. People often snowmobile here right through the last week of March. Off-trail snowmobile riding is also available on 175,000 acres of public land. This is for the adventurous rider and a certain type of sled is necessary navigate the deep snow.

Known for its mining heritage, you can snowmobile to the site of the world’s deepest iron mine and explore the interpretive park there called The Plummer Mine. More trails to explore just to the southeast in Mercer, a town surrounded by lakes, stands of virgin pines and the world’s largest loon, for the perfect photo op.

For more information: hurleymwi.com, mercercoc.com

Where to Warm up:
Liberty Belle Chalet in Hurley scores for pizzas, homemade pastas and friendly atmosphere. The copper-surfaced bar in front greets visitors and families and groups are always welcome. Hurley’s entire downtown is virtually on the trail so ride right up to warm up. (715/561-3753)

More to Explore:
On the Saturday of President’s Day weekend, the Manistowish Waters Sno-Skeeters hosts Winterfest Rendezvous. Bring the family for winter fun including ice bowling, grooner rides, ice diver for kids fishing, live music, Klements racings sausages, and more. The main event is an ice fishing contest for all ages – individual and teams. (www.mw-snoskeeters.com)

Family Favorites in Northwest Wisconsin

When kids imagine a perfect winter day, they may think of being out on dad’s Arctic Cat, on a slick trail crossing Big McKenzie Lake near Spooner, building speed while they lean into dad’s back. With an expanse of snow flying past and a break for cheese curds, soda and fries at the cozy Mc Kenzie Landing, what could be better.

Families might head to Port Wing along Lake Superior where uncrowded trails offer impressive views. Time it right and witness the ice pyramids formed by the winds and waves during the ice break-up. Another special treat can be found on Trail 63, traveling from Hayward north through Cable, Drummond, Grandview and Mason. Riders cross three refurbished railroad trestles, the 200 foot Namekagon River Bridge, 585 foot 18 Mile Creek Bridge, and the 325 foot White River Ramblers Snowmobile Bridge, each providing an awesome view.

For more information: washburncounty.org bayfieldcounty.org

McKenzie Landing west of Spooner, offers great lake views while serving everything from cheese curds to juicy steak. (715/635-2520)

Lakewoods Resort in Cable has been voted the #1 Snowmobile Resort six times by SnowGoer magazine. The rustic Lakeside Restaurant and Buck’s Bar & Grill offer great Northwoods menus to get you refueled. (715/794-2561)

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

Juneau County

Rolling hills, deep valleys, and villages dot southern Juneau County. To the north explore forests and expanses of prairies and wetlands including the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge. Some weekends check out sanctioned time trials on Castle Rock Lake. The Elroy-Sparta Trail travels through the county and connects with over 500 miles of state funded trails. The route goes over the tunnels on this trail but icefalls often decorate the narrow rock cuts surrounding the trail doors.

For more information: juneaucounty.com

Where to Warm Up:
The Way Station is a quaint restaurant and bar on the trail north of Mauston at 49th St. and County Rd. HHH. Stop in for breakfast or order the biscuits and gravy for lunch. (608/847-5209)

The Reel Inn near Necedah is right on the trail on Hwy 80. From steaks to sandwiches, this is a great place for your group to stop. (608/565-2262)

Waupaca County

Twists and turns, woods and fields, hills and streams meld together to form this Waupaca County snowmobile experience. Hartmann Creek State Park on Trail #11 and Look Out Mountain on Trail #26 are popular stops. North of Iola near Big Falls you can see the Little Wolf River cascade through a jumble of giant granite slabs. In Iola be sure to check out the big wooden statue of Chop O’ Tallow.

For more information: washburncounty.org bayfieldcounty.org
of Vidar, a Norse warrior god carved from a cottonwood tree stump. They take winter seriously here, hosting ski jumping competitions and a winter festival.

For more information: waupacaareachamber.com

Where to Warm Up:
Crystal Café in downtown Iola is right on the trail. They serve great breakfasts, hot coffee and homemade pie. (715/445-9227)

Southern Kettle Moraine

The Moraine Ridge Trail rocks and rolls through the Kettle Moraine State Forest and connects with over 500 miles of trails in Jefferson, Walworth and Waukesha counties. The trail provides up-north riding with a southern exposure. This area was the Super Bowl of the Ice Age with competing glacial ice sheets. On a topographic map, it looks like Swiss cheese. On a snowmobile, it feels like a roller coaster! The small towns offer warm greetings when you need a break and trail maps can be picked up at the forest headquarters in Eagle.

For more information: http://dnr.wi.gov/

Where to Warm Up:

Knucklehead Pub-n-Grub in Eagle has big breakfasts and fresh baked breads and donuts. A great stop for breakfast or lunch. (262/594-5552)

The first snowmobile was invented in 1924 by Sayner’s Carl Eliason.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Trail conditions and maps:
Go to travelwisconsin.com to subscribe to our weekly Snow Conditions Report email for constant updates. The report is also viewable on our website and is regularly updated by local snow experts from around the state. Call our Customer Service team at 800-432-8747 if you have questions.

Call the local trails condition phone numbers or order the local snowmobile maps before you travel. Contacts can be found in our Wisconsin Activity Guide. Otherwise pick up maps in the area when you arrive. They offer important local information that will help you have a safe trip.

Rentals and guided rides:
Don’t own a sled or want someone else to do the planning? The Wisconsin Activity Guide and travelwisconsin.com have listings for snowmobile rentals and guided snowmobile tours. Dick Decker, a member of the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame, suggests that joining a local snowmobile club, renting a sled or taking a guided tour is a great way to try out the sport.

Snowmobiling regulations and safe riding tips:
A Wisconsin snowmobile registration or snowmobile trail pass are required to operate on a Wisconsin snowmobile trail. Trail passes may be purchased over the counter at many authorized sales locations or by contacting WDNR. Knowing the snowmobiling regulations, safety rules and registration information will help everyone have an enjoyable trip.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – www.dnr.wi.gov or 888-936-7463
Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs – www.awsc.org or 800-232-4108

Where to stay:
In northern Wisconsin, snowmobilers can often jump on the trail right outside the door. Many resorts and hotels offer snowmobile packages. From rustic lodges with toasty fireplaces to newly renovated cabins with outdoor hot tubs, visitors will find the perfect spot to relax after a day on the trails. Contact local tourism offices, visit travelwisconsin.com or order a copy of the Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association guide when you call our the Department of Tourism’s Customer Service Center at 800-432-8747.

EVENTS

12/30, 2011-1/1, 2012
Pro-Vintage Snowmobile Olympus - Hurley

1/7, 2012
Wisconsin State Championship Snowmobile Drag Races - Merrill

1/13-15, 2012
Loadmaster Classic Vintage Weekend - Eagle River

1/14-15, 2012
World Championship Kitty Cat Races - St. Germain

1/19-22, 2012
World Championship Snowmobile Derby - Eagle River

1/21, 2012
Curtiss Snowmobile Drag Races - Curtiss

1/26-28, 2012
Sno-Drovers Poker Run - Park Falls

1/27-29, 2012
Women on Snow Weekend - Eagle River

1/28, 2012
Antique Snowmobile Show and Jalopy Ride - Spencer

Caldron Falls Fishoree and Drag/Radar Runs - Crivitz

1/28-29, 2012
Winter Fest - Phillips

2/3-4, 2012
Snowmobile Radar Run - St. Germain

2/4, 2012
Budweiser Race of Champions - Plymouth

2/10-11, 2012
Cruiserfest - Minocqua

King of the Bay - Ashland

2/10-12, 2012
Fire on Ice - Weyauwega

2/11, 2012
Chute Pond Ice Drags - Mountain

Curtiss Snowmobile and ATV Sno-Cross Races - Curtiss

2/18, 2012
Drummond Sno Jacks Bar Stool Races - Drummond

Screamin’ Half Mile - USA Snowmobile Oval Ice Racing - Richland Center

White Thunder Riders Auction - Hurley

Winterfest Rendezvous - Manitowish Waters

2/24-26, 2012
FROSTival - Tomahawk

2/25, 2012
Prentice Bushbenders Snowmobile/ ATV Races - Phillips

3/2-4, 2012
Annual Vintage Snowmobile Show and Swap Meet - Nellsville

Hayward SnoCross Nationals - Hayward

3/3-4, 2012
Weenie Roast Weekend - Cable

3/16-18, 2012
Nielsen Enterprises SnoCross Grand Finale, Championship Snowmobile Racing - Lake Geneva
Wisconsin Snowmobile Corridor Trail Map

Wisconsin’s Self-Funded Trail System

By legislative action, the State of Wisconsin has adopted a self-funded snowmobile trail system in which snowmobilers themselves pay for the vast network of trails that criss-cross the state. Funds are generated by snowmobile registration and state gas taxes on that portion of the fuel used by snowmobilers. The fund is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and by cooperating counties that have adopted the program. Counties contract with individuals or organizations, usually local snowmobile clubs, to develop and maintain trails.

For more information on Wisconsin snowmobiling visit travelwisconsin.com or call 1-800/432-8747.