

Life

DOOR COUNTY SECRETS

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Alternative things to do this winter

Yes, the list of things to do in Door County slows down considerably in winter.

A number of those remaining things are well known to residents and visitors alike, such as the outdoor community festivals in Fish Creek and Sturgeon Bay — the Winter Festival, Feb. 1 to 3 and the Fire & Ice sculpture contest, Feb. 16, respectively — viewing the ice formations on Lake Michigan at Cave Point County Park and the monthly acoustic music concerts with optional dinners at White Gull Inn.

However, there's more going on from January through March than you may expect, whether it involves the arts, outdoor activities or just special experiences. You just have to know what you want to do and where to look.

Here's a quick look at six things you might not be familiar with, which make an off-season adventure around Door County worthwhile.

I want to hike or ski by candlelight

A number of Wisconsin state parks hold cross-country ski events and hikes by the soft, flickering glow of candlelight at twilight in January and February, and the parks in Door County are no exception — Whitefish Dunes, Peninsula and Newport hold such events on consecutive Saturdays.

At 3275 Clark Lake Road (Door County WD) on the Lake Michigan shoreline, Whitefish Dunes State Park holds its annual candlelight ski from 5 to 8 p.m. Jan. 26. Luminaries light separate trails for skiers and hikers, and the shelter building will offer a fire to gather around, hot beverages and popcorn. Pets are not allowed on the trails or in the shelter. For more information, call 920-823-2400.

Peninsula State Park hosts its candlelight ski/hike from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Feb. 2. The 1-mile loop through the woods and a meadow will be lit by hundreds of luminaries, and those on the trail can warm up afterward with a bonfire and refreshments by the shelter. Participants should use the Highland Road entrance at Door County A and State 42, a mile north of Fish Creek, and park in lot No. 5. Pets are not allowed. For information, call 920-868-3258.

And, a 1.2-mile candlelit path welcomes skiers, snowshoers and hikers to Newport State Park from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Feb. 9. Along with an outdoor bonfire, indoor fireplace and refreshments at the shelter at the end of the trail, grills will be available for visitors to make supper or roast marshmallows — though you must bring your own supplies. The park is at 475 Door County NP, Ellison Bay, and the trail starts at the picnic area off lot No. 3. For more information, call 920-854-2500.

Admission is free to the candlelight events, but a state park vehicle pass is required to enter

the parks.

For more information, visit dnr.wi.gov/Calendar/Events/Parks.

Hockey on Kangaroo Lake

For some faster-paced outdoor action, the sixth annual Door County Pond Hockey Tournament is set for Feb. 9 on Kangaroo Lake in Baileys Harbor.

Fifteen rinks will host four-person teams from across the state and elsewhere as they compete in six divisions for first place and the Stanley Thermos trophy. A record 48 teams already have signed up.

The rinks are slightly smaller than a regular ice hockey rink. Goalies are not allowed, and to score, players must get the puck into a low box with two small holes facing out.

Between games, a separate rink will be designated for open skating, a fire pit will offer some heat, and antique tool expert Mike Maden is expected to give demonstrations of how blocks of ice were harvested from the lake back in the day, said publicity director Myles Dannhausen.

Concessions will be available, with Door County North Rotary Club grilling, hot and cold beverages and at least a couple Baileys Harbor restaurants expected to have some of their wares on site, Dannhausen said. Organizers are hoping to set up a shuttle service between the tourney site and the town, and teams and spectators will have separate warming tents. Post-hockey, bands will play at Door County Brewing Co. and Maxwellton Braes Lodge.

The tournament is almost full, but registration is still open. For more information, call founder and co-organizer Brian Fitzgerald at 920-421-1518 or visit doorcountypondhockey.com.

Let the professionals tell you a story

The arts are a major reason tourists flock to Door County in summer, but two theatrical companies keep the stage lights burning for a brief spell in winter with play readings.

Peninsula Players Theatre just announced the plays and schedule for "The Play's the Thing," its winter play reading series with full casts. Through the years, the series has presented works that have appeared on stage before as well as ones that proved so popular that Artistic Director Greg Vinkler eventually scheduled full productions for the summer season at America's longest-running professional resident summer theater.

This year's readings open with "Apparitions" on Feb. 4. The Kristine Thatcher play explores actual events and historical figures in and

around the Death's Door tip of the Peninsula.

Also on the schedule are "Tales of Men and Ghosts," adapted by Steve Pickering from stories by Edith Wharton, for March 4; and "Love, the Cracksman," a new fast-paced comedy by Mark Brown, April 1.

All readings start at 7 p.m. at Björklunden, 7590 Boynton Lane, Baileys Harbor. Casts will be announced later. There is no charge to attend; seating is general admission. For more information, call 920-868-3287 or visit peninsulaplayers.com.

Also, Third Avenue Playhouse in Sturgeon Bay holds its third annual Winter Play Reading Festival from Feb. 15 to 24. Like Players, the TAP readings feature full casts, and play selections by artistic directors Robert Boles and James Valcq have varied from light to dramatic to edgy in its first two runs. The plays have yet to be announced for this year's series; for more, call 920-743-1760 or visit thirdavenueplayhouse.com.

Giggles and dinner

Those who need a good laugh to get through the gray days of winter can head for the Comedy Club at The Landmark Resort in Egg Harbor.

Held once a month from October through May, usually Thursdays, the Comedy Club evenings feature two nationally touring stand-up comics as well as a pre-laughs buffet dinner. The next show features Ohio-based comedian Adrian Cosby and Floridian Jordan Garnett on Jan. 10.

All shows start at 8 p.m., with the buffet at 6:30. Cost is \$24.99 for buffet and show, \$18 show only, and reservations are required. For reservations, including resort stays, or more information, call 800-273-7877 or visit thelandmarkresort.com.

I didn't know that!

Jon Jarosh, director of communications and public relations for the Door County Visitor Bureau, suggested taking a ride on the **Washington Island Ferry**, running between Northport Pier at the tip of the Peninsula and Detroit Harbor on the island once in the morning and once in the afternoon in winter. He said traversing the waters past Death's Door is far different in winter than in summer, especially once ice floes become more prevalent in the passage.

"Taking an ice boat is something people probably never do," Jarosh said. "It's just a neat experience."

The ferry website provides information on times and prices, as well as webcams at its docks. For more, call 800-223-2094 or visit wis-ferry.com.



The Door County Cherry Pickers and Moonlight Flyers of Racine battle it out in the Classic Division of the 2015 Door County Pond Hockey Tournament.
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