



# Cross Country Canaan

*Canaan Valley Resort shifts gears during winter, opening its 18-hole golf course to cross country skiers.*

written by KATE MISHKIN

**E**ven blanketed with feet of snow, the golf course at Canaan Valley Resort sees a lot of action in the winter. Visitors during these months are likely wearing more layers of clothing, golf shoes definitely aren't required, and the scenery is breathtaking no matter when you're there. Winter has offered something extra special since the resort opted to transform the golf course into cross country ski trails in the off-season.

During the winter months, visitors can cruise the more than 20 miles of cross country trails, visit the on-site cross country pro shop

for gear needs, and even take lessons offered for visitors new to the sport. Ski and snowshoe rentals are also available from the pro shop and, if you're staying at the resort, a shuttle can take you from the lodge directly to the golf course. Canaan Valley Resort has made it easy for visitors to experience the stunning, wide-open spaces of a region that has lured adventure seekers for more than 70 years.

The story of Canaan Valley Resort dates back to the early 1950s, when the Washington Ski Club would visit. Airplane pilots working in the area told anyone who would listen that the place was special—from their vantage point, they could see that it stays white longer than anywhere else around.

The club developed it and called it Cabin Mountain Ski Area, and skiers would use a rope as a towline up the hill. "They basically founded the Canaan Valley through that," says Justin Harris, media liaison for Canaan Valley Resort.

In 1971, the Canaan Valley became a state park. Through the years, West Virginia has gathered more land to grow its state park, and the resort has grown in both size and popularity. The next year, the resort built the golf course beloved by cross country skiers in winter. It boasts skiing, ice skating, tubing, and snowboarding—and that's just during the winter season.

Some things haven't changed: Canaan Valley's storybook views and picturesque mountains still draw visitors looking to explore the Mountain State's natural beauty. "Any weekend during ski season it's just bustling with people," Harris says.

With a valley floor about 3,200 feet above sea level, the Canaan Valley is the highest valley east of the Mississippi River, with mountains that reach about 4,300 feet. It bodes well for wintertime, when thick snow blankets the 60,000-acre valley.

This year, the winter season officially starts December 14. The ski areas see between 150 and 180 inches of snow each year, about



a quarter of which is natural. The rest is made on-site. In fact, the resort just increased the water supply from the Blackwater River and got a new pump for snowmaking. Now, it has nine snow guns—four tower guns and five moveable guns.

Downhill skiers and snowboarders enjoy an 850-foot vertical drop, with about 90 acres of skiable terrain over 47 trails designed for all experience levels. Cross-country skiers can do their thing on the golf course's marked and unmarked trails for free.

The resort is gearing up for a busy season. Part of that is due to some recent sprucing up, according to Harris. "We had a \$34 million dollar renovation in 2013, a state-funded renovation, which is why we have this beautiful hotel now," he says. "It's pretty stunning." The resort also opened two more ticket sale windows to shorten wait times.

The 160-room hotel sits on the opposite side of the road from the ski mountain, with balconies that overlook the valley. In the wintertime, it looks like a snow globe. There are also 23 cabins and cottages on the resort property. "I like that because it gives the ski mountain its own natural appeal," Harris says. "So when you're skiing you don't have houses or a hotel—you're in the forest, which is really cool."

The resort is in a prime location; people visit to ski and snowboard, but they also like to wander into nearby Thomas and Davis, where they can hear live music and try craft beer. People go next door to Blackwater Falls State Park and to the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. "You're not just coming here for skiing, you're coming here for an overall winter experience," Harris says.

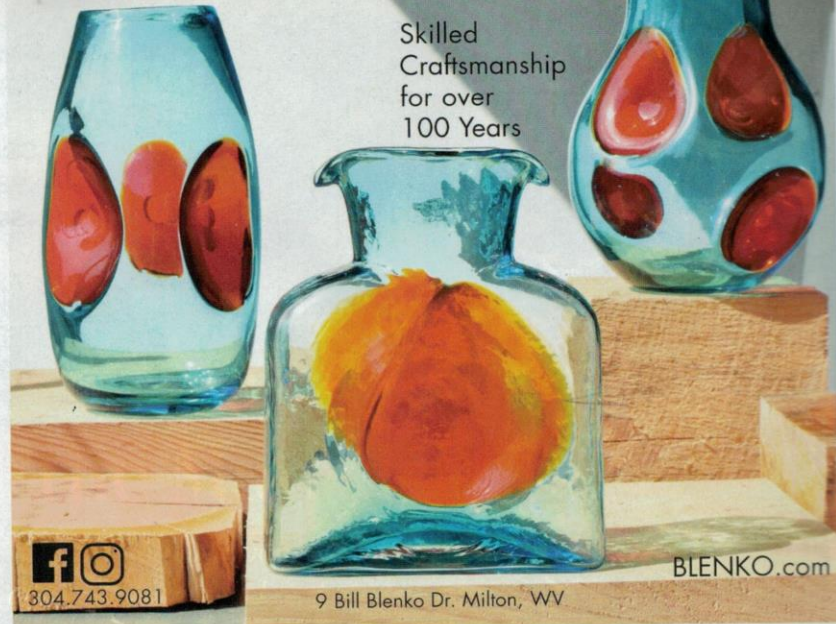
"The state of West Virginia is realizing there's a lot of money to be made on tourism here," he adds. "They're putting money in marketing. They've been shooting more and more commercials. And I think all of that has an impact on bringing people to the area." 230 Main Lodge Road, Davis, 800.622.4121, [canaanresort.com](http://canaanresort.com)

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