


The Lake Tahoe of the South

Recent winters have brought record snowfall to Western Maryland's Deep Creek Lake, just a three-hour drive from the Nation's Capital. Here's our guide to the snowiest spot in the South



Frostburg's Savage
River Lodge, 45
minutes from Deep
Creek Lake

Your entire winter wish list is here. Cozy fire casting shadows in an expansive lodge library? Check. Families snowshoeing into a thicket of evergreens? Check. Old-timers dropping lines into holes cut from a frozen lake? Check. You can even find dogsledding and sleigh

rides. All this in a postcard-ready setting: the 3,900-acre Deep Creek Lake, surrounded by Maryland's mountains and dusted with an average snowfall of 120 inches. (That's twice as much as Denver, Colorado, and Fairbanks, Alaska!) Turn the page for our guide to planning a frosty yet cozy winter weekend. ➔



It's an easy hike to Muddy Creek Falls, which often freezes this time of year.

STAY

Set on the shore of Deep Creek Lake, **Lake Pointe Inn** has nailed the yin and yang of a winter retreat. The Arts and Crafts-style bed-and-breakfast has a wraparound porch with views of the lake, while a massive stone fireplace dominates the lobby. Outside, a fire pit in the snow is fully stocked with marshmallows. Every detail speaks of this inn's devotion to comfort, from rooms with gas fireplaces and lake-view balconies to the comfort food: pumpkin flapjacks and egg scrambles by morning and a complimentary happy hour with wine and hors d'oeuvres each eve. (Rooms with breakfast start at \$232; visit deepcreekinns.com.)

The **Savage River Lodge** may be a 45-minute drive from the lake, but this full-service resort is a destination all on its own. Sitting on the Eastern Continental Divide, the lodge enjoys lake-effect snow, with access to 13 miles of groomed cross-country ski-and-snowshoe trails. A double-sided stone fireplace warms a three-floor lodge complete with an impressive library, a full bar, and a restaurant that leans heavily on local fare (wild game meatloaf, anyone?). Sign up for one of the lodge's all-day culinary classes (\$300/person) and you can even be chef for a day. (Private cabins start at \$220; savageriverlodge.com.)

For large groups, a cabin makes the ideal winter base camp. From shoreline homes to slope-side rentals, some

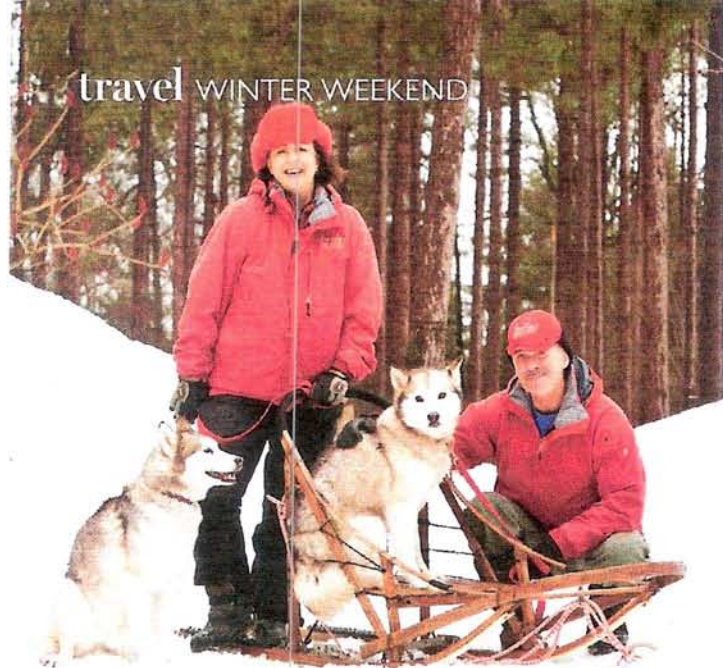
cabins come equipped with hot tubs, bonfire pits, game rooms, and even in-home movie theaters. (We found a five-bedroom lodge with a hot tub, pool table, wood-burning fireplace, and views of the lake for about \$100 per bedroom per night; rentals.deepcreek.com.)

PLAY

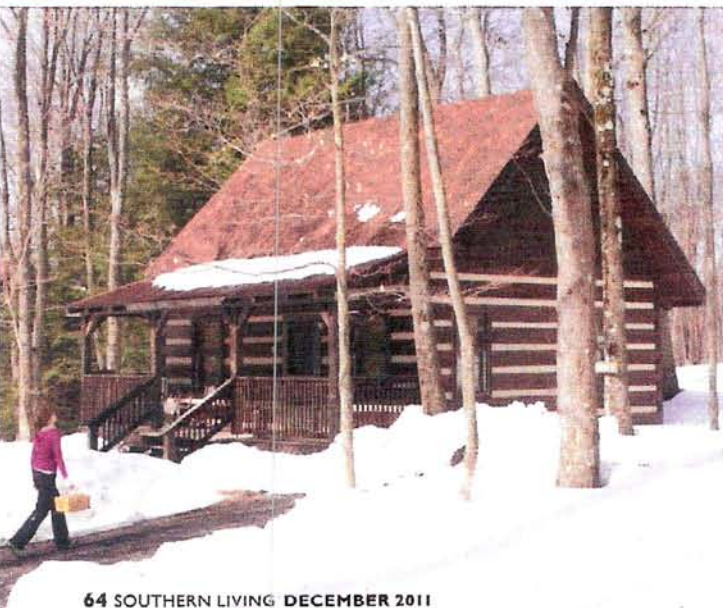
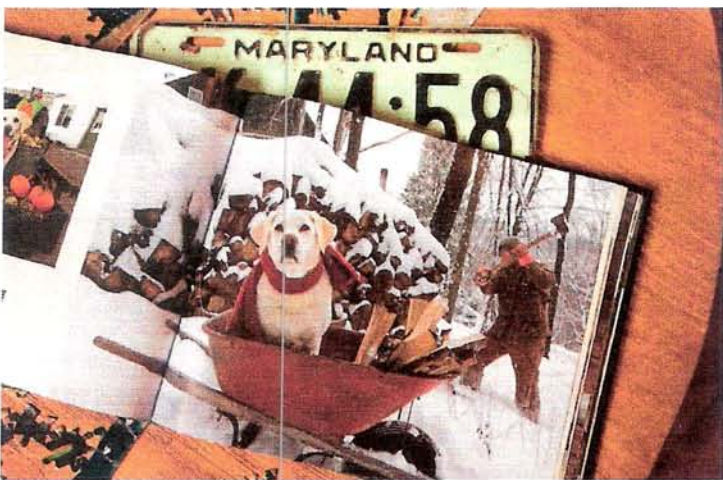
FROZEN WATERFALL HIKE: Strap on a set of snowshoes (it's as easy as walking, we swear!) for a two-hour guided hike (\$30) through an old-growth hemlock forest in **Swallow Falls State Park**. Your ultimate destination is Muddy Creek Falls, the highest waterfall in Maryland, which, with any luck, will be frozen during your winter visit—a spectacular photo op. Consider signing up for the four-hour Nature Photography Tour (\$125), which includes camera instruction from a pro nature photographer (deepcreeklake-eco-adventures.com).

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING: There's no shortage of cross-country trails in the Deep Creek Lake area, but the most civilized option might be at **Savage River Lodge**, where in-house rentals (\$20/day) and lessons (\$20/person) make the experience a cinch for beginners. To entice visitors even further, co-owner Mike Dreisbach has set up a warming station with a bonfire pit and benches where skiers can rest and guests can roast marshmallows (savageriverlodge.com). ☞

ART MERIPOL



Dog days of winter: Learn to mush huskies from guides Linda and Mike Herdering of Husky Power Dogsledding (TOP); ask about Bodhi the legendary host at Savage River Lodge, with library and private cabins (CENTER AND BOTTOM).



DOGSLEDDING: The Siberian huskies at **Husky Power Dogsledding** may be the happiest locals in Deep Creek. “We’re the only commercial dogsledding outfit below the Mason-Dixon,” says co-owner Linda Herdering. Choose from a 10-minute jaunt (groups of 10 for \$40/person) to a two-hour excursion (\$245/person), and hang with the dogs while learning about the sport (huskypowerdogsledding.com).

DOWNHILL SKIING: **Wisp Resort**, Maryland’s only downhill ski area, offers 132 acres of skiing, almost half of which is designed for beginner skiers and boarders. Head for the North Camp Trails, almost entirely devoted to new skiers, and combine Backbone Pass with Big Dipper for 1½ miles of gentle terrain with pastoral views. Go during the week to avoid the crowds and score a deal (\$49 for lesson, rentals, and weekday lift ticket after 2 p.m.; wispresort.com).

SLEIGH RIDES: Does it get any cozier than snuggling beneath a blanket while sipping hot chocolate in a horse-drawn sleigh? Hardly. **Pleasant Valley Dream Rides** offers sleigh rides on a gorgeous family-owned farm throughout the day, but we say reserve a private excursion under the stars (\$60/couple; pleasantvalleydreamrides.com).

EAT

Mountain State Brewing Company serves creative wood-fired flatbread pizzas, such as the Buffalo Chicken (with grilled chicken, Buffalo sauce, and blue cheese, \$17) and such treats as the s’mores dessert pizza made with Nutella, graham crackers, and marshmallows (\$8). The beer’s good too, handcrafted by two West Virginia brothers. Try their Almost Heaven Amber Ale, a caramel-flavored brew (\$4; mountainstatebrewing.com). **The Four Seasons at Will O’ the Wisp** is the local go-to spot for an intimate dinner. The restaurant sits inside the family-owned Will O’ the Wisp Resort (owned by the same family who started Wisp Resort in 1955) and has been a local institution for decades. Even more surprising than the restaurant’s longevity is the kitchen’s eclectic from-scratch menu, with items as varied as berry-blackened tuna (\$22) and tomato-basil tofu (\$16). Call ahead to reserve one of the handful of tables overlooking the lake (willothewisp.com). SL

THE SOUTH’S SNOW BELT



The same lake effect that dropped 400 inches of snow in Western Maryland during the last two winters also blankets the mountains of West Virginia. For another winter wonderland, consider the **Canaan Valley** of West Virginia, which has two downhill ski resorts (Timberline and Canaan Valley) as well as a popular cross-country area, White Grass. The valley averages 160 inches of snow each winter (skithevalley.com).

Mugging around
the bonfire pit at
Savage River Lodge



LET IT SNOW!

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Two winters ago, the Deep Creek
Lake area saw off-the-chart's snowfall
with nearly 300 inches in one season—
that's double the yearly average.

