



SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT/HAWKSNEST

Located between Boone and Banner Elk, Hawksnest offers both snow tubing and winter zip lining.

# Head north for the winter

## Boone and Blowing Rock offer cold-weather family fun

By Lockie Hunter  
WNC Parent contributor

The towns of Blowing Rock and Boone are marvels in winter.

There truly is a “blowing rock” and this rock face has wind gusts so mighty that it is the only place on earth where it is rumored to snow upside down. This wonder and many more await your family a short drive from the Asheville area.

“It’s winter. Don’t hibernate. Celebrate!” says Billie Rogers, events director

for the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce.

Blowing Rock hosts **Winterfest**, a four-day festival complete with a frigid Polar Plunge and a steaming Chili Challenge. The event kicks off Jan. 27 with Winter-Feast, showcasing the area’s restaurants. On Jan. 28, shop the area and enjoy a concert. And on Jan. 29, experience the Winterfest Polar Plunge, Chili Cook Off, Wine Tasting and Auction and more.

“We have something for all ages from the kids activities to game shows to the

ice carvers,” Rogers says. She adds that there will be free hayrides and free hot chocolate (as well as free snow).

Billed as North Carolina’s oldest travel attraction, the actual “**Blowing Rock**” is not just a pretty cliff face. Featuring a walk with a garden waterfall and observation tower, the site is open on weekends in January and February (weather permitting). Winter transforms the garden, cliff and falls, painting a white expression on the landscape.

Get some relief from the cold with an

indoor diversion at the **Mystery Hill**, which has been around since 1948. Inside the “crooked house,” watch balls roll uphill and experiment with other uncanny phenomena in this place where gravity seems to have taken a holiday. The Hall of Mystery lets children experiment with physics and math. Kids can study bubbles, holograms and mirrors, and learn while having fun.

Also on site is the Appalachian Heritage Museum and a Native Artifacts Collection, including 50,000 arrowheads from 23 states.

Mystery Hill is open all year. Children age 4 and younger are free.

### Snow sports

The Blowing Rock and Boone area is flush with ski resorts, and most of them have special children’s programs and lessons. Most lesson packages include equipment and helmet rental and slope tickets.

**Appalachian Ski Mountain’s** Skiwee and Cruiser Camp programs are intended to teach beginning snowboarders (ages

7-12) and skiers (ages 4-10).

**Sugar Mountain Resort** bills itself as North Carolina’s largest ski/snowboard area with 20 slopes, eight lifts and a tubing park.

**Ski Beech** is the highest ski area on the East Coast at a 5,506 feet in elevation. A ski school and youth learning center are on site, as is an ice skating rink. For parents with much younger children, The Beech Mountain Resort Nursery provides care for infants and toddlers ages 6 months-3 years. Reservations are required and must be made one day in advance.

For those who prefer horizontal winter fun, **Hawksnest Snow Tubing** offers the longest snow tubing runs in North Carolina. It is also one of the few places to go zip lining in the winter months. Children must be 3 years old to snow tube.

### Fun family dining

For more than 40 years, **Dan’l Boone Inn** has been serving Boone and the High

*Continues on Page 34*

## BOONE/BLOWING ROCK DETAILS

**Winterfest:** In downtown Blowing Rock. Tickets and information available at Blowing Rock Visitors Center, 7738 Valley Blvd., Blowing Rock; 828-295-7851.

**The Blowing Rock:** 432 Rock Road, P.O. Box 145, Blowing Rock; 828-295-7111

**Mystery Hill:** 129 Mystery Hill Lane; Blowing Rock; 828-264-2792

**Appalachian Ski Mountain:** 940 Ski Mountain Road, Blowing Rock; 828-295-7828

**Sugar Mountain Resort:** 1009 Sugar Mountain Drive, P.O. Box 369, Banner Elk; 828-898-4521

**Ski Beech:** 1007 Beech Mountain Parkway, P.O. Box 1118, Banner Elk; 828-387-2011

**Hawksnest Snow Tubing:** 2058 Skyland Drive, Seven Devils; 828-963-6561

**Dan’l Boone Inn:** 130 Hardin St., Boone; 828-264-8657

**The Village Inns of Blowing Rock:** 315 Sunset Drive, Blowing Rock; 828-414-9154

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# Travel: Explore Boone and Blowing Rock this winter

Continued from Page 33

Country area delicious homecooked “family style” meals. Breakfast includes scrambled eggs, bacon, country ham, sausage, grits, fresh stewed apples, biscuits and gravy, cinnamon bread and black cherry preserves. Dinner includes three meats (staples such as fried chicken and country style steak), five veggies and dessert. Winner of awards including first place among readers of *Our State Magazine* for Family Dining/Country Cooking, the Dan'l Boone Inn will leave you full and warm.

## Wrap it all up

Consider an inclusive package at a local inn.

“We offer several fun, family packages, including our Tweetsie Railroad, Choose Cut and Plant Package, and skiing packages,” notes Jessica B.



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**The natural wonders of the High Country transform into sparkling scenes in the winter months.**


SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT  
**The Polar Plunge in Chetola Lake is one of the highlights at Winterfest.**

Smith, general manager of the **Village Inns of Blowing Rock**, which include the Village Inn, Hillwinds Inn and Ridgeway Inn. "All three are located in the heart of beautiful downtown Blowing Rock, very close to upscale shops, restaurants, and

area attractions."

Rates include a continental breakfast each morning, an afternoon snack with complimentary wine tasting and free wi-fi. A selection of the rooms even allow pets.

*Lockie Hunter is a local freelance writer. Contact her at [lockie@lockiehunter.com](mailto:lockie@lockiehunter.com).*



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