

Take a Garrett County Spring Break

March in Western Maryland Can Mean Skiing or Golf

The Deep Creek Lake area of Western Maryland has long been known for its winter skiing and sum-



The golf course is directly behind the Wisp Resort Hotel, which offers stay and play packages.

mer boating activities. For more than a century, visitors have been coming to Garrett County for respite and regeneration, but also a little action and adventure.

Deep Creek Lake offers 65 miles of shoreline and plenty of summertime water activities, and with Wisp Resort's state-of-the-art snowmaking machine, winter skiing lasts well into March. But the region's shoulder seasons offer just as many outdoor activities as do the prime-time winter and summer months.

"Spring is the peak season for fly fishing," said Lori Epp, of Wisp Resort. "We have four world-class rivers." Garrett County holds all of Maryland's records for trout fishing, and in recent years, fly fishing has become an additional draw. In 2007, Orvis named the Wisp outfitter as Guide Service of the Year, a distinction that Epp said is "very prestigious" for a new outfitter.

Several outfitters in the county offer clinics and fly fishing trips on some of the most famous fishing rivers in the world — the Youghiogheny (Yough), North Branch of the Potomac, Savage, and Casselman.

But even with a surplus of rivers and Maryland's largest man-made lake, Garrett County offers plenty of land-based activities. The county boasts 150 miles of maintained hiking trails. Biking also has become popular, and a decade-long effort to develop trails for bikers has turned the area into a cycling destination.

Wisp Resort also features a Mountain Coaster, a cross between an alpine slide and a rollercoaster. With manual handbrakes, riders can control their car as they turn, twist, and roll for 3,500 feet, reaching speeds up to 25mph.

Golfing in Garrett County

Two championship golf courses also play a role in attracting visitors to Maryland's westernmost county — Oakland Country Club and the Wisp Resort Course.

Oakland Country Club started as a nine-hole course in 1937, part of a Great Depression-era Works Progress Administration project. In the 1960s, another nine holes were added, giving golfers "two slightly different tests of golf," said Oakland's General Manager and PGA Pro Pat Warren.

"The front side is more traditional, with big greens," he said. "The back has smaller greens, almost postage stamp size. It's not overly long (6,417 yards from the back tees), and it's pretty open — very forgiving off the tees."

Oakland's signature hole is No. 5, a 593-yard par 5 that has water on both sides of the fairway and requires "three good shots to get there," including an uphill wedge to the green, Warren said. No. 10 is the course's toughest hole, a 237-yard downhill par 3. Warren suggests that golfers play it like a par 4 and hope for a birdie.

The club has been home to the Western Maryland Amateur tournament, a three-day event that attracts golfers from across the country. The late Jim McKay, of *Wild World of Sports* fame, and PGA touring professional Donnie Hammonds have played the Western Maryland Amateur.

In 2008, the Wisp Resort Course underwent a dramatic change when four new holes were added to the 30-year-old course. Designers removed two narrow par 4s and two par 3s from play and replaced them with four new holes on the north side of the course.

"Our longtime members were ecstatic," Epp said. "It's like a whole new course, a totally new experience."

The new holes — 11-14 — maintain not only the elevation changes for which the Wisp Resort Course is known, but also incorporate the area's his-

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The Mountain Coaster takes you downhill at speeds up to 25 miles per hour!

tory into the layout. A decades-old springhouse sits beside No. 11, and the green was built on the spot where an old haunted barn once stood.

Designers also changed the course's finishing hole, a 562-yard par 5 and previous No. 17, which allowed them to use the old downhill par 3 18th as a betting hole for a last-ditch effort to win back that \$2 Nassau.

Other Outdoor Activities

But springtime in Garrett County is more than just lures and lob wedges. With almost a dozen state parks and other wildlife sanctuaries, Garrett County offers outdoor enthusiasts plenty of open-air opportunities.

At 53 feet tall, Muddy Creek Falls at Swallow Falls

Over the next few months, festivals and fundraisers highlight activities for Garrett County visitors and locals alike.

The second annual Kayaks, Tunes, and Brews will be held on May 23 at the Adventure Sports Complex International (ASCI), which operates the world's only mountaintop whitewater rafting course.

The first weekend in June, the 22nd McHenry Highland Festival celebrates the Celtic culture with a three-day event, featuring bagpipes, re-enactors, and traditional Scottish music, games, and dance.

State Park is Maryland's highest waterfall and well-known photo destination. Deep Creek Lake State Park also is popular in the spring as boaters get their first chance on the water after the winter. Public boat launches and beaches make this state park an appealing destination for visitors.

Winter and summer in Garrett dominate the area's attraction for visitors, but springtime in the region offers its own unique offerings in what arguably is a true four-season destination.

By J. Eric Eckard

CHECK THESE OUT

Garrett County Tourism: 301-367-4366, www.visitdeepcreek.com

Wisp Resort: 301-367-4911, www.wispresort.com

Oakland Country Club: 301-334-3883, www.golfatoakland.com

McHenry Highland Festival: www.highlandfest.info

Adventure Sports Complex International: 301-367-3250, www.adventuresportscenter.com

WISP RESORT

March

Maryland Special Olympics Winter Games
 Sunday - Tuesday, March 1 - 3
 Come out & cheer on these amazing athletes!

Freestyle Skiers Rule
 Saturday, March 7
 2-plankers get ready to throw down or get thrown out of the comp!

Governor's Cup Race
 Saturday & Sunday, March 7 - 8
 The biggest race of the year, open to skiers & boarders.
 Presented by Deep Creek Winter Sports Team & Wisp Resort.

3 Jump Jackpot
 Saturday, March 14
 Lot of jumps, punctuated with jumps - 1st to the finish line with the best tricks takes home the cash-money!

Beachin' Weekend
 Saturday & Sunday, March 21 - 22
 Break out your swimsuit & celebrate spring skiing!
 Cardboard Box Derby, Live Entertainment, Games & Fun.

Make it an Overnight at the Wisp Resort Hotel
 Reserve a special lodging package today:
 Slide & Ride Weekend Pkg starting at \$169*
 Spring Adventure Pkg starting at \$63*

*Prices are per person, per night, based on availability, restrictions apply.

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