

By ROCHELLE LASH

The big news in Stowe this year is the addition of a high-speed chairlift, seating four abreast and put in at a cost of \$1.4 million. As a result, the sometimes windy and bitterly cold ride up Mount Mansfield, at 4,393 feet the state's highest mountain, has been cut just about in half, to seven minutes. The lift should also cut waiting time in half: to under 20 minutes.

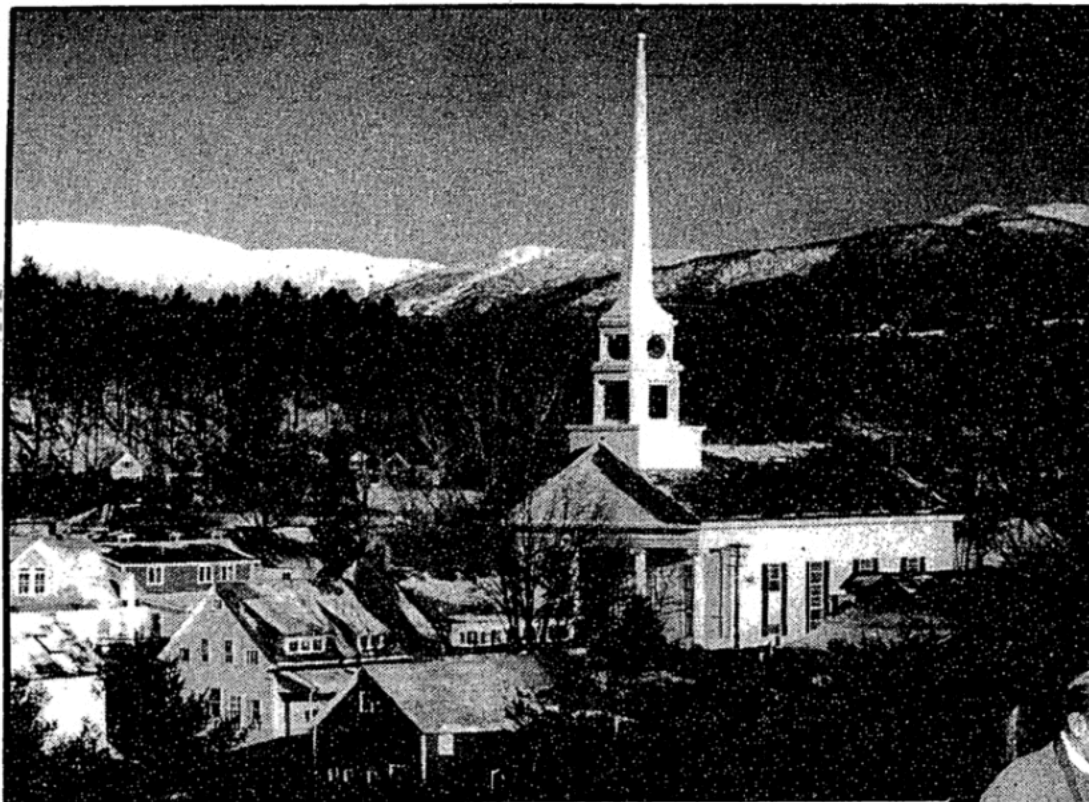
Stowe is a 223-year-old New England village that guards its traditions. After a tussle with the zoning board, for example, a fast-food franchise emerged in blue clapboard with a rustic, hand-painted wooden sign instead of a golden arch. The white-steeped Congregational Church still holds chicken-pie suppers on Sundays, and Stowe is small enough that people dial only four digits to make a local phone call.

Four-wheel-drive vehicles cause après-ski traffic jams at the only stoplight in town, where the two main streets, Main Street (State Route 100) and the eight-mile Mountain Road (State Route 108), meet. Fashionable one-piece ensembles and high-topped sneakers can be seen along with traditional knee-length down jackets and hiking boots. At night, Stowe remains resolutely casual; the few hotels that for a while requested jackets at dinner have relaxed the rule.

About 7,000 visitors a week come to Stowe (permanent population: 3,500) at peak times, especially during events like winter carnival, which will be Jan. 16 to 25. On Stowe's two mountains (Mount Mansfield and Spruce Peak) 32 of 44 trails are more than a mile, and one run, the Starr, has a pitch of 37 degrees. Mount Mansfield's Front Four (the National, the Lift Line, the Goat and the Starr) can intimidate even experts when a cold snap hardens packed

WHAT'S DOING IN

Stowe



Spire of Community Church (Congregational) dominates the village of Stowe. Duck decoys, below, are for sale at the Stowe Antique Center.



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snow into ice, known as Eastern powder, and moguls are carved into thigh-high icebergs.

Skiing

One-day lift tickets good on 32 runs cost \$29, up \$1 from last year. Tickets for ages 6 to 12 and 65 to 69 are \$15. Under-5's and over-70's ski free.

There are multiple-day packages, with or without lessons from 70 instructors in red, white and navy parkas, new this year. A five-day Mountain Experience (\$185) for intermediates or experts includes daily instruction and video analysis. From January to March, the 1984 Olympic medalist brothers Phil and Steve Mahre will hold training camps (\$450 a week or \$880 with accommodations and meals at the Inn at the Mountain). Children 7 to 12 explore varying terrain in supervised groups during the Mountain Adventure program (\$45 a day, \$180 for five days, including lunch), and there are day-care facilities for children aged 3 months to 12 years. For details, call the Mount Mansfield Company (802-253-7311; 800-253-4754).

At the Trapp Family Lodge up to 1,000 cross-country skiers pay \$5 a day to glide along 60 miles of groomed and ungroomed tracks, which connect with those of Edson Hill Manor, the Mount Mansfield Company and Topnotch to form a 100-

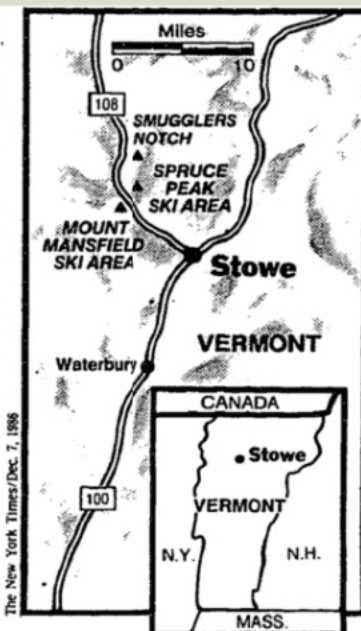
mile network. On Feb. 23 the Stowe Derby, a cross-country race that was first held in 1945, is expected to draw 900 contestants for the 10-mile run from the top of Mount Mansfield to the village.

Where to Stay

Topnotch (802-253-8585; 800-451-8686) pampers its guests with room service, indoor tennis courts, workout facilities, a cross-country ski center and shops. Rooms, some with balconies and Colonial antiques, range from \$95 to \$160 a night for two. A five-day ski package (\$535 a person) includes breakfast and dinner, lift tickets, cross-country skiing, a massage and free indoor tennis. Generally speaking, at Topnotch and other hotels, regular rates begin in January, with rates before Christmas slightly lower and those during holiday periods somewhat higher.

Austrian-style cuisine and architecture add to the Old World atmosphere at the Trapp Family Lodge (802-253-8511; 800-826-7000). The 73-room main hotel has a 40-foot glass corridor off the lobby and an indoor pool. Rates are \$74 to \$90 a person with breakfast and dinner.

At the 40-room Snowdrift Motel (802-253-7305), with fireplaces in some rooms and an outdoor hot tub, rates range from \$50 to \$75 for two a night or one night free on a five-night stay. The 100-room Stoweflake Resort (802-253-7355; 800-782-9009) charges \$54 to \$84 for two. The sprawling resort also has one, two- and three-



bedroom apartments and townhouses (\$90 to \$240), two restaurants, an indoor pool, a health club and a conference center. A five-day rate of \$425 a person includes lift tickets, local transportation and breakfast and dinner.

Guests in condominiums at the Inn at the Mountain (802-253-7311) at the base of the Toll House lift can ski from their door. Lift tickets, access to a health club and two meals a day are

day or \$175 to \$195 for five days, including breakfast and dinner).

The Stowe Area Association (802-253-7321; 800-247-8693) can make reservations at more than 60 inns, hotels, motels, lodges and the like.

Where to Dine

At the Stowehof Inn (802-253-9722), jutting from Edson Hill, a Continental dinner (\$60 for two) is preceded by a 20-minute sleigh ride and hot rum drinks. The spacious dining room at Topnotch (802-253-8585) offers an imaginative menu of meat, fish and game as well as items low in sodium and cholesterol, including linguini with tofu (\$3.95) and breast of pheasant (\$16.25). The Isle de France (802-253-7751) offers classical French cuisine, including oysters bourguignonne (\$6) and chateaubriand (\$40 for two).

Fireplaces warm the lobby, library and most guest rooms of the Ten Acres Lodge (802-253-7638) in an 1830's red clapboard farmhouse, considered by many the finest place to eat. The menu changes daily, but look for local veal and lamb specialties and chocolate cake with truffles (dinner for two \$50 to \$60 without wine).

For informal lunches (\$5 to \$10) or dinners (\$10 to \$20), residents favor Hapleton's West Branch Cafe (802-253-4653), which serves sandwiches that you can design yourself until 2 A.M., and the Whip Bar & Grill (802-253-4400), a cheery cafe in the historic Green Mountain Inn.



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Len Sheller, owner of the Logwood Inn, presiding at carving table at dinner. Below, the Trapp Family Lodge.



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included in the midweek price of \$100 a person or five nights for \$430 a person. Weekend rates are \$125 a person, with breakfast and dinner.

The Notch Brook Resort's townhouse condominiums (802-253-4882) have a bathroom for each bedroom, fireplaces and an outdoor heated pool (\$37 to \$73 a day including Continental breakfast). A one-bedroom unit, which can sleep four using the living room, costs \$625 for five nights.

The Ski Inn (802-253-4050), a mile from the mountain, has 10 bright rooms, some with private bath (\$27.50 to \$40 a person, including two meals). The Timberholm Inn (802-253-7603), among birches atop Cottage Cub Road, has boosted capacity to 11 rooms (\$32 to \$48 for two, with breakfast at large pine tables \$3.50 extra). The Logwood Inn (802-253-7354) has two chalets and 30 rooms — none with locks (\$42 to \$50 a person a

The ever expanding Shed (802-253-4364), occupying a 150-year-old cider mill on Mountain Road, offers lunch (\$5 to \$10) and dinner (\$10 to \$20) as well as its specialty, the Shedburger, marinated in beer and served on an English muffin with sweet pepper relish and sharp Vermont cheddar (\$4.20).

Early birds stoke up on stacks of blueberry pancakes (\$3.45) beginning at 5:30 A.M. at McCarthy's (802-253-8526). Late risers can feast till noon on eggs benedict (\$4.75) at the Gables Inn (802-253-7730).

Après-Ski

Rock-and-roll trivia contests, 48-ounce pitchers of draft beer (\$5.25), pizza (\$1.25 a slice) and some of the best 50's and Motown tapes in New England lure après-skiers to the rec-

tangular bar of the Matterhorn, a dance hall half a mile from the base of the mountain.

The cashmere and suede set crowds around the fireplace at Topnotch's Buttertub Bar where Bob Shannon mixes a drink called the broken leg: vodka, whipped cream and apple cider (\$3.25).

At Mr. Pickwick's Pub in Ye Olde Englands Inne, the Highland Weavers sing British folk songs from 8 P.M. to midnight, and a yard (three-foot-tall glass) of Whitbread ale is \$7.

Late-night action is split between B. K. Clarke's, a boisterous bar, and the Rusty Nail, a sagging three-story barn where under-25s dance to live music.

Shopping

Local crafts and unusual gifts abound at Prints and Patches, where queen-size quilts sell for \$200 to \$300, and at the Country Goose, where arrangements of dried wildflowers cost \$40 to \$300. The Christmas Place carries 2,000 kinds of ornaments (\$2 to \$20) and icicle-shaped lights (\$12). At Everything for Cows, a bar stool painted black and white is \$120.

The Stowe Antiques Center specializes in Vermont country wares, such as furniture from the late 1700's and a wide range of decoys (\$50 to \$1,000). The center also distributes a free map pinpointing the dozen or so antique shops in Stowe and neighboring Waterbury and Morrisville.

Shaw's General Store, an emporium that has been on Main Street since 1895, carries everything from maple syrup to hiking boots, imported long silk underwear, Lacoste T-shirts and the down-filled, knee-length nylon slope coat by the Gerry Company (\$235). Fashion-conscious skiers can find Bogner skiwear at Betsy Snite Sports; Anzi Besson and Peter Steinbronn labels at Romy's; Colmar, Skimer and Head at Front Four Sports and Patagonia and Woolrich clothing at A. J.'s Sports.

A thriving wool-products cottage industry began in 1958 when Annabelle Moriarty knit a triangle-shaped tuque for her son, Marvin, then a member of the United States ski team. Traditionalists still get their Nordic-style ski sweaters (\$95) and hats (\$20) from Moriarty's 26 knitters, but Stowe Woolens, a competitor with more than 50 patterns and 100 colors, is one of the largest producers in the country. Hand-loomed limited-edition sweaters, mostly for women (\$300 to \$400) by Dia Elliman at Dia North of Boston, depict an American Indian theme. Look for nonitch, acrylic neck warmers (\$7) by the Turtle's Neck Company at Boots 'n' Boards.

For Nonskiers

A 10-minute gondola ride (\$7 round trip) to the mountain-top Cliff House for lunch yields a view of the Stowe Valley, Smuggler's Notch Mountain Pass and, on a clear day, New Hampshire's Mount Washington 100 miles away.

Stowe Aviation (802-888-7845) provides a bigger picture with a 25-minute tour in a single-engine Cessna (\$50 for three) or a ride in a hot-air balloon (\$300 for two).

Shaw's General Store rents skates for the indoor Jackson Arena (802-253-8173) or the lighted pond at the Quality Inn (802-253-7131). The Village Athletic Club (802-253-7151) behind the Green Mountain Inn has sauna, steam baths (\$10 for a one-time visit) and an indoor workout center with racquetball and squash courts. The Topnotch Racquet Club (802-253-8585) has four indoor tennis courts (\$16 an hour) and instruction.

Edson Hill Riding Stables (802-253-8954) organizes sleigh rides (\$6 a person) past Edson Hill Manor to Percy Maple Products.

At the Helen Day Art Center (802-253-8358), the annual Festival of Christmas Trees runs to Dec. 28 and photographs of snow crystals in the 1880's by William A. (Snowflake) Bentley, a Vermont scientist, will be on display from Jan. 17 to Feb. 28. ■

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