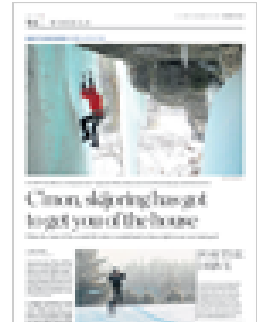


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C'mon, skjoring has got to get you of the house

Make the most of the wonderful winter wonderland we have right in our own backyard

Karen Kwan Special to the Star

About this series: With COVID-19 restrictions having eased over the last few months, Wheels wants to inspire you to get ready to explore - but only when it is safe to do so. This series of daytrips and longer drives highlight great experiences you can have in the province and across Canada, and show you why this country is "Ours to Discover."

Looking for something to do during the holiday break and the weeks ahead? Winter keeps many of us indoors. This year, instead of hiding inside from the elements, rethink how you do winter. There are trails, lakes, hills and fields blanketed with snow and ice that are perfect spots for trying out a slew of activities that will make you love getting out of hibernation. Grab your car keys and set your GPS to any one of these winter wonderland adventures.

Skijoring

Santa's got his reindeer, but you can turn your dog into your own little engine while cross-country skiing. The sport is known as skjoring. Don't have your own dog? No problem, Yours Outdoors

can hook you up with one during a beginner lesson with skijor expert Karen Kohler.

"I love the agility of the sport, and the connection you have with your dog moving together and building that trust is pretty awesome," she said.

Where to try it: Book a two-hour lesson (this includes a harness for your dog) for \$90 per person at Yours Outdoors in Haliburton. If you need cross-country skis, you can rent a set at Algonquin Outfitters in nearby Huntsville (it also ships some smaller items).

How to get there: Take Highway 404 north, followed by Highway 48 and Highway 35 north. Then, drive along Highway 118 east to Haliburton.

Fat biking

Fat biking will have you cycling through snowy conditions on two wheels that are about five inches wide, perfect for riding over rougher surfaces. Not only do you get an adrenaline rush fat biking, if you wipe out, it's a little less painful thanks to the cushioning of snow.

Where to try it: Rent a fat bike for one,

One Axe Pursuits offers ice-climbing experiences in a gorge near Milton, where you can climb up the side of a gorge via a 60-foot wall of ice. Skijoring is a mix of cross-country skiing while being pulled along by a dog. One Axe Pursuits Yours Outdoors

two or four hours (or for a full day) from Liv Outside in Bracebridge and hit the nearby trails.

How to get there: Take Highway 400 north and merge onto Highway 11. Take exit 182 and follow Highway 118 west into Bracebridge. The business is located on Ecclestone Drive.

Snowshoeing

Now lighter than ever thanks to aluminum frames, today's snowshoes can help you virtually float over fluffy snow.

"A lot of people just go on hiking trails, but you don't need snowshoes when the snow is packed down. Where you want to go is the swampy, forested areas that are unattainable nine months of the year," said Angelo Morgante, owner of Adventure Attic Travel and Outdoor Lifestyle in Dundas.

Morgante said it is in those areas that

you will get to see some incredible wildlife, including muskrats, deer and foxes.

Where to try it: Rent snowshoes for \$10 per day (with a \$100 deposit) from Adventure Attic Travel and Outdoor Lifestyle, and head to the nearby Dundas Conservation Area.

How to get there: Head west via Queen Elizabeth Way to Highway 403 and drive west. Take Exit 74 and follow York Road to Highway 6 north and turn right onto Highway 8.

Ice fishing

Discover what lies beneath the layer of ice covering Picton Bay during an ice fishing adventure in Prince Edward County. New this year at Merland Park Cottages are cameras that have been installed in the water so you can see the pike, trout and bass swimming underneath you. You will stay warm and cosy in your ice fishing hut, while the kids will be entertained watching the cameras to see if any fish approach. The idea, said Kevin Lavers, owner of Merland Park, is that even if you are unlucky enough to not catch any fish, you will still know they are there.

Where to try it: Book an ice fishing hut (this includes heat, transportation, bait and fishing rods) for \$75 per person at Merland Park Cottages in Picton.

How to get there: Drive east along Highway 401 and take exit 522 to County Road 40. Then take County Road 33 and Prince Edward County Road 1.

Snow tubing

The glee of swooping down a hill on a bouncy tube will make you fall in love

with winter again. Best of all, the whole family can participate in it.

"If you can sit, you can snow tube," said Ryan Leblanc, tube park manager at Snow Valley Ski Resort.

It has earned a reputation as one of the best tubing locations in Ontario thanks to its 14 chutes that are 10 storeys high. Tubers have been known to hit speeds of up to 80 kilometres per hour at Snow Valley, so you might want to bring ski goggles to protect your eyes. There are also three lifts to take you to the top, so you won't get tired climbing back to the start of the chutes.

Where to try it: Book two hours of tubing starting at \$20 per adult at Snow Valley Ski Resort, just outside Barrie in Minesing.

How to get there: Take Highway 400 north and then Exit 96B to Dunlop Street West in Barrie. From there, drive along Ferndale Drive north, followed by Wilson Drive and Snow Valley Road to Vespra Valley Road in Minesing.

Ice climbing

Gear yourself up with axes, crampons, boots, harnesses and a helmet. Then climb up the side of a gorge via a 60-foot wall of ice. While ice climbing might seem similar to rock climbing, it's even more thrilling because you can choose your route up the ice, said Christa Niravong of One Axe Pursuits.

"It is very empowering to hack your way to the top," she said.

She said that nothing beats facing your fears and watching yourself succeed one step at a time.

Where to try it: Book a six-hour lesson

(this includes safety equipment) for \$350 per person with One Axe Pursuits in Elora.

How to get there: Drive along Highway 401 west and take Exit 312 to Guelph Line in Milton. Continue toward Wellington County roads 29 and 7 to Henderson Street in Elora.