

Skiing comes to Beijing suburbs

Snow World Park a wild ride of snow fun

By YU NAN
China Daily staff

The first time I donned the bulky quilted skiing suit, put on the huge snow boots, carried the heavy skis on my shoulder and stumbled towards the entrance to the snow run, I didn't feel like skiing was worth the fuss.

I wished I was ice skating or having a snowball fight instead.

Skiing was not popular in Beijing for very long, partly because the nearest skiing resort was at least a four-hour drive away until two years ago.

But this year, six skiing resorts have opened in a Beijing suburb. The one I visited, called Snow World Ski Park, is just beside the famous Ming Tombs — only a 30-minute drive from downtown Beijing.

The sky was clear blue. The snow glistened in the bright sunshine. And I could hear the joyful voice of children.

In the distance, a boy was smoothly gliding down from the

top, speedy as an arrow. But a girl was struggling to get up with the help of a coach.

Another coach sensed my nervousness when he skillfully helped me fasten my boots into my skis. He smiled and told me the high-upper boots will protect me when sliding.

Then, I slightly bent my knees, leaned forward and pushed on my poles — I was moving!

The snow run was made specially for beginners like me. It is a gentle slope 380 metres long and 60 metres wide.

The other one on the left was longer and steeper, geared towards those veterans who can descend like a missile while making perfect, controlled turns.

I prayed I wouldn't tumble all the way down the bunny hill.

I pushed off, but suddenly a girl in front of me fell down, and I was sure I would run her over if she didn't move out of the way.

I didn't know how to stop, so I just fell down near her so that neither of us got hurt.

It was not a bad try for a beginner. "Skiing is not that hard!" I thought quietly. "I should go to the top!"

But once there, I regretted it immediately. I was the only girl. Peering down to the end of the run, I could not imagine how to balance myself on such a long and steep and speedy path. I felt my hands getting sweaty.

But after watching 10 "brave" men sliding down and only three of them falling, I made my mind to push on my poles and go.

"One, two, three!" I murmured, held a deep breath and rushed out.

I abandoned my body to the pull of gravity and pushed the centre of my body forward on the boots.

My heart raced as I picked up speed. My face ached in the icy wind, but the joy of flying through the snow for the first time made it worthwhile. I was flying!

I fell again, but that didn't stop me from 16 more tries at the top. The feeling of soaring was

fantastic, even with me fall-

I also tried riding a snow sled, but it was the best body sore later to return a better at the

Snow World Park, which occupies 500,000 square metres, is still in its formative period and will formally open just before

New Year's Eve. It will also offer dog sledding, horse-drawn sleighs, snowman-making, and ice skating.

It can accommodate about 1,800 people at a time.

"More than 100 people come here each weekend," said Lilian Li, the main instructor and board chairman of the park who has lived in China for 15 years.

"Skiing is becoming more popular in Beijing this winter, and we have more fun here." If you want to have a try, you can go to the website of the resort for more information.



For better skiers: A 1,500-metre-long run stretching from a mountain top near the county town of Miyun is now open for veteran skiers at the Nanshan Ski Village near Beijing.

New slope runs fit for both rookies and experts

By CHEN LIANG
China Daily staff

The skiing season is back, but enthusiasts in Beijing might find that nearby ski resorts used in prior years are losing their allure.

That may be because the skier is getting better, and the limited runs nearby are no longer a challenge.

Local slope operators, fortunately, are doing something about this.

The Nanshan Ski Village last weekend opened a new 1,500-metre-long run for advanced skiers on a mountaintop near the town of Miyun.

"It will take at least three sea-

sons for skier to improve from a beginner to one who can master this slope," boasted Dr Lu Jian, president and major designer of the resort. "Skiers can find a real good challenge at our resort."

Lu founded Nanshan as well as the nation's first and largest resort, Yabuli Ski Centre. The slopes meet international standards, he claimed.

"Beginners and good skiers will ski down different runs," he said. "Fast skiers need not to worry about crashing into slow beginners. It will be really safe here."

Under the same consideration of safety, Lu designed separate snowmobile runs for adults and for children. Snowboarders

can enjoy the powder at the country's first half-pipe. There is a toboggan run stretching downhill from the mountaintop for 1,318 metres.

The resort also features signage in both Chinese and English as well as high-quality skiing and snowboarding coaches available for instruction.

But Lu admitted the resort can't be called "international."

"I know how big the gap is between our resort and any international ski resort in developed countries," he said. "Right now I just expect to build the Nanshan Ski Village into one of the best ski resorts in the country."



Amateur attempts: First-time skiers try out their luck at Snow World Ski Park, just beside the famous Ming Tombs, about 30 minutes from downtown Beijing.



Advanced maintenance: Imported machinery helps keep the skiing resort at Nanshan Ski Village rolling.

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NOTES

From staff and Xinhua

SHENZHEN Tourism show

South China's Shenzhen City bordering Hong Kong will strive to attract more overseas tourists, a local official said here on Wednesday.

Shows highlighting Shenzhen's tourist attractions will be held next year in Japan and Germany, said Chi Xiongbiao, head of the Shenzhen Tourism Bureau.

A campaign calling on people to build the city into one of the best tourist sites in China will be launched soon, Chi said.

Being a major player in China's economic reforms and a major base for the export-orientated economy, Shenzhen plans to sharpen up its tourism in both marketing and management and take the lead again in serving the

needs of overseas tourists.

Between January and November, the city collected US\$1 billion in international tourism, up 10 per cent from the same time period last year.

Tourism became a pillar industry for the city between 1996 and 2000, generating more than US\$5.3 billion — 15 per cent of the city's total gross domestic product during that period.

WEIFANG, Shandong Kite festival

The 19th Weifang International Kite Festival will be held in Weifang in Shandong Province from April 20 to May 1.

More than 1,000 people, including individuals and 110 teams from both home and

abroad, are invited.

Known as the hometown of the kite in China, Weifang has held kite festivals since the 1930s. The first international festival was launched in 1984.

Since 1985, it has become an annual event that draws more and more participants and tourists to this small city where kite-making is a tradition.

SEOUL Korea tour

More than 444,000 Chinese tourists visited South Korea in the first 11 months of this year, the Korea National Tourism Organization said on Tuesday.

In the same period, a total of 4.75 million foreign tourists came to South Korea.

Japan led with 2.22 million people, followed by the Chinese mainland with 444,113 and the US States with 395,963.

It is the first time Chinese mainland tourists numbered more than 400,000. Last year, 317 Americans toured South Korea while 442,794 Chinese mainland people visited the country.

The number of Chinese mainland tourists to South Korea rose to 316,639 in 1999 and 217,000 in 1998.

South Korea's adopted various marketing strategies and tour programmes to attract even more Chinese tourists. The tourism organization estimates that 600,000 Chinese mainland tourists will visit South Korea for next year's World Cup finals.