



Adventure in play at Out of Bounds

By Ted Allen

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Editor's note: This is the second segment of a 10-part series as sports writer and outdoors enthusiast Ted Allen explores 10 recreational things to do in Central Virginia.

WINTERGREEN - A four-season resort, Wintergreen is at its busiest in the winter months, when snowboarders and skiers take to the slopes en masse.

But recreational opportunities are even more abundant in the spring, summer and fall, with activities such as golf and tennis, fishing and swimming, hiking and horseback riding available to its visitors.

Then there's the Out of Bounds Adventure Center, open daily throughout the summer and on weekends year-round. There, extreme sports athletes of all ages and abilities can try everything from downhill mountain biking and rock climbing to mechanical bull riding and bungee trampoline jumping.

Skateboarding, in-line skating and BMX biking are also offered at a scaled-down 3,225 square foot skate park, featuring a beginner's street area, advanced street park and half pipe, which has been relocated twice since the center opened in 2001.

A series of new inflatable obstacle course structures designed for three different age levels opened July 4 in front of the skate park. Only the bungee trampoline, which allows participants to bounce 25 feet into the air while doing forward and backward somersaults, is more popular.

For those who like to mountain bike, there are 24 cross country trails, mostly through the wooded areas that separate the ski slopes. Lifts are available for riders and their mountain bikes on weekends in May and June, Saturdays in July and August and by reservation in the spring and fall.

"You park at the bottom of the mountain, get a lift ticket and you're set for the rest of the day," said James Patterson, a resort employee from Vermont.

Being a recreational mountain biker, the first thing I tried, while my wife watched our 3-year-old daughter shriek on the bungee trampoline and explore the inflatable amusement park, was the rocky 7.2-mile Logger's Alley downhill trail.

"The 7.2-mile trail is not a killer," Patterson assured me.

"We bill it as intermediate," added Out of Bounds manager Chris Faunce, who moved to Waynesboro last year from Vail, Colo.

The trail features four crossings of Stoney Creek, which soon became obvious as to how it derived its name. It is steep enough that riders don't go back the way they bike down, but take a Valley Shuttle back to the resort from the Stoney Creek Golf Course clubhouse.

Even after first losing and then breaking and removing his chain, Faunce, who served as my guide, slalomed down the stone-covered fire trail like a downhill skier, picking a line through the canopy of rocks. Meanwhile, I fell once after hitting a rock on a fairly steep downhill stretch, nearly re-injuring the shoulder I dislocated on a head-over-handlebars fall descending Mill Mountain in Roanoke. I later lost my bike over my head - somehow managing to land with both feet in the water - after planting the front tire on the edge of a stone on the bank of one of the stream crossings.

If you prefer road cycling, and like riding uphill rather than down, the annual Wintergreen Ascent in early May is worth a try. That seven-mile race, which starts at the bottom of the mountain and finishes at the Wintergreen Spa and fitness center parking lot area at the top, boasts climbs reaching 15- to 20-degrees of grade, averaging close to 10. Those may seem about as steep as the Out of Bounds' 25-foot climbing tower, only more than 100 times taller, with 2,700 feet of elevation gain.

Team paintball is yet another Adventure Center option for the reckless die-hard.

"Paintball can be a lot of fun," Faunce said. "You don't realize how much adrenaline you can get going until you pull on some knee pads and run out there around the trees."

For those interested in less violent activities, The Wintergreen Nature Foundation maintains 30 miles of hiking trails, with connections to a picturesque stretch of the Appalachian Trail, in the resort's 6,000-acre protected area, within the 11,000-acre haven for outdoors lovers.

And besides 45 holes of golf, 27 of which are at scenic Stoney Creek, and an 18-hole miniature golf course beside the skate park, there is a new nine-hole disc golf course that roughly uses the slopes as its links, allowing for some long-range downhill

drives.

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