



[HOME](#) > [SKI RESORT LIFE](#)

Wisp Mountain Resort: Snow Wonder

Travel East

Eric Vohr · Dec 18, 2003

Looking for crab cakes and terrapins? Try Maryland. But if it's knee-deep you're after, go somewhere else, right? That's the perception that Wisp Mountain Resort is up against, but mid-Atlantic skiers might be surprised. I know I was during a late-March visit last year. While it rained everywhere else in the state, I caught a 14-inch dump at Wisp. And that's not as unusual as you'd expect this far south.

Though it's often overlooked among more thriving mid-Atlantic resorts, locals call Wisp (with mostly straight faces) the "Little Tahoe of Western Maryland, thanks to the proximity of six-mile long Deep Creek Lake and surprisingly abundant natural snowfall. Last year it counted 12 powder days and more than 200 inches of natural snow. And though the vertical drop is limited—610 feet—there's a variety of pitch and terrain.

Three black-diamonds—Squirrel Cage, The Face and Devil's Drop—stripe the front of the mountain. Squirrel Cage is Wisp's race hill—and a favorite first-run cruiser among regulars. (It's not uncommon to hear the old-timers griping when the kids are racing on their favorite morning corduroy.) Skier's left of Devil's Drop is a fantastic little glade called Three Pin Alley, and since Wisp averages about eight powder days a year, there are plenty of good days in the trees. On the east ridge, Eye Opener catches the early light and is less crowded. Neighboring Main Street has a sustained pitch that begs for fast GS turns.

The facilities are humble, but that's changing drastically. This winter (Wisp's 48th), skiers will find two new lifts and a refurbished daylodge. And Wisp's owners, in cooperation with the nonprofit Adventure Sports Center International, are poised to embark on an ambitious expansion. The drawings include a residential village, a new lodge, an adventure sports hall of fame and museum, an artificial whitewater course, a new golf course and an amphitheater, all to be built at the summit. Construction is expected to start next spring. Future plans call for further lift upgrades and terrain expansion, as well.

It'll never rival the big resorts, but a bigger Wisp sounds like more of a good thing—and a boon to Maryland skiers.

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