

New England Today **TRAVEL**

BERKSHIRES

Stretch Your Body and Mind in the Berkshires this Winter

Red Lion Inn getaways fire up snowy days.

Kim Knox Beckius • January 12, 2018

Sponsored by Red Lion Inn

When winter swipes away the crowds that make the Berkshires such a bustling summer arts hub and autumn leaf-peeping playground, this hilly region falls less dormant than you initially might perceive. Like Wite-Out painted over oopses, a coating of snow gives the Berkshires a fresh, clean start, but a careful look reveals it's merely masking what lies underneath. Dark nights and cold snaps can't erase the Berkshires' cultural vitality, beauty, and recreational possibilities. When your inclination to hibernate peaks, run away, instead, to the Red Lion Inn, and—like an artist who sees each blank canvas's inherent potential—shift your viewpoint on the season.



The historic Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, is the perfect place to begin your next Berkshires winter adventure.

Courtesy of Red Lion Inn

Sure, rooms at this historic hotel on Stockbridge’s Main Street—particularly the spacious, serene retreats at **Maple Glen guest house** just steps from the lively main inn—seem ideally designed for a long winter’s nap. But the Red Lion Inn is at the heart of efforts to make the Berkshires an active four-season destination. A place where traditional winter sports are just the start of a vibrant line-up of outdoor and indoor activities so physically and intellectually stimulating, even cold and snow haters will feel inspired and recharged.



*You don’t need to be a hard-core skier or snowboarder to hit the slopes at nearby **Ski Butternut** in Great Barrington.*

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You don’t need to be a hard-core skier or snowboarder to hit the slopes at nearby **Ski Butternut**, a retro-fun family mountain with 22 easy-to-expert trails and two terrain parks. The chairlift-serviced beginner hill makes it easy to get back into the sport or to give downhill lessons a try. Red Lion Inn’s **Ski & Stay package** makes midweek ski escapes more affordable than you’d imagine. Invest a bit more in a weekend getaway, and you’ll find Butternut doubly enticing. Snowmaking ensures all-ages thrills at the eight-lane, night-lit **snow tubing park**. A magic carpet lift saves you the exertion of trudging uphill between exhilarating runs.

Less obvious winter workouts can yield surprising side benefits. Horses still crave exercise in the winter, so an indoor arena riding lesson at **Undermountain Farm** in Lenox isn’t merely good for *your* core muscles. And a snowshoeing trek through the winter woods is both a calorie burner and a moving meditation. Just around the corner from the Red Lion Inn, **Laurel Hill Association trails** remain open year-round. You can embark on an easy snowshoe hike along the flat, riverside Mary V. Flynn Trail, which traces an old trolley route. Or challenge yourself to a moderate trek along the Ice Glen Trail, lined with snow-frosted, old-growth pines. The ultimate challenge is the short but steep Laura’s Tower Trail. Climb the tower for three-state views of the Berkshires, Catskills, and Green Mountains—all sugar-coated and sparkling just for you. Don’t own snowshoes? Rent them at **Berkshire Bike and Board** in Great Barrington or **Arcadian Shop** in Lenox, which is adjacent to additional snowshoeing terrain within 500-acre Kennedy Park.



The 15-acre Berkshire Botanical Garden in Stockbridge is an intriguing stop for a winter walk or photo shoot.

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If you primarily know the Berkshires as a spot for summer theater, dance, and music performances, it may startle you to discover how culturally alive the region remains from January through March. Don't think a garden has anything to offer in cold weather? Think again. The 15-acre **Berkshire Botanical Garden** is an intriguing stop for a winter walk or photo shoot, when skeletal trees cast a maze of shadows on crisp snow. And this non-profit's mission to enlighten doesn't take a winter holiday. Learn a new skill at the on-site Education Center, where upcoming workshops cover topics as diverse as cheesemaking, tree care, beekeeping, and brewing beer with botanicals.

The Mount's indoor-outdoor appeal is unparalleled this time of year, yet largely a secret. For the first time, the home in Lenox where Edith Wharton wrote her most famous novels remains open through February for winter weekend tours. Self-guided tours are an even more enchanting option: Read, sketch, write...even curl up window-side with a first edition of one of Wharton's novels from the tiny browsing library. Because furnishings are not original, you may sit wherever you feel inspired. The grounds—which Wharton thoughtfully designed with input from her renowned landscape architect niece, Beatrix Farrand—are open free to visitors all winter. Trails leading down toward the lake behind the mansion are postcard-perfect for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing.



This year, Edith Wharton's home, The Mount, will be open through February for winter weekend tours.

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Trails leading down toward the lake behind the mansion are postcard-perfect for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Even better, the grounds are free to visitors all winter.

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Tote snowshoes along to the [Norman Rockwell Museum](#) in Stockbridge, too. It's surrounded by 36 scenic acres, and a river walk is tucked behind the beloved artist's studio. Aerobic exercise boosts creativity, so you'll step inside this engaging museum with your imagination afire, ready to fully appreciate not only Rockwell's gift for capturing American life but the wildly fantastical illustrations by Tony DiTerlizzi on view this winter through spring. Admission is included if you've booked Red Lion Inn's [Norman Rockwell Experience package](#). Year-round, the museum

hosts talks, events, and workshops. You can even meet locals who modeled for Rockwell's immortal *Saturday Evening Post* covers the first Friday of each month.



With 36 acres outside and many examples of Rockwell's gift for capturing American life inside, the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge is a year-round Berkshires favorite.
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Back at the Red Lion Inn, there's one more unexpected way to invigorate every cell in your body. The hotel's heated outdoor pool and hot tub remain open through the wintry months. And while it may seem zany to take a plunge while the mercury is flirting with the freezing mark, a quick swim or soak will make heading inside for live music and comfort food in the **Lion's Den** or a meal in the **dining room** or **tavern** even more soul-soothing.



The heated outdoor pool and hot tub at the Red Lion Inn remain open through the wintry months.
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Enjoy live music and comfort food in the Lion's Den.

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Until the last snowflake melts, you can be sure a fire will blaze in the Red Lion Inn's lobby. So settle in after dinner—perhaps with a rum-spiked hot cider—and relish the warm tingle. It's not the flames, nor the alcohol. It's internal combustion that will carry you through remaining winter days with renewed energy and wonder.

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