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... But Who Says You Need to Hit The Slopes to Have a Good Time?

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I've suffered enough sports injuries over the years to make hurtling downhill on a pair of skinny planks -- *waxed* skinny planks -- sound like a pretty bad idea. ("Over my dead body," as my training coach Pedro once put it.)

So I arrived at [Virginia](#)'s Wintergreen Resort as a resolute non-skier. I had no plans for anything more strenuous than perhaps a fling at tubing, followed by a little time in the sauna, a massage, a couple of hours reading (wineglass in hand) by a fireplace, a nice dinner and perhaps a pickup game of billiards. When the first person I saw in the lodge was a woman asleep curled sideways in an armchair with her book half over the side, I smiled. I was not alone.

But the second person I saw was a 3-year-old in gleaming ski boots and right behind her a few teenagers talking over the mechanics of what sounded like a very advanced snowboarding maneuver.

The first adult (age 26) I struck up a conversation with informed me that he worked as a landscaper so he could spend the winters snowboarding in [Colorado](#), where the boarding was "serious," and was only getting his snow legs back at Wintergreen. "A double black diamond here would only be a single diamond out there," he told me -- and then explained how colored signs indicate a slope's difficulty. Then a couple, who retired to Wintergreen, darkly lectured me on the difference between skiers and snowboarders. I was obviously radiating unenlightenment.

The temptation increased. Wintergreen has a personable teaching staff, which kept pointing out the nice, flat learning area and the easy-to-understand equipment rental. Everyone was encouraging. I have strong ankles. I could easily learn a wedge stop. I'd be at no risk on the bunny slope. (Even I knew what that meant.)

Still I held out. I had that massage appointment. I could easily show my mettle in the fitness center. I could swim a few laps. If nobody else was on the driving range, I might risk slicing a few golf balls.

Besides, what sane human being wanted to go skiing in this weather, anyway? The temperature was sliding toward single digits, and the wind was gusting so hard that clouds raced by as if in fast forward. When the snow machines were turned on, the ice flew sideways in great "Edward Scissorhands" clouds and crusted the side of my face as I crossed to the Dome, Wintergreen's new gaming center. There was a lively [Wii](#) tennis match going on, and competition at the bull-riding machine was starting to pick up. I wandered for a while, watching kids play computer games via WiFi or clattering foosball rods, and decided an early toddy was the better part of valor.

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But on the way back, I stopped to look in on a ski lesson. There were five students in their 20s and 30s, apparently doing the hokeypokey sidestep on skis, then gliding down a tiny incline and pigeon-toeing into easy stops. I broke away, but a few minutes later I followed a couple of the beginners into the restaurant and asked how they'd liked the lesson.

"Great!" said Ray Kerr of [Chesapeake](#), Va. "But it's a lot more physical work than I expected; by the time I got to the bottom I was sweating!"

The bottom in one lesson? After a little rest, he said, he and his wife, Amanda, were considering snowboarding lessons -- and they seemed sane enough.

So the upshot is I'm going back to Wintergreen. I'll definitely have another massage, and the scallops at Devils Grill are worth an encore, but I'm also going to sign up for a ski lesson.

Just don't tell Pedro.

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