



Going to the Dogs in Garrett County, MD

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It's snow season in Garrett County, and it's time to play. You've tried everything: skiing, snowboarding, sledding, sleigh-riding, ice fishing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ice climbing, snow tubing...

Well, not quite everything.

Like many areas blessed with abundant snowfall and open spaces, Garrett County has gone to the dogs — two newly established dogsled touring companies are eager to show you, your family and your friends a howling good time. Last winter, Husky Power Dogsledding and Yellow Snow Dog Adventures began offering a recreational sport popular in the northern states of the U.S. and Canada. So if you've had fantasies of mushing your own dog team in the Iditarod, now's your chance to make those dreams come true.

Imagine skimming over snow-blanketed trails winding through woods and fields, immersed in a deep stillness accompanied only by the sled's swishing, the dogs' panting and the soft tapping of happy paws.

No snow? No problem. You can mush a team from a cart if the temperature isn't too hot for the dogs, or over 50°F. If you're feeling adventurous when snow is available, you can try skijoring, the sport of cross country skiing while being pulled by a team of dogs. If you just want to go along for the ride, you can leave

the mushing to the experts. If you'd just like to visit with the dogs, that's fine, too. The dogs are natural hams, each with his or her distinctive personality. Either touring company is happy to customize your dogsled adventure to your special needs, whether it be a romantic interlude or a heart-pounding workout as a musher.

Both businesses are run by women with connections to the area and a mission to share their passion for dogsledding with locals and visitors alike. Kim Trickett of Yellow Snow Dog Adventures is a Garrett County native and works at High Mountain Sports in McHenry. Patty Glotfelty, her "equipment guru" and general assistant, also comes from Garrett County. Linda Herdering of Husky Power Dogsledding is a graduate of Frostburg State University and has family in the Oakland area. She moved to Garrett County soon after she and her husband Mike retired, he from 31 years with the U.S. Marine Corps and Linda from a career that included running her own photography business and freelance writing.

Visitors to either touring outfit can rest assured that they are in good hands. All owners have extensive training in the art of dogsledding. For more than 20 years, mushing was Mike and Linda's idea of the perfect vacation. To gain experience before establishing



their own business, they volunteered with large dogsledding kennels and trained dogs for the Iditarod. While attending graduate school in Minnesota, Kim fell in love with the sport after participating in a 4-day dogsledding trip through White Wilderness Sled Dog Adventures. After returning to Garrett County, she developed a dog sledding/skijoring business proposal for the Adventure Sports Institute at the Wisp Resort. She now regularly attends a Musher's Boot Camp run by Jamie Nelson, an Iditarod champion. Both companies are certified as Nature Tourism vendors.

So what about the dogs? Some critics have charged that dogsledding is yet another form of animal exploitation. But if these dogs could talk, they would tell you a different story.

First of all, their owners choose their team of Huskies carefully.

"We select dogs according to three criteria: they must be people-friendly, dog-friendly and like to run," says Kim. Alaskan, Canadian Inuit, Siberian and Siberian/Malamute Huskies are all represented in the pack of 26 dogs now living at the Yellow Snow Sled Dog headquarters. The Herderings' pack of 15 dogs includes Alaskans, Siberians and Malamutes. Nine of their dogs come from one family in Alaska.

Second, the dogs are lavished with care and attention. After a full day at work, Kim and Patty spend about four hours per day with doggy duty. Some of their better-behaved dogs are allowed inside their home. When the Herderings are not physically with

their dogs, their home's large picture windows, facing the dog pen, allows them to keep an eye on the pack. They also breed Siberian Huskies for sale through their Mountain Maryland Kennels, LLC, and provide most of their dogs' veterinary care.



Above photos: "Husky Power" owners, Mike and Linda Herderings take a brisk ride in wooded forests.

Third, Husky Power and Yellow Snow dogs live in dog yards custom-designed for their comfort and health. Home for the Husky Power pack is a gravel-covered circular area with a liner beneath, while the Yellow Snow dog yard is constructed with wire beneath to prevent the digging that dogs so much enjoy. Each dog has its own shelter and is tethered so it can move in a circle for exercise and access to two other dogs for playtime. Fences around the dog yards provide safety from wild dogs as well as confinement.

Finally, these dogs do something they love to do — run and pull. These instincts must be handled carefully, according to Mike, who says, “It’s all about maintaining control. You must stop them because they’ll run forever. It’s all about the relationship with the team and establishing mutual trust. The dog leader must respond to the vocal commands of the musher, which include the following: “hike” means “get the dogs moving”, “gee” means “turn right;” “haw” means “turn left” and “easy” means “slow down.”

This is where training becomes critical. “You have to become dog,” says Mike. Both companies focus on training in the fall with wheeled carts. By adding miles gradually, increasing the amount of weight pulled, enhancing the dogs’ diet with higher energy foods and performing speed and interval training runs known as “fartleks,” mushers prepare their Huskies for the rigors of the primary season. They vary the dogs’ positions and combinations as needed for compatibility and allow different dogs to serve as team leaders. Teams usually consist of six to eight dogs.

Then there’s the investment of time, funds and labor involved with the dogsledding equipment, primarily consisting of toboggan and racing sleds, wheeled carts, custom-fitted harnesses, various types of lines (gang lines, tug lines and neck lines) and travel trailers with paw-shaped vents for ventilation. Both companies use ATVs for training their teams.

Outreach and partnerships continue to provide growth opportunities for both companies. To expand the range of their dogsled runs, the owners have



The dogs are friendly and love being with people. Both sledding companies have friendly dogs that children love.

Facing page: Kim Trickett of “Yellow Snow Sled Dog Adventures” takes a client for a memorable ride.

worked with their neighbors and appropriate officials to gain access to adjacent properties and public lands. Yellow Snow currently conducts campfire programs at area state parks and will be working with the Savage River Lodge. Husky Power runs cart rides at the Discovery Center at Deep Creek Lake and plans to offer tours at the Nemaquin Resort. Area school children have enjoyed visits with the dogs while learning more about dogsledding.

If you really want to understand dogsledding, Kim says, “You have to experience the power of the dogs.”

Both touring outfits offer a wealth of information about their operations, background, touring packages, the Huskies and the sport of dogsledding on their respective websites.

To learn more or to book your own adventure, contact:

Husky Power Dogsledding, located near Deep Creek Lake at 2008 Bumble Bee Road in Accident, Md. Call Linda at 301-746-7200 or email her at Linda@HuskyPowerDogsledding.com

Yellow Snow Sled Dog Adventures, located off Bethlehem Road near Oakland, Md. Call Kim at 301-616-4996 or 301-387-4199, or send an email to her at info@yellowsnowadventures.com



