



WELCOME TO WINTERGREEN

Winter fun for a day or weekend

Ridgely's Fun Park at Wintergreen Resort is ideal for kids under 6, with a tame tube ride, snow fort, sleds, toys, and a toasty tepee. Photos by Loretta Sherwood

The snow may have melted away here in Richmond, but there sure is plenty of it up at Wintergreen Resort.

Located adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway in the heart of Central Virginia, Wintergreen is less than two hours away. The gorgeous drive through pastoral fields and the curvy climb up the mountain is a treat in and of itself. You can feel your stress level drop despite how many juice boxes and Goldfish you pass to the backseat and hear spill all over the floor.

Easily accessible for a day trip or weekend getaway, there are lots of options for family fun - skiing, snowboarding, overnight lodging, as well as ice-skating. The Plunge will get your heart pumping because you are literally taking a plunge! This fast-paced tubing can reach speeds up to 30 miles per hour. As Virginia's largest tubing park, this ride is open to anyone 42 inches or taller. If you are curious, check out YouTube for several videos taking you along on the ride. The price is \$18 for a two-hour session.

Located right next to the Plunge, the Zip is an alpine zip line, brand-new to Wintergreen this year. Kids ages 8 and up weighing 75 pounds or

more are welcome to take this 30-second ride with speeds approaching 40 miles per hour. Oh, and one other detail to consider for your youngster - the rider also happens to be 40 feet off the ground for the entire ride. The fee for this ride is \$10.

Is all that a bit too much for your kids - and you perhaps? Never fear, Ridgely the Bear is near! Wintergreen's furry mascot has opened a fabulously kid-centered play area this year called Ridgely's Fun Park. Located at Discovery Ridge near the Plunge and the Zip, the Fun Park is perfect for toddlers on up to at least 6 year olds. With its own much-tamer version of the Plunge, the smaller kids have a fantastic time tubing and using the mini-people-mover, as do the adults, including yours truly. It was so entertaining for our 5 year olds we never made it to the "real" Plunge. Next time for sure!

The Fun Park also offers an even tamer tube ride, as well as a big snow fort, sleds, toys, and a toasty tepee with benches and a real blazing fire. (There is a metal grate planted securely over it for safety.) The Fun Park also has peppy music playing from speakers and a handy-dandy tissue dispenser. The fee for one adult and child is \$15 per hour.

Please note that sessions begin on the hour. For example, you wouldn't want to begin a session at 10:45 because you would only have 15 minutes of playtime. You can purchase tickets for the Plunge, Zip, and Fun Park at a central ticket window near the tubing park and zip line, where you can also find restrooms.

The nearby Discovery Ridge Adventure Center is a great place to regroup indoors while the kids enjoy some indoor "tech" play and snacks. There are activities galore - Wii games, foosball, air hockey, a bouncy house, and a mechanical bull. One hour is \$12 per child, and two hours is \$18. Adults are free.

Craving some adult ski time? Take advantage of Wintergreen's licensed childcare center conveniently located at the top of the mountain in the Treehouse, as well as their certified babysitter service. The kids' ski school is next door, also located in the Treehouse, offering ski lessons for kiddos right in front. There is a myriad of options for half-day, full day, and childcare combined with a ski lesson. If it is not covered in snow, there is a small playground in front, open for all to use free of charge.

When it comes to mealtime, there

are several options to satisfy the "foodies" out there as well as those picky eaters. At Discovery Ridge near the ticket window, you'll find the Chili Depot with several kinds of chili and some delicious macaroni and cheese. (We found the chili and bread bowl combo to be the best value for a filling meal.) However, at the back of the building, you'll also find the Grill, selling burgers, fries, chicken nuggets, and hot dogs from an open window.

Once you are off the slopes, the Edge is the ideal place for adults and kids alike. It's a happenin' place with a casual vibe, a full bar, and a wide menu offering all sorts of good eats. There is a full children's menu as well with crayons and coloring sheets for the remarkably short wait. The portions are huge and come with fresh fruit, perfect after a day on the slopes. And the best part is that the place is so loud you don't have to stress about keeping little Johnny quiet.

For more information, check out www.WintergreenResort.com. **RPM**

Libby Carty McNamee, a local freelance writer and mother, is already plotting her next escape to Wintergreen. See you on the slopes - or taking the Plunge!