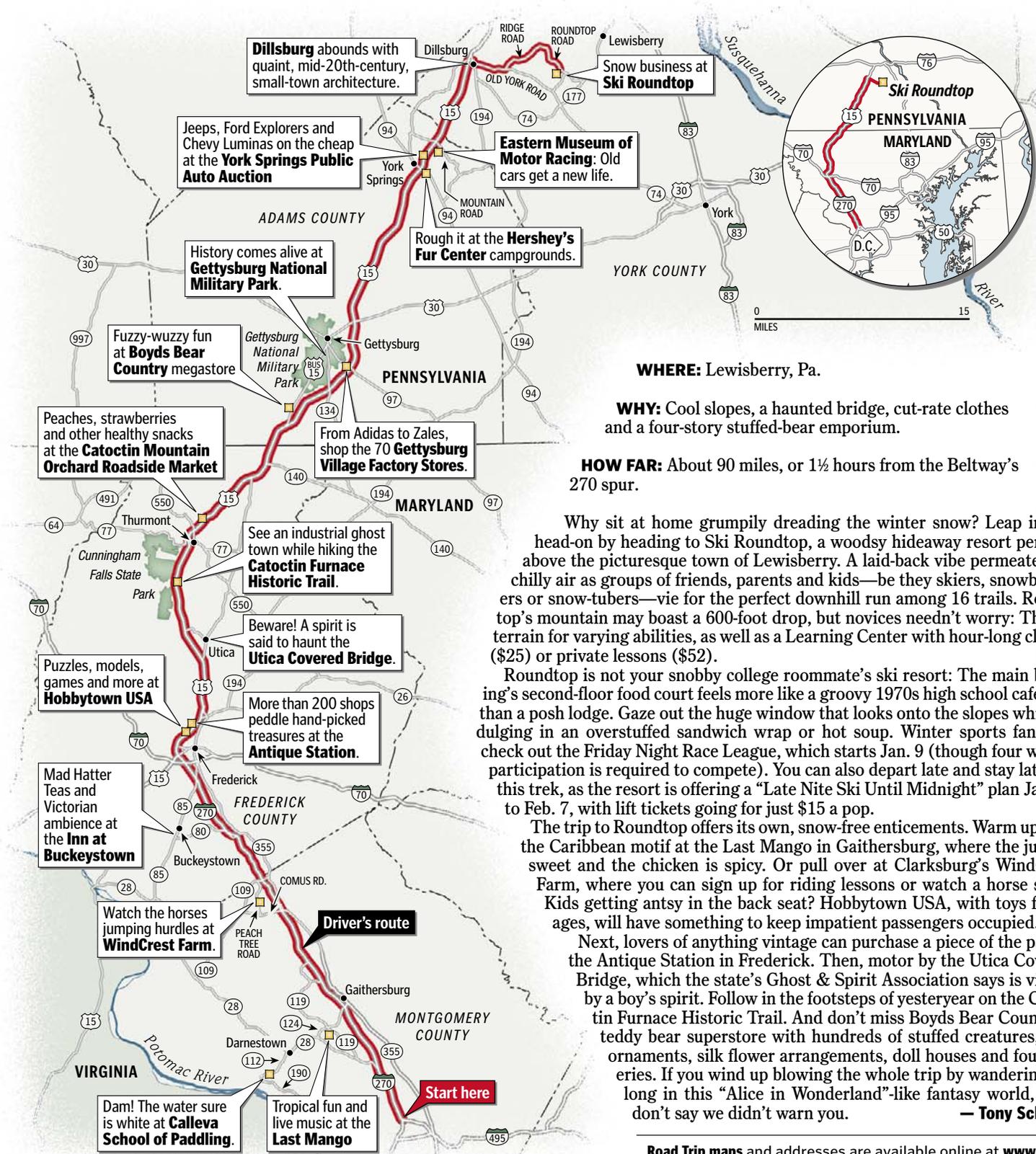


ROADTRIP | Ski Roundtop



WHERE: Lewisberry, Pa.

WHY: Cool slopes, a haunted bridge, cut-rate clothes and a four-story stuffed-bear emporium.

HOW FAR: About 90 miles, or 1½ hours from the Beltway's 270 spur.

Why sit at home grumpily dreading the winter snow? Leap into it head-on by heading to Ski Roundtop, a woody hideaway resort perched above the picturesque town of Lewisberry. A laid-back vibe permeates the chilly air as groups of friends, parents and kids—be they skiers, snowboarders or snow-tubers—vie for the perfect downhill run among 16 trails. Roundtop's mountain may boast a 600-foot drop, but novices needn't worry: There's terrain for varying abilities, as well as a Learning Center with hour-long classes (\$25) or private lessons (\$52).

Roundtop is not your snobby college roommate's ski resort: The main building's second-floor food court feels more like a groovy 1970s high school cafeteria than a posh lodge. Gaze out the huge window that looks onto the slopes while indulging in an overstuffed sandwich wrap or hot soup. Winter sports fans can check out the Friday Night Race League, which starts Jan. 9 (though four weeks' participation is required to compete). You can also depart late and stay later on this trek, as the resort is offering a "Late Nite Ski Until Midnight" plan Jan. 10 to Feb. 7, with lift tickets going for just \$15 a pop.

The trip to Roundtop offers its own, snow-free enticements. Warm up with the Caribbean motif at the Last Mango in Gaithersburg, where the juice is sweet and the chicken is spicy. Or pull over at Clarksburg's WindCrest Farm, where you can sign up for riding lessons or watch a horse show. Kids getting antsy in the back seat? Hobbytown USA, with toys for all ages, will have something to keep impatient passengers occupied.

Next, lovers of anything vintage can purchase a piece of the past at the Antique Station in Frederick. Then, motor by the Utica Covered Bridge, which the state's Ghost & Spirit Association says is visited by a boy's spirit. Follow in the footsteps of yesteryear on the Catoclin Furnace Historic Trail. And don't miss Boyds Bear Country, a teddy bear superstore with hundreds of stuffed creatures, plus ornaments, silk flower arrangements, doll houses and four eateries. If you wind up blowing the whole trip by wandering too long in this "Alice in Wonderland"-like fantasy world, well, don't say we didn't warn you.

— Tony Sclafani

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