

10 great places to ride into a Currier & Ives

It's lovely weather for a sleigh ride together with you... Indeed, "Sliding quietly through the woods, often en route to a great meal at a truly unique location, a sleigh ride is a classic experience — especially around the holidays when everyone's in a festive mood," says Samantha Berman, senior editor at SKI magazine. "Sure, it can be cold, but there are usually blankets on the sleighs, and there's always a warm drink in the very near future." Here, she shares with USA TODAY's Shawn Sell some brisk, exciting rides to catch some fresh air and the spirit of the season.



Thunder Bay Resort Hillman, Mich.

"A bustling golf resort in the summer, come winter, this sprawling Lower Peninsula hotel offers dinner sleigh rides through the woods to their intimate Elk Antler cabin, perhaps passing some of the majestic animals after which the cabin is named," Berman says. "Inside, warmed by twin antique wood stoves, a five-course dinner, complete with wine pairings, will warm you up before the return ride to the resort." 800-729-9375; thunderbayresort.com

Trapp Family Lodge Stowe, Vt.

"This European-style inn on 2,700 acres in the Green Mountains was opened in 1950 by the von Trapp family of Sound of Music fame," Berman says. "Today, the lodge is known for winter activities, including its sleigh rides drawn by two Percheron horses over valleys and meadows." 800-826-7000; trappfamily.com

Elk River Guest Ranch Clark, Colo.

"After warming up with appetizers and beverages in the ranch's saloon, board a 14-passenger sleigh pulled by two draft horses en route to a candlelit tepee dinner," Berman says. "After the meal, the sleigh travels back through the aspens and lodgepole pines of Routt National Forest to Elk River's saloon for dessert and after-dinner drinks." 800-750-6220; elkriverguestranch.com

Rocky Mountain Sleigh Company Near Park City, Utah

"A true rustic sleigh experience, the ride leaves from the Stillman Ranch, set along the pristine Weber River," Berman says. "The two-horse sleigh is pulled through meadows and silent woods, far from the city. Afterward, back at the ranch, dinner is served in a log cabin in front of a huge wood-burning fireplace." 800-303-7256; www.rockymtnrec.com

National Elk Refuge

Near Jackson, Wyo.

"Hunker down in an old-fashioned wooden sleigh," Berman says, "and keep your eyes on the meadows of this 25,000-acre refuge, where the Jackson herd — composed of thousands of elk — gather to weather the winter from November through April. Also watch for eagles, swans, deer, bighorn sheep and bison." 307-733-5386; www.bart5.com

Nestlenook Farm Inn

Jackson, N.H.

"Follow the path of the rambling Ellis River on an authentic Austrian sleigh pulled by two draft horses," Berman says. "The sleigh stops for sightings of European fallow deer in the adjacent Emerald Forest, so keep your eyes open. Consider booking a night in one of Nestlenook's Victorian suites." 603-383-0845; lmgnh.com/NestlenookFarm

Two Below Zero

Frisco, Colo.

"Two mules pull a 12-person, handcrafted red-oak sleigh over a trail in full view of the snow-capped peaks of White River National Forest," Berman says. "Two trips are offered nightly (except on Sundays): A 5 p.m. hot-cocoa ride, where steaming mugs of cocoa are served at a backcountry tent; and a 6:30 p.m. dinner ride, where a hearty menu is served, along with live music." 800-571-6853; dinnersleighrides.com

Trail Creek Sleigh Ride & Dinner

Sun Valley, Idaho

"Built in 1937, Trail Creek Cabin is a local landmark dating back to ranching and mining days," Berman says. "Today, it's for a more tasty purpose: The dinner sleigh ride to the cabin, where Ernest Hemingway is known to have celebrated at least one New Year's Eve, features a Western meal (prime rib, Idaho trout), along with nightly entertainment in front of the stone fireplace." 208-622-2135; sunvalley.com

XTC Ranch & Sleigh Rides

Lake Clear, N.Y.

"Bundled in thick wool blankets, with sleigh bells jingling in the night air, guests sit back and take in the evening as the sleigh crunches over snow and through the mountains surrounding the Adirondacks' Lake Placid," Berman says. "Stargazing is de rigueur on clear nights en route to the log cabin on the grounds of the 15-acre XTC Ranch, where home cookin' is on the menu." 800-613-6033; sleighrides.com

Adams Family Farm

Wilmington, Vt.

"Two Belgian draft horses pull the old red sleigh to a secluded log cabin in the woods on the farm's rural spread," Berman says. "During Wednesday's 'Fondue Night,' enjoy homemade fudge fondue inside the cabin or opt for the nightly traditional sleigh ride, stopping at the cabin for cocoa and tunes from the player piano." 802-464-3762; adamsfamilyfarm.com