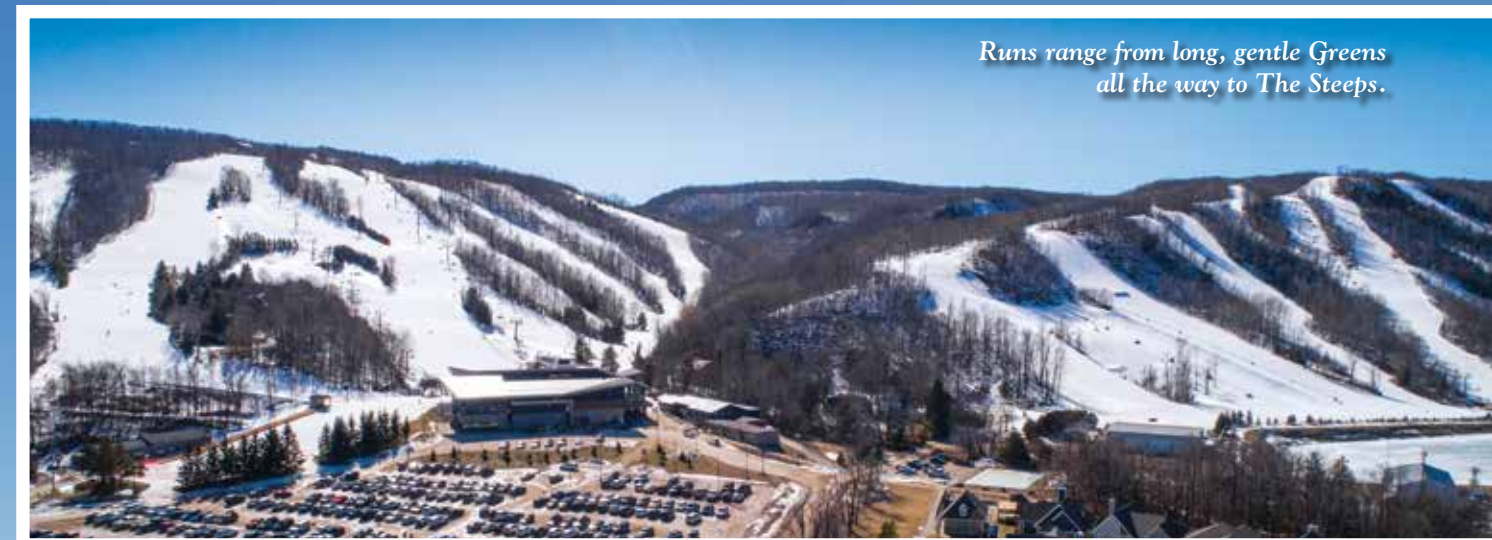


# MAXIMUM snow time

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW FEARMAN



Runs range from long, gentle Greens all the way to The Steeps.



## Smaller lines at a private club mean more runs and better snow conditions

“How many days did you get out last season?” It’s a question keen skiers ask each other all the time.

But Kirsti Suutari says it may be the wrong question. A more logical question, she says, is not how many days you were out, but “How many runs did you do?”

It’s a question some skiers avoid considering.

“Nobody likes to admit it, but there are days on public hills when you spend more hours standing in the lift line than you do going downhill,” says Kirsti, marketing manager at Alpine Ski Club. “If you work it out, on those days your cost per run can become pretty steep.”

That’s not a problem at Alpine. It’s not at all

unusual to complete a run on a weekday and use your momentum to continue straight onto the chair lift. “It becomes a bit of a game,” Kirsti admits with a laugh. “How many runs can I do in a row without actually coming to a complete stop at all?”

Even on the busiest weekends, it’s rare to wait for more than a few minutes before you are on your way back up the hill. With high speed lifts and a lift capacity of 9,000 riders per hour, riders are quickly back up at the top and ready for another run.

That focus on skiing rather than lining up is one of the big advantages that comes with membership at a private ski hill.

Quantity of runs is only part of the consideration. “It’s not just the number of runs you can do in a day,” Kirsti says. “What’s even more important are the conditions.”

### Snow quality counts

There are many things that affect the condition of a ski run. Terrain is one of them – Alpine has some of the longest runs in Ontario, 36 runs that range from gentle greens all the way up to “The Steeps,” a collection of double black diamond runs that challenge even the most intense skiers and boarders.

Weather is also a factor, of course. And while the maintenance team can’t change the forecast, they do have control over how they

respond to it. “Grooming is a craft, and we have some amazing craftsmen on our team,” says Bill Williams, general manager of Alpine. “Some of these folks have been grooming for decades. No matter what Mother Nature gives us, they always turn it into a perfect carpet.”

Another consideration is the traffic that goes over that snow during the day.

“Every skier has seen runs deteriorate over the course of the day,” says Bill. “If you have thousands of skiers or boarders on the hills, they inevitably get chewed up or icy.” The best solution is to have fewer people using the run, which is what a private hill allows. It’s not unusual

to be on a run at the end of the day and still be able to find patches of gorgeous corduroy snow.

Of course, fewer people also means more room on the hill, Bill says, and that creates a safer and more enjoyable environment. “If you’re constantly watching over your shoulder to see who’s around you, the risk of collision becomes enormous. And it’s just not fun. That’s really not an issue here.”

### Families and more

Alpine has always put an emphasis on families – members include several families where three or even four generations all ski together. “With our diverse terrain, and uncrowded

conditions, it becomes really easy for families to enjoy their time on the hill,” says Kim Roberts, manager of programs.

For those who want to challenge themselves, Alpine has a superb ski school as well as a competitive racing program. It is the home hill for the Ontario Escarpment Snowboard Team, and club members have gone on to international competition,

including members who have competed at the Winter Olympics.

And when it’s time to relax between runs, the new clubhouse is unparalleled.

“With some of the best skiing in Ontario, it only made sense to build a clubhouse to match,” says Kim. The space is bright and comfortable, offering a superb view of the hill. Meeting rooms – including

a fireplace lounge – are used year-round for conferences and various events, but in winter the focus is entirely on the comfort of the members.

The cafeteria is catered by Men with Knives, Alpine’s Reader’s Choice Award-winning caterer, who serves fresh, creative food made to order, with an emphasis on locally-sourced ingredients where possible.

“Our philosophy is that time at the ski hill should be quality time,” says Kim. “Whether you’re on a run, trying out some demo skis from the pro shop,

or sitting in the clubhouse and chatting with a friend, it should all be delightful.” **DS**

BY ANDREW WAGNER-CHAZALON

Alpine Ski Club is ideal for families like the Henrys, where three generations can enjoy the hill together.



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