ALL IN A DAY: Sliding Down the Slopes

Need one good reason to get outside and embrace the cold? Snow tubing. The slick rides are like sledding—on steroids. No special skills are required. And the colder it gets, the faster you’ll fly down the slopes: at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour. “As the snow freezes more, it gets a little icier,” says Alex Cole, a manager at Nashoba Valley Tubing Park, in Littleton, Massachusetts. There, 18 tubing lanes, each nearly a quarter of a mile long, are packed with man-made (and some natural) snow and extend along two sides of the hill, at a 100-foot vertical drop.

The park—the largest snow-tubing venue in New England—is part of the family-run Nashoba Valley Ski Area, founded in 1964. Tubing lanes opened on an adjacent hill in 2001, and quickly became a popular intergenerational winter activity. Families and kids come in droves, especially during school-vacation weeks, but so do groups of young adults and “the occasional older couple,” Cole adds. “We have thousands of people every week for tubing; in a season, we could see 50,000.” Tips: go early or late in the day to avoid crowds; two-hour individual tickets are $35; group-rate discounts are available; and night-time tubing, until 10 p.m., ups the thrill factor.

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Other snow-tubing sites close to Boston include Ski Ward, in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, and McIntyre Ski Area, in Manchester, New Hampshire. Those are smaller and perhaps tamer, but nonetheless offer fresh air and exercise, human contact, and a fun day out: all helpful combatants against winter doldrums.

—N.P.B.

El Mundo desde abajo/Under View of the World (2015), by Juana Valdes, at the Portland Museum of Art (above); Maine Craft Portland’s new downtown gallery; and a concert in the historic State Theater

The Maine College of Art (MECA), which redeveloped and moved into a former downtown department store in the late 1990s, has graduated hundreds of students, many of whom stay to work as artists and open businesses and nonprofits across the city, according to Robinson. And in 2018, storefront space in the historic Maine Charitable Mechanics Association building, which formerly housed that artisans’ guild, was renovated and opened by the nonprofit Maine Craft Portland as a retail gallery and arts-resource center. “Art-makers are fighting hard to stay in the city,” he says, a result of the rising housing and living costs associated with the city’s popularity.

The Maine Craft Portland project has been “a big, huge hit,” says Dinah Minot, executive director of Creative Portland, which supports and “promotes the artistic talents and cultural assets of the city.” In addition to anchoring institutions, like the Portland Symphony, Portland Museum of Art, and MECA, which established its Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in 1997, Minot points to the smattering of smaller and experimental arts and culture organizations, like SPACE, which “showcases some of the hippest output of local art.” All of those, and dozens of others, open their doors for First Fridays and sponsor events year-round, but winter’s a prime time to meet these artmakers and delve unfettered into the arts scene. Says Minot, “You’re going to have 500 people out on the streets, instead of 3,000 to 6,000.” (Check the website for details and a map of First Friday Art Walk events.)