

# Who Needs a River?

Snow Kayaking: An Emerging Trend in Winter Sports

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**O**utdoor sports enthusiasts are always trying to come up with new ways to have fun outside. In the summer, activities such as river surfing and flyboarding are all the rage amongst the adrenaline junkie crowd. In winter, people have upped the outdoor recreation ante with sports such as heliboarding and heliskiing. An emerging trend in winter recreation is snow kayaking.

Sort of like sledding with a kayak, participants in this sport take a freshly waxed kayak and race down the mountain. Sometimes the journey will end in a body of water such as a pond or a river, and other times, kayakers simply stop at the bottom of a run. While snow kayaking can be done on any inclined surface, it is catching on in popularity in well-known ski destinations, such as the Black Hills and Colorado's mountain resorts.

A lot of ski resorts do not presently permit snow kayaking on their mountains. The kayaks tend to tear up the snow, and it would be hazardous to skiers, snowboarders and kayakers alike to share the mountain with one another.

However, Monarch Mountain in Colorado has hosted an annual Kayaks on the Snow competition late in the ski season since 2005. The race is held on a closed part of the resort, and is set up like a motocross style, head-to-head race.

This sport has been popular with kayakers for a number of years, as some of them used older kayaks and paddles to play in the snow. However, since 2010, it has been gaining steam with a more mainstream crowd. Red Bull, a popular sponsor of extreme sporting events, hosts snow kayaking competitions all over the world. In Austria, the sport has been gaining popularity since 2002, and some of the country's ski resorts have begun offering lessons and special designated areas for snow kayaking.

Like other extreme sports, snow kayaking is dangerous and runs a high risk of injury. As such, protective gear such as helmets and pads is a must. Kayakers must also take into account the risk of avalanches. Unlike a ski resort where runs are manufactured and maintained, snow kayakers often use backcountry areas. While there are usually less people in the backcountry, kayakers should take note of snow conditions and other hazards, such as trees.