

Discover Upstate New York

Break Out the Ice Skates and Enjoy an Upstate Tradition

With winter breaks, holidays, family in town and kids off from school, tis the season to look for [activities that will get everyone out of the house](#) while still enjoying some quality time together. Whether you're looking for fresh air, family-friendly fun, or a little of both, now is the perfect time to take advantage of one of the season's most popular activities—ice skating! You don't have trek all the way to Rockefeller Plaza for the real deal experience. No matter what part of [Upstate New York](#) you're in, odds are you can find somewhere great to skate right in your own backyard.



Even if you're not a world-class figure skater, you can still get the feel for what it's like to skate the same ice as Olympians once did at the [Olympic Speed Skating Oval at the Olympic Center](#) in [Lake Placid](#). This [Adirondack](#) town is famous for hosting not just one, but two winter Olympics—first in 1932 and then again in 1980. Choose from four rinks, two indoor and two outdoor; if you're planning on staying outside, you can also cozy up around the bonfire at the center of the speed skating oval to warm up between laps. And of course, while you're in town, the other Olympic sites may call your name, along with [Whiteface Mountain](#), which offers some of the best downhill skiing you'll find on the whole east coast.



In the capital city of [Albany](#), winter is the time to bundle up and head downtown to the [Empire State Plaza Ice Rink](#). In the warmer months, this rink is a reflecting pool; this time of year, it's an outdoor ice rink that's become an absolute favorite among many in the [Capital Region](#) and beyond. Skating at the plaza is free and open to the public, and on Saturdays even the skate rentals come at no cost. The rink lies in the shadow of the [New York State Capitol](#), the [Egg Center for Performing Arts](#) and the [New York State Museum](#), so there's plenty to see and do once you're off the ice, too.



[Central New York](#) has a similar setup in Syracuse's [Clinton Square Ice Rink](#). This outdoor spot is situated right in the heart of downtown [Syracuse](#), surrounded by historic architecture, and like the Empire State Plaza rink, it doubles a fountain and reflecting pool in the summer months. This time of year, it's the most popular skating destination in the city, attracting more than 20,000 skaters each winter.



Further west, in [Rochester](#), you'll find dozens of skating spots, but none more beloved than the [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park at Manhattan Square](#). Another spot that serves as a simple

reflecting pool in the summer, the park not only becomes an ice rink each winter but also plays host to the [Roc Holiday Village](#) each weekend between early December and New Year's Eve. A mixture of ice skating and holiday fun like Santa visits, kids' activities, food, drinks, shopping and entertainment, the Roc Holiday Village is popular among many, but if good old simple skating is more your speed, stop by on a weekday or after January begins. The park's downtown location, right in the shadow of the [Strong National Museum of Play](#), makes it easy to add to your day out as well.



Finally, once you're well into [Western New York](#), stop in the city of [Buffalo](#) to explore the Buffalo Waterfront at [Canalside](#). This spot, located at what used to be the western ending point of the [Erie Canal](#), is hoppin' all year long, but wintertime offers a special variety of activities on ice: skating, of course, but also more unique options like ice bikes, ice bowling and ice bumper cars.

Whether it's an afternoon on an indoor rink at the community rec center or a whole winter wonderland extravaganza in the center of town, make sure to strap on a pair of skates and hit the ice this winter! Don't have your own? Most places will rent you a pair. Remember to check hours and weather conditions before you head out to your rink of choice. And most importantly, enjoy this Upstate staple of the season!

Photo Credits:

Lake Placid Speed Skating Oval photo credit Whiteface Mountain
Empire State Plaza Ice Rink photo credit AllOverAlbany
Clinton Square Ice Skating photo credit Gavin Schaefer
Roc Holiday Village photo credit Roc Holiday Village
Buffalo Waterfront ice skating photo credit Buffalo WaterfrontIce
Bikes at Canalside photo credit Visit Buffalo Niagara