



**Current Mountain
Top Temperature**

72°



Today's Forecasted Highs:

Richmond: 85° DC: 87°

VA Beach: 52°

Raleigh/Durham: 85°

Wintergreen Resort – Where Cool Weather Reigns Supreme

By Robert T. Jordan, MBA

Wintergreen Resort, set upon 11,000 acres nestled almost 4,000 ft. up in the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains, lies just southwest of Charlottesville, VA. Folks from Washington, DC, Richmond, VA, and the surrounding areas are attracted to Wintergreen's villas and condominiums, surrounded by winding trails, cascading streams, and lush forests.

This distinguished Central Virginia resort is the ultimate vacation or conference spot -- peaceful, refreshing, with an endless variety of activities. There are no malls, no traffic lights, and no commutes. Here, the pace slows to a relaxing mountain rhythm as guests indulge themselves in golf game on Wintergreen's world-class golf courses, ride horseback along the rugged, beautiful Appalachian Trail, jog along the resort's lakeside, or just relax in one of the beautifully appointed condos.

Wintergreen's stock in trade is year around "cool weather" that is just right whether one is golfing, hiking or horseback riding in the spring, summer or fall – or skiing in winter. The resort boasts that its summer temperature never rises above 84.7 degrees.



Guaranteed Cool Summer Getaway

"Weather has a huge impact on what we do – we've paid for weather reporting for years," says Jay Roberts, director of Mountain

Operations. “A warm, dry summer is a huge impact on golf operations, in terms of play, in terms of maintaining the course. Right now (August), for instance, we’re getting such humidity and heat that it’s just destroying the course! We’re a little too far north for Bermuda to be the grass of choice – we’re a little too far south for bent grass to do all that well.”

Roberts points out that the weather not only affects play, but also affects cost. “Weather is such an impact upon our business that senior level managers have a fair amount of weather savvy. We’re constantly looking at NOAA Web sites and National Weather Service Web sites.”

For years, Wintergreen Resort promoted the fact that its mountain temperatures are 10°-15° cooler than the average local summer temperatures. This year the resort offers a \$100 money back guarantee of a “cool summer” from July 5 through September 30, 2006 – crediting their bill with \$100 if the daily high temperature on the mountain exceeds 85° Fahrenheit during their stay.

Snow on the Ski Slopes – A Problem?

One would think that snowstorms at a ski resort would be a good thing, but Roberts says it’s not so.

“If we get too much snow, it costs us lots of money,” Roberts points out. “It costs us money in terms of additional staff ... and if it snows too much, it will keep our customers away during the time that it’s actually snowing.” *Then snow removal becomes a problem!*

But a significant amount of Wintergreen’s business is during the winter. It is critical that they know what the weather will be so they may plan accordingly.

“We do call upon public weather sites for service, we also hire specialists to provide us weather (forecasts),” Roberts says. “WeatherBug is really one of the most successful that we’ve had in recent years. It’s definitely my favorite. We’ve only been using those guys a short time. We also use AccuWeather, out of Pennsylvania; and we’ve also hired a forecaster out of Richmond, VA.”

One of the strong points about WeatherBug’s service is that Wintergreen invested in establishing a weather station on its premises. “One advantage to us that it provides ‘real time’ information about what’s going on outside,” says Roberts.

“Second is that it provides WeatherBug with ‘real time’ data, from which they develop our forecasts.” As a result, Roberts says that WeatherBug’s forecasts are much more accurate than their competitors’ forecasts.

Roberts adds, “That’s because they have information about our weather, our temperatures and our conditions, rather than the situation at a National Weather Service observatory 60 miles away.” He says that Wintergreen then passes that information on to its customers, which may be experiencing weather that is 10 to 15 degrees hotter or colder than it may be at the resort.

“The WeatherBug site is a real asset – we produce ‘real time’ data on our Web site,” Roberts explains. “We look at the weather services that we hire ...and, in our minds, WeatherBug is the most cost effective.”

Roberts says that “snow making” decisions are critical to Wintergreen Resort. “Whether we make snow or not depends upon temperature and humidity. The cost of making snow is *tremendous!* Just the cost of pushing the button – in terms of electricity is enormous – it’s in the *hundreds of thousands!* We spend \$3 to \$5 hundred thousand on snow-making electric – *big numbers.*”

Roberts looks for weather forecasts that say one may expect 25 degrees, with relatively calm winds and low humidity, which translates that Wintergreen could expect relatively good snow production for its electric dollar cost.

“We measure that in acre-foot of snow ... how much it will cost us to make a certain quantity of snow,” Roberts explains. “As the temperature and the humidity increases, the costs increase for us to make more snow and the volume of snow we make decreases. So, that six inches of snow made at 28 degrees is a lot more expensive to make than that six inches of snow costs at 25 degrees.”

Roberts says that an inaccurate forecast could cost the resort five to ten thousand dollars that they may have chosen not to make if the forecast were accurate. “That’s not an insignificant amount – one that, had I looked at an accurate forecast, I would have said ‘No, tonight, I won’t even attempt it.’ But once you start, you’ve bit off a big chunk of expense. ”