

Cross Country Skiing: Places and Programs

by Talbot Bielefeldt

Cross country ski areas include any patch of ground that happens to be covered with snow. Consequently, any guide to the sport is bound to be incomplete. The partial list of nordic resources below is roughly arranged according to distance from Eugene and Springfield.

Eugene Parks and Recreation Department
Outdoor Program
301 N. Adams
Eugene, OR 97402
687-5329

Willamalane Park District
Memorial Building Community Center
765 N. "A" St.
Springfield, OR 97477
746-1669

Both of these recreation programs feature beginning and intermediate ski lessons, plus ski tours, handicapped programs, and special classes in cross country, downhill, racing and instructor training. Eugene Parks and Recreation runs an accredited ski school, but since the two cities draw on the same pool of instructors, Willamalane's program is more or less the same.

Gold Lake Sno Park

This is the port of entry to the sport for many beginners. The parking area on Highway 58 just west of Willamette Pass provides access to gentle road tours to Gold Lake (north side of the highway) and Pengra Pass (south side). Marked Forest Service trails link with more adventurous tours to Midnight Lake, the Willamette Pass Ski Area, Rosary Lakes and other destinations. The volunteer Nordic Ski Patrol maintains a base at the parking area. For maps and

trail information, contact the Oakridge Ranger Station, 46375 Highway 58, Westfir, OR 97492, 433-2234.

Odell Lake Lodge
P.O. Box 72
Crescent Lake, OR 97425
433-2540

The resort at the east end of Odell Lake is the closest thing to a nordic center near Willamette Pass. The rustic lodge offers hotel and cabin accommodations, a restaurant, ski rentals and lessons. The ungroomed trail system was lengthened during the summer and the trails have been widened. Additional Forest Service trails are accessible from the lodge. Odell plows its own lot and access road from Highway 58, so Sno-park permits are not required. Day visitors do have to pay a small parking fee, however. Call early for weekend reservations.

Old Davis Lake Road

In some respects, this is the ideal day tour: a rolling, snowed-in road leading to an open hill that makes an ideal picnic-spot-cum-ski-play area. The only catch is the road rolls a little sharply for first-timers, and it can be a little hard to find. Skiers can park at Odell Lake Lodge or at a turnout east of the Lodge access road on Highway 58. The Old Davis Lake Road is on the north side of the highway between Odell and the turnout. It also is possible to ski on a marked trail from the turnout, if you can handle a dicey crossing of Odell Creek. A number of other trails loop off of the road. The Willamette National Forest (see Oakridge Ranger Station, above) publishes a trail guide describing some of these routes.

Crescent Lake Lodge and Resort
P.O. Box 73
Crescent Lake, OR 97425
433-2505

Crescent Lake Lodge does an admirable job of catering to both nordic skiers and snowmobilers. Perhaps the resort should consider hosting U.S.-Soviet arms control talks. To get to Crescent Lake, turn off of Highway 58 at Crescent Junction. On the way to the resort you pass the Crescent Airstrip (flattest of the flat—a good place for first timers) and a snowmobile parking lot that also serves as the Fawn Lake trailhead. Fawn Lake, in the Diamond Peak Wilderness, can be reached by 4.5-mile intermediate-level trails from both Odell and Crescent Lakes. A popular arrangement is to leave cars at each trailhead and to do the whole nine miles with a shuttle at the end.

Hoodoo Ski Bowl
Box 20, Highway 20
Sisters, OR 97759
Hoodoo Toll Station 1 or 2

Hoodoo maintains a groomed cross country track that is closest to the mid-Willamette Valley. Five

kilometer events are set daily, Tuesday through Sunday, with additional distance added for special events. Restaurants, rentals, ski patrol and lessons are available at the area's twin lodges. Nordic downhill races are held the second Sunday of each month, with cross country races every third Sunday. Participants earn points throughout the series, which culminates on closing day, April 13. This year, Hoodoo also offers accommodations across from the ski area at Santiam Lodge, on Highway 20.

Santiam Sno-parks

Excellent off-track touring is available from the Ray Benson snowmobile Sno-park, off the Hoodoo access road, and from the Pacific Crest Trail parking lot east of the ski area. The loops around the snowmobile lot offer challenging trail skiing through rolling second-growth forest. The PCT climbs into the meadow country of the Mt. Jefferson Wilderness. Numerous lakes offer destinations for day tourers and for over-nighters. Views of Mt. Washington and of Three Fingers Jack are easily accessible. Wilderness maps are available from the Forest Service. The nearest ranger station is at Sisters, OR 97759, 549-2111.

Blue Lake Resort
Star Route
Sisters, OR 97759
595-6671 or 595-6675 for Nordic Center only

The newest groomed track in Oregon is Blue Lake's eight kilometer course, maintained Friday through Sunday by Outfitters Unlimited. Trail fees are \$3.50 per day. Rentals, lessons, snack bar, ice skating and overnight accommodations are available at the resort. The Nordic Center is located between Blue and Suttle Lakes, a few miles east of Santiam Pass on the south side of Highway 20/126. The Nordic Center should be particularly popular with skiers staying at the numerous resorts in the Sisters/Camp Sherman area.

All Outdoors, Inc.
P.O. Box 1100
Redmond, OR 97756
923-9264

All Outdoors is a company providing outdoor recreation for people with disabilities and other special needs. (Able-bodied persons can participate, as well.) AOI's cross-country ski program is open to stand-up and sit-skiers, and includes basic instruction, day tours and Special Olympics racing classes. One unique program on the calendar is a five-day cabin trip in December, with transportation by dog sled.

Breitenbush Community
P.O. Box 578
Detroit, OR 97342
854-3501 or 854-3314

Most people think of Breitenbush as a summer conference and retreat center, a hot spring or a rural commune. It is these things and a winter resort besides. Breitenbush offers ski weekends complete with guided ski trips on surrounding roads and trails, meals, evening entertainment and a tour of the self-sufficient community. Best of all, guests can dissolve in the resort's hot springs after skiing.

Swampy Lakes

The Forest Service marks an extensive network of trails around Swampy Lakes, north of Century Drive between Bend and the Mt. Bachelor ski area. Most of the routes are moderate, with one notorious hill above Swampy Lake itself, and a couple of steep pitches northwest of the parking area. Several log shelters make good lunch spots and good campsites. Connecting trails lead west to Dutchman Flat and north to Tumalo Falls. These provide full-day expeditions for skiers willing to shuttle cars. Information on Swampy Lakes and other trails in the Deschutes National Forest can be obtained from the Forest Headquarters, 1645 Highway 20 East, Bend, OR 97701, 388-2715.

Mt. Bachelor
P.O. Box 1031
Bend, OR 97709
382-2607

Mt. Bachelor, west of Bend on Century Drive, is the largest ski area in the state for both downhill and cross country. Fifty kilometers of immaculately groomed trails take off from a new nordic center. A full program of lessons, rentals, races and retail sales allows the nordic enthusiast to absolutely wallow in skiing. The developed facilities are conveniently backed up by the Three Sisters Wilderness, with its miles of above-timberline touring terrain and picture-perfect glaciated peaks. There is no lodging at the ski area, but Bend and the surrounding resort communities are just waiting to put you up. Bachelor's central reservations number (382-8334) will put you in touch with a number of inns and motels.

Elk Lake Resort
P.O. Box 789
Bend, OR 97701
389-6736 or Mobile Operator
YP7-3954

For most winter visitors, skiing at Elk Lake really means skiing to Elk Lake. The resort is about 10 miles from the snow gate on Century Drive at Mt. Bachelor. The trip in is technically easy and spectacularly scenic, although nordic purists will have to accept sharing the road with snowmobiles. The resort will provide snow machine transportation (\$12 one-way) for those who don't feel up to an all-day tour with a pack. Lodging is in cabins, with meals and gro-

ceries available at the restaurant/store. By reservation only.

Happy Jack Skiventures
P.O. Box 842
Bend, OR 97709
382-9381 or 382-8330

Happy Jack is a guide service that outfits ski trips ranging from half-day tours to week-long expeditions. Cornerstone of the program is an A-frame cabin near the Three Sisters Wilderness boundary that serves as a destination and as a basecamp. The cabin also is available for rent by groups with qualified leadership. Other Happy Jack trips go to Blue Lake and Crescent Lake Lodges and to backcountry camps in the Three Sisters and on Steens Mountain.

Timberline Lodge
Government Camp, OR 97028
800-452-1335

Touring at Timberline, the most famous of the Mt. Hood ski resorts, is limited by topography. Skiers can go west until they hit Zigzag Canyon, east until they hit White River Canyon, or south on the West Leg Road to Government Camp. Competent nordic downhillers can play on the alpine runs or can climb the peak for a ski descent from the highest point in Oregon. All these projects depend on weather, which hits Timberline sooner and harder than any other place in the Cascades. On the other hand, you can find snow at Timberline year round. The resort is reached via an access road from Government Camp on Highway 26 east of Portland.

Trillium Lake

The most extensive touring trails around Mt. Hood are in the Trillium Lake basin south of Government Camp. Most of the routes follow gentle logging roads and allow novice and intermediate skiers to cover a lot of ground. The direct descent into the basin from Government Camp is quite thrilling. Most skiers start from the snow bunny snow-play area east of the village. The Oregon Nordic Club holds a twenty kilometer ski race at Trillium Lake every spring. For information on snow trails on the south side of Mt. Hood, contact the Zigzag Ranger Station, Zigzag, OR 97049, 666-0704.

White River Nordic
c/o Charles Lake
P.O. Box 41
Rhododendron, OR 97049
622-3419

White River Canyon, on the east side of Mt. Hood, has long been a popular beginner's area. In recent years, groomed tracks have been set south of Highway 35. The trail fee is \$4. There is no lodge and are no services except the track setting, but rentals and lessons are available through shops in Portland and at sur-

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