

Skiers turn from slopes to cross-country

By MELVIN MANN
Of the EMERALD

Winter brings snow to Oregon's high Cascades, and the snow brings skiers. Once, this meant packing up the gang and heading for Ashland or Bachelor. But long lift lines and rising lift prices, as well as crowded slopes, has caused many avid down-hill fans to turn to ski touring.

The amount of equipment necessary for ski touring is fairly minimal: skis, poles, boots, warm clothing and a little food.

Skis are a complex subject in themselves, but there are two things a beginner needs to know. First, there are two kinds of skis, waxed and waxless; second, Alpine skis don't work very well for cross-country skiing.

Purists and many advanced skiers prefer wax-based skis because a wax base puts them in close contact with the environment. When the wax is right, walking uphill is easy and sliding downhill is easier.

Waxless base skis use either a fish-scale pattern or strips of fur to

prevent sliding backwards without slowing forward travel. Waxless bases are not as efficient as the best wax job but are better than poorly chosen wax and eliminate the need to change waxes when snow conditions vary. Beginners usually have the best luck with a waxless base ski.

Two types of boots are used in ski touring, dictated by the type of binding on the skis. The three pin binding generally used on light touring skis requires special cross-country ski boots. Any fairly heavy boot with a welt will work on

the cable type bindings found on heavier skis.

Winter weather in the mountains is unpredictable. This means you must have clothing along to cope with any climatic atrocity which might come your way. Wool is the preferred fabric for clothing because it stays warm when wet. The multi-layer approach is popular because it allows maximum adjustability. In Oregon, be sure to take a rain coat (no use kidding yourself, you'll need it).

Skiers should always carry extra food, first aid supplies and a repair-survival kit. The repair-survival kit should have pliers, a screwdriver, wire, tape, extra screws, matches, a fire starter and a flashlight. Some dry clothes, especially mittens and socks, can be very welcome. Skiers should always have a compass and a map of the area. When the snow is flying thick and sky is dark it is incredibly easy to get "a mite bewildered."

How do I get started?

There are several good ways to get started in cross-country skiing. The Outdoor Program offers low-cost cooperative trips. Everyone helps one another and there are usually experienced skiers along to lend advice.

The most popular way to get started is the old self taught hit-or-miss method (does this refer to trees?) also known as the school of hard knocks. The many snow covered logging roads are a good place to try this. Popular ones are often located near downhill ski areas.

Cross-country ski equipment can be rented at most skiing or backpacking type stores. Prices range from \$4 to \$6 a day, with reductions on longer periods of time.

Can I do it?

Anyone in reasonably good health can cross-country ski. Ski touring takes about as much effort as riding a bicycle. Most people can learn to get around on easy terrain in a single day.

Ski touring is a good way to see a part of the woods that only a few will know. True solitude and rare beauty are treasures you can find. Ski touring can be as exciting or as contemplative as you choose. Be prepared for all possibilities, and have a good time.

Help offered in filling out tax forms

Taxpayers can get individual help in completing their state and federal tax forms in Eugene this year.

The service will be available until April 15, according to John Lobdell, Director of the Oregon Department of Revenue, and Ralph B. Short, District Director of the Internal Revenue Service for Oregon.

"We are pleased to be able to extend this joint service. Joint service in the five cities will reduce the amount of time and confusion taxpayers may face in preparing tax returns," say the directors.

Persons taking advantage of taxpayer assistance must bring with them information necessary to complete tax returns. Information includes a copy of the 1975 federal income tax form (1040), the 1975 Oregon income tax packet and records of income from all sources.

The offices are located at 398 High Street, 1471 Pearl, and 211 East 7th. They will be open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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