

# NORTH IDAHO SKI / SNOWSHOE TOURS

## **Category I: Groomed Skiing Areas**

The areas are arranged according to distance from Moscow.

**North/South Area** - Bald Mountain, Palouse Divide, The Sampson Jeep trail, and East-West Dennis Peaks

Located 40 miles North-East of Moscow, this nordic ski area has good access right off Highway 6. This is a Idaho Park n' Ski area and requires a sticker which can be purchased at Hyper Spud Outdoor Shop in Moscow. The loop trails that leave the alpine ski area are good for beginning and intermediate skiers. The trails on the west side of Highway 6 (East-West Dennis and Sampson Jeep Trail) are more for intermediate to advanced skiers if the conditions are icy, as the descent can be quite fast. The area is "groomed" by a snowmobile so don't expect dual tracks or prompt packing after a snowfall. Information can be obtained from the old North/South ski area, now called Palouse Divide Lodge.

### **Elk Creek Falls Area**

Located approximately 53 miles from Moscow, this area has great access directly from Elk River or off the highway 3 miles before town is reached. This is a beautiful place and a good area for beginning and intermediate level day tours. The trails are marked but the signs are somewhat confusing to the first time visitor. There are a number of loop trips to be done of varying lengths, all of which are easy and excellent touring. This is a Idaho Park n' Ski area and requires a sticker which can be purchased at Hyper Spud Outdoor Shop in Moscow.

### **Fish Creek Meadow**

Located approximately 8 miles south of Grangeville, this Park n'ski area is run by the Department of Parks & Recreation and requires a sticker. There are numerous trails that are well marked for length and difficulty. An added benefit is the warming shelter that provides a haven for a rest-stop and lunch. For further information and maps contact the Clearwater Ranger District, Nez Perce National Forest.

### **English Point**

Located 2 miles north of Hayden Lake this area was the first established nordic trail system in North Idaho. The trails are marked, signed, and groomed by the U.S. forest Service. To reach the trail head drive north on U.S. 95 past Hayden Lake to Rimrock road. The trail starts 150 feet south of the Rimrock-English Point junction. The trails are gentle and suitable for beginners.

### **Farragut State Park**

Located approximately 25 miles north of Coeur d'Alene near the shores of Lake Pend O'reille this is a popular skiing area with many finely groomed trails. This is probably the finest groomed area around and as such has become a favorite of nordic racers, in fact there are numerous races held here every year. The snow conditions are variable, but even a few inches is sufficient for skiing on the relatively flat terrain. This is an excellent area for beginning skiers. conditions and other information can be obtained by contacting the Park Headquarters.

## **Category II: Backcountry (Out of Track) Day Tours**

### **Moscow Mountain**

At over 5000 feet, Moscow Mountain receives the most snow in our vicinity, but access can be tricky during winter months. The best access for snow sports is via Tamarack road. It is plowed to about 3,500 feet most winters. This fits the "go east-up 1,500" rule well. Drive east on Idaho 8 to Troy. At Troy turn

left onto Randall Flats Road, take a right onto Tamarack Road. Follow Tamarack Road until it's no longer plowed. Tours follow snowbound roads and logging trails to the top of Moscow Mountain. The Giant Cedar Grove is about 2.5 miles out the main road (which is currently hard to follow with recent logging activity)

### **East Fork Meadow Creek Road**

This tour begins on a road just south of the Benewah county line on Highway 6 about 35 miles north of Moscow. There is a large turnout to park on the county line from which you can walk back to the end of the road. The tour is gentle for the first half mile but steepens greatly before passing over a ridge and dropping into a clearcut section and many spur roads. This road is 2.5 miles long and has many options along the route. The forest service road number is 1473 and there are side trails 26 and 26a which have been designated for ski touring.

### **Powerline Traverse**

One half mile past the beginning of the Palouse Divide tour (refer to category I, North/South area) is a sign on a tree on a left bend of the road. The sign says "winding road". to the right of this sign is a narrow, very steep trail leading one half mile to a series of clearcuts. Follow the right hand edge of the clearcuts on a tow mile tour leading along a former power line right of way and eventually you will come out at the East Fork of Meadow Creek Road near Highway 6. This is not a beginning tour, and needs 3 feet of snow or so to negotiate the first section. Cars may be shuttled to the bottom if you do not wish to make this a round trip back uphill.

### **Sampson Jeep Trail**

Near the beginning of the East Dennis tour (refer to category I, North/South area) is a left fork just across from the large clearcut. This pleasant narrow trail leads up, down, and around for about a mile and then drops three miles down to the Meadow Creek road junction with Highway 6 as well. Either you will need a car shuttle, or reverse the route.

### **McGary Butte**

Leaving Bovill on Highway 8, 30 miles east of Moscow, take the sign to Elk River, and drive no more than 4 miles past Bovill. The road first climbs then drops down, then crosses a small creek and eventually straightens out. There is a large dip in the road on a straight section and then a hill will be encountered. You may either park in the turnout on the right by the dip or by the gravel pile on top of the hill. From the first turnout you can ski east along the railroad track (now abandoned) to where it junctions with a secondary road. The second turnout by the gravel pile has a fun and challenging downhill run and junctions with the same secondary road, but slightly west of where the railroad track meets the road. At the railroad track junction there is a small road leading across the creek and up onto McGary Butte. It is about 3 miles from here to the summit. It passes through many clearcuts, finally heading into timbers near the top. It is only steep near the top, so even in fast snow this is a good tour for beginners.

### **County Line Road**

A few miles past the McGary Butte road is a left facing road just past the Clearwater county line. This road leads up to Jackson Mountain with several small side roads to explore.

### **Railroad Trestle Road**

Past the county line road on Highway 8 you will see a large railroad trestle on your left. The railroad runs parallel to the highway. There is a meadow seen on the other side of the trestle. Park at the top of the hill just past the trestle (towards Elk River) and ski back down the tracks to the trestle. Ski or walk to the west side of the trestle. Ski or walk to the west side of the trestle and follow the meadow

uphill. Near the top of the meadow is a small road leading into the forest with numerous branches of it to explore.

### **Mineral Mountain**

25 miles north of Moscow is the skyline drive leading off Highway 95 to the west. Park near the highway and walk up a hundred yards or so to where it is no longer plowed, past the last house. At the first junction two options await the tourer; heading to the right takes you up a very steep road to the summit of Mineral Mountain in about a mile's worth of skiing, or heading to the left for a gentler tour taking you out to McCrosky State Park in several miles of skiing. There are good views from the summit and the run down is a real screamer.

### **Hobo Pass**

Located approximately 6 miles north-east of Clarkia this area offers the intermediate to advanced skier great skiing in an alpine environment. Take road number 301 that originates in the center of Clarkia and follow it to the junction with road number 321. Take road 321, which follows Merry Creek, and follow the signs to Hobo Pass. Park by the powerline. Ski opportunities exist all around, but the best skiing is on the north side of the pass. The north side can be reached by following the road to the north paralleling the powerlines then contouring around further to the northern aspect of the peak. The Hobo Pass road is usually plowed, but beware after big dumps. For further information contact the Clarkia Ranger Station.

### **Winchester State Park**

Located approximately 40 miles south-east of Lewiston on Highway 95 (head for Boise), follow the signs to Winchester Park entrance and take the main park road to the boat launch area. The bridge leads across the lake inlet to the trail. This is a good place for beginning skiers as the trail goes through rolling terrain of Douglas Fir and Ponderosa Pine. The trail is usually groomed, but for more information contact Winchester State Park (208)924-7563.

### **Fourth of July Pass**

Located approximately 14 miles east of Coeur d'Alene on I-90, this ski area is good for beginning skiers with many opportunities for side trips. At the Fourth of July summit on I-90, park at the Mullan Tree which is just east of the summit. The trailhead begins on the south side of the interstate at road #614. The loop trail is six miles long and follow logging roads which may be plowed if logging operations are ongoing; if so watch for trucks. For more information contact the Forest Service Supervisor's Office in Coeur d'Alene.

### **Category III: Long Day Tours and Extended Trips**

#### **Freezeout Ridge**

Just east of Clarkia is a road leading up into the high St. Joe country. The road number is 301 and it begins in the center of the town of Clarkia. Follow it past the school house to a left fork (it's probably the only one plowed). Continue driving out for several miles. It eventually will junction with road #382. At that junction road 301 heads to the left and sharply uphill. You may have to ski from this point. This is snowmobile country so don't be surprised if you have to get out of someone's way. The road climbs steeply for three miles and then levels at White Rock Springs where there is a picnic table and outhouse on your right. The main road also forks right here, but you continue through the forest and up a more gentle incline. It is about four more miles to where the road breaks out of the timber and you see the flank of Marks Butte. There is a short steep section leading to a traverse of the butte on the south side. It is a short ski from this point to the summit at about 6,000 feet in elevation. Often the snow is good at this elevation when it is wet below. Marks butte is open and only timbered on the north side enabling good downhill running and telemark practice. It can be a long tour in if the snow is poor, so many parties will

do an overnight trip. The snow can get very deep at this elevation giving opportunities for snow cave construction. In fast snow the runout is fast and a delight. There is avalanche potential, so be prepared.

### **St. Joe Baldy**

Located approximately 7 miles north-east of St. Maries on the St. Joe River road #50, which is paved (head for Avery). Drive up river about 7 miles until you reach Phillips Draw. there are signs here directing one towards Tingly Springs and St. Joe Baldy. The approach is around 8 miles and the road is steep, with many switchbacks. However, there are some permanent residents up the draw so you may get lucky and have a shorter distance to ski. An alternative, and less steep ski in, is to approach the peak from the north, from off I-90. This is accomplished by turning south off the interstate at Cataldo and driving up Latour Creek (about 13 miles) to the Rochet Divide Road. The road is usually plowed to here, but the distance to the top of the divide will, of course, depend on how far up you can drive. At any rate, this is a much more scenic and enjoyable approach if you can't mind the extra driving time. For information of the roads and maps of the area contact the Bureau of Land Management in Coeur d'Alene. This is high mountain terrain, be aware and prepared for avalanches. The area offers unlimited potential for downhill skiing with slopes that all levels should find exciting.

### **Lookout Pass**

Located off I-90, the tours begin near the Lookout Pass Ski Area. There are many skiing possibilities to be found in the vicinity and there is terrain to suit all levels of experience. In fact, one of the best beginning tours in the region can be found here as the terrain is forgiving and the scenery superb. The tours can easily be done in a day from the Lookout Ski Area and there is potential for more extended trips as well. The St. Regis Lakes area is a great destination, but remember that this high alpine valley possesses significant avalanche hazard, so be prepared. For information on conditions and trails contact the Lookout Ski Area.

### **Lolo Pass**

Located off U.S. 12 near the Idaho/Montana border. Turn into the Lolo Pass Visitor Information Station where a large lot provides the parking. A Park n'Ski sticker is required. A number of ski trails are available from the information station and many are well suited for the beginning skier. More difficult and intermediate trails can be found, but these are rated more for length than difficulty. Backcountry skiing can be found in the area, but be aware of avalanche potential. For more information on trails and conditions contact the Powell Ranger District, Clearwater National forest, Lolo, MT.

### **Wallowas, North East Oregon**

Located in north-eastern Oregon, approximately 7 miles east of Enterprise, the Wallowa mountains offer some of America's finest skiing. Located within the Wallowa Whitman National Forest, the Eagle Cap Wilderness area offers unlimited skiing terrain, suited to all ability levels, provided that you are in good physical condition. Always obtain the current weather and avalanche reports from the Wallowa/Whitman Ranger Station in Joseph, Oregon. This is a high alpine environment with a history of avalanches, so be aware and prepared for such emergencies.

In recent years a winter snow park has added access to the Wallawas at Salt Creek Summit. The road is plowed to about 6000' ending at a parking area and warming hut shared by skiers and snowmobiles. This gives good access to the wilderness area, which is restricted to snowmobiles, around the wing ridge area. To get there, travel to Joseph Oregon, turn east on state road 3 drive, about 7 miles. Turn right on forest service road 39 (sign to Halfway), follow this to the Parking area.

### **Salmo Pass, Canada**

Located just over the border in British Columbia, Canada, this area is great alpine touring terrain. The skiing is well suited for all ability levels and does not require a high level of physical conditioning.

There is a hut that is open to the public for use. The hut and pass area is a 5 hour drive from Moscow and is found between Nelway and Creston on Highway 3. Drive to the summit of Salmo Pass there a small lake and highway department buildings will be found. Park at the small turnout on the north side of the highway, cross road and ski the south tending Forest Service road. Once you attain the top of the ridge (around two miles) ski for two hundred yards and then look for a spruce tree with two white squares. Leave the main road and ski past the tree about 100 yards and look for the cabin. The huts are run by the Creston Ski Club and it is a courtesy gesture to contact the club's director to ask for permission as well as gaining current information on use and conditions. Contact Alex Nelson, home phone (604)428-4960, or work (604)428-3232 (he is the Sr. Health Inspector). The club's members are friendly people, and will go out of their way to help you, so show them similar consideration.

### **Resources**

Resources available for preview and duplication that can found in the Outdoor Program Office:

1. A Ski Tourer's Guide To Idaho
2. Ski Trails and Old Timers' Tales in Idaho and Montana
3. Ski Trails in the Canadian Rockies
4. High and Dry (Alpine Huts in the Canadian Rockies)
5. Winter Tales and Trails, Skiing, and anowshoeing in Idaho the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone, by Ron Watters.

There are also numerous pamphlets on the local ski area and a great wealth of information on avalanche evaluation and rescue. The program staff are an excellent reference for skiing and avalanche information.

For further information Contact the University of Idaho, Outdoor Program a 208-885-6810  
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