



Nordic Pass Ski Trail Completed

Have you been seeking a new place to cross-country ski? Try the new backcountry ski trail the Sierra Club and the Mountaineers have together reopened near Snoqualmie Pass. This trail serves a pressing need for a dedicated route for backcountry skiers who are seeking a more remote, natural experience than on the fee groomed trails in the area.

In recent years the downhill ski companies at Snoqualmie Pass have gradually edged out much of the public from what used to be free cross-country ski routes. Many cross country skiers will remember places like the Mt. Catherine Loop and the Three Forks Road that used to be pleasant make-your-own-trail routes on some of the best snow in the vicinity, but that have now been taken over by the ski companies who groom the trails and charge \$8 for day use.

To preserve some of the original type of cross-country use, members of the Mountaineers and the Club approached the Forest Service to see about keeping a dedicated backcountry corridor out of the hands of the hungry ski areas. After a series of field trips to survey the area, a route was selected and an agreement with the Forest Service was struck that will keep the route for backcountry, non-groomed skiing only. The approximately four-mile long route generally avoids steep areas and avalanche terrain.

We have removed major obstacles and brush from the route and have marked the

whole length with blue diamonds. To find it, start at the steep access road just a hundred yards west of the entrance to the Hyak ski area parking lot. Proceed on the main road as it swings right. At the first switchback, take the blue diamond route across a creek and into the woods. From here the route is fairly easy to follow and leads through beautiful forest with widely-spaced trees, to Hyak Lake, and eventually to Nordic Pass, which is a good lunch spot and turnaround point.

Skiers interested in this trail should be aware of a few details. First, parking at the Hyak parking lot is not free—check with attendants if you want to park there. The best bet is to park in the Gold Creek Sno-Park lot just on the other side of I-90. A Sno-Park permit good for the whole season is \$15 at most outdoor stores. This lot is patrolled frequently, and you will get a heavy fine if you park without a permit. Finally, the ski route itself is considered an advanced route, requiring an ability to ascend occasional steep pitches and to turn and slow down confidently on the quick descent. After storms blue diamonds can get hidden by snow and ice, so you should have some routefinding skills and definitely carry map, compass, and the rest of the Ten Essentials.

For a simple map of the route, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Ski Route, c/o Mark Lawler, Sierra Club, 1516 Melrose, Seattle, WA 98122.

Happy skiing!