



Go by Snowshoe

If you can walk, you can snowshoe. It's that simple. The trick is to find a place that is close and convenient where you can return time and again. Don't worry; you won't get bored. Snow has a way of changing the terrain so that each outing offers new discoveries and challenges.

In this feature, WTA members Reisha Holton and Ryan Schreiner share a few of their favorite snowshoeing destinations—Cabin Creek near Snoqualmie Pass, the snowfields above Paradise in Mount Rainier National Park and the Mount Adams Ranger District—and, WTA's recipe maven, Sarah Kirkconnell, shares three new chocolate recipes. You'll deserve them!

As snow blankets the backcountry, it beckons: Come! Enjoy the silence and the calm. Come! Explore!

Photo by Dave Schiefelbein.



A holiday outing at Cabin Creek. Photo by Ken Smith.

I began snowshoeing on the slopes north of Interstate 90, just past Snoqualmie Pass, at the Gold Creek area. This popular and relatively flat excursion offers early-season hiking on a seemingly never-ending trail. When covered in snow, the trail is transformed into an endless wash of white against a cloudless blue sky. (Well, it's occasionally cloudless.)

I soon tired of the level playing field at Gold Creek and longed for a more aerobic outing. I found the perfect mix of convenience and cardio at Cabin Creek. Snowshoers and cross-country skiers share the entrance to this winter haven, but most skiers peel off as the slope heads upwards. Essentially a Forest Service road, the wide trail is perfect for traveling alongside your two- or four-legged friend.

Don't be alarmed when you look up Cabin Creek in Dan Nelson's *Snowshoe Routes: Washington* and find that you are actually climbing Amabilis Mountain. I have trekked in this area a dozen times or more over the past two years, but I have yet to reach the 4,554-foot summit. There are a number of spots to stop for a snack or lunch that offer views to the southwest over some of the craggy peaks of the Cascades. I never know how much of the 2,100 feet of elevation I've tackled. I just know that when I get back to the car and settle in for the drive over the pass, I am worn out from the workout and I can't wipe the smile off my face.

—Reisha Holton

Getting There

Drive I-90 east over Snoqualmie Pass to exit 63, signed for Cabin Creek. Turn right at the end of the ramp and park at the Cabin Creek Sno-Park. A Sno-Park Permit is required. The parking lot can be very icy and slippery, but wait until you cross the freeway overpass to strap on your snowshoes. Look for the start of Forest Road 4826 on the left. You'll see machine-groomed tracks for the cross-country skiers, so try to skirt around these for a quarter of a mile until you see Forest Road 4822. Here the climb begins.

Cabin Creek



Easy Nut and Chocolate Truffles

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup nut butter of choice
- 3 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 3 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- 2 Tbsp. mini semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

For rolling

- Cocoa powder
- Mini chocolate chips
- Shredded coconut

At home: Mix everything in a medium bowl, using a fork to gently combine. Scoop out balls of the mix, about 2 teaspoon in size. Roll gently in your topping of choice. Store tightly covered in the refrigerator until trail time.

To carry: Pack in a small plastic box to protect. A lightweight sandwich box works well and can do double duty as a dinner bowl afterward!

Notes: We use a small disher (an ice cream scoop) to do the scooping; these can be found in any well-stocked kitchen department. They keep your hands mess free and make evenly sized truffles!

Natural style butters, where the oil separates, will result in a softer truffle. A mixed kind will result in firmer truffles.

Paradise



Solitary snowshoer at Paradise. Photo by Paul Raymaker.

Getting There

Take State Route 7 from Tacoma toward Elbe and pick up State Route 706 there. Pass through Ashford and through the Nisqually Entrance into the park. Drive 16 miles on the plowed road to the parking lot at Paradise Lodge.

Mocha Pudding

Ingredients

- 1 box instant chocolate pudding mix
- 2/3 cup dry milk
- 1 tsp. espresso powder
- 2 cups cold water
- 1/4 cup glazed pecans

At home: Pack the pudding mix, dry milk and espresso powder in a quart freezer bag. Tuck the pecans in a small bag.

In camp: Add the cold water to the pudding bag. Seal tightly and shake for 2 minutes, or use a spoon or whisk to beat it. Park the pudding in a cold stream or snowbank to finish setting up for 30 minutes or so, or until you have eaten dinner and crave dessert.

Divide up and top with pecans. *Makes 2 servings.*

Mentioning Mount Rainier conjures up images of alpinists in crampons, lugging ice axes and 40-pound packs over the glacial ice just above the Muir Snowfield. But this gradual slope is home to some of the most picturesque and wide-open snowshoeing the area has to offer. Both beginners as well as more accomplished snowshoers can get a great workout with incredible views of the 14,410-foot volcano here.

There are 19 Mount Rainier National Park adventures detailed in *Snowshoe Routes: Washington*, but I return time and time again to the simple challenge offered at Paradise. You can start your adventure right from the parking lot between Paradise's Jackson Visitor Center and the ranger station by trudging past the sledding area and heading up "The Mountain." Climbers use the troughs channeled through the snow, but with snowshoes you can cut your own path. Another starting point is behind the Guide House almost across the parking lot from the front door of Paradise Inn. This route offers a more gentle start, although the appeal of any outing from this location is the gradual ascent toward Camp Muir.

Weather is a factor when deciding to visit Mount Rainier. It changes quickly and can become hazardous. Starting from Paradise, however, is a safe bet because beginners will most likely keep the buildings of the visitor center, guide hut and Paradise Inn in sight.

The 5-mile trek to Muir may beckon the more advanced snowshoer, but I have been content to simply wander through the snow as long as time permits.

One of my favorite ways to enjoy snowshoeing at Mount Rainier is to book a room at National Park Inn at Longmire—the only winter lodging available in the park—and enjoy a two-day adventure. Hot drinks and delicious meals make this an escape worthy of playing hooky from your daily responsibilities!

—Reisha Holton



Mount Adams

Well, it's that time of year again. Snow is falling. Autumn is a memory. If you are like me, you are feeling a bit cooped up and ready to get back outside. It's time to snowshoe!

Southwest Washington boasts a plethora of choices for winter recreation, and its most exceptional snowshoe getaways are tucked away, just off the beaten path.

Located north of the Columbia River Gorge, the Mount Adams Ranger District gives the eager snowshoer plenty of options. In this district, you'll find 27 miles of signed ski and snowshoe trails, as well as 80 miles of signed snowmobiling trails that are fair game to snowshoers. These trails vary in length and in difficulty. Each offers something special to any level of experience.

One of the most scenic snowshoe hikes in the district is the Natural Bridges Loop. This 6.75-mile round loop will impress even your most temperature-sensitive friends. The traffic level here is low, granting you some solitude as you soak in the scenery. Snow-covered trees add to the distinctive beauty of this chasm's otherworldly charm.

Access this trail from Atkisson Sno-Park. A clearly marked loop will take you to a collapsed lava tube with natural land bridges. This would be an amazing sight to see in any situation, but it is especially dramatic in the snow. Don't forget to bring your camera. And even more importantly, make sure to stay well away from the edge of the collapsed tube, as it may be icy.

Here's a tip: Pack a stove, cups and cocoa mix in your day pack. When you reach a scenic vista and then offer your friends a steaming mug of hot cocoa, you can be sure they'll say "Yes!" the next time you ask, "Want to go snowshoeing?"

—Ryan Schreiner

Getting There

The five Sno-Parks in the Mount Adams Ranger District are all within striking distance of Trout Lake. Pineside, Pipeline and Smith Butte Sno-Parks can be reached by following the "Mount Adams Recreation Area" sign. Make a right turn as you enter Trout Lake. Reach Atkisson Sno-Park by following Highway 141 past the Mount Adams Ranger Station for 5 miles. To reach Flattop Sno-Park, go 1 mile past the Ranger Station and make a right on Forest Road 88. Follow FR 88 until it is no longer plowed.

Mount Adams Ranger District - (509) 395-3400

Taking a break in Horseshoe Meadows.
Photo by Dean Myerson.



Trail Mochas

Ingredients

1/2 cup dry milk
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 Tbsp. instant espresso powder
1/2 tsp. cornstarch or potato starch
Pinch of salt

At home: In a large bowl whisk the ingredients together; for a smooth powder, sift it as well. Pack into three snack-size bags in 1/2-cup portions.

To prepare: Add 1 cup boiling water slowly to the mix, stirring well. Sip away and wake up! *Makes 3 servings.*

Notes: Medaglia D'Oro instant espresso can be found in the coffee aisle in most grocery stores; look for a green-capped glass bottle.



Standing amidst splendor, near Paradise.
Photo by Paul Raymaker.



Plunging downhill from Lake Annette. Photo by Dave Schiefelbein.

Getting Started

Technique: It's true that if you can walk, you can snowshoe. You just have to widen your step. The first couple of steps feel awkward, but your body quickly adjusts to the width of the snowshoes. Walking backwards or turning takes a little practice. You may fall, but the snow is soft.

Conditions: Check conditions often before you head out to snowshoe. For mountain forecasts, try Washington Online Weather or the National Weather Service. The Northwest Avalanche Center's website provides detailed avalanche forecasts and comprehensive weather data and forecasts for the mountains. For road conditions, Washington State Department of Transportation has up-to-date mountain pass conditions, including cameras on five well-traveled routes. It is also wise to call ahead to the ranger station where you plan to hike or snowshoe to determine current conditions.

General Safety: Choose your destinations wisely. Routes that are popular summer hiking trails, such as McClellan Butte, Granite Mountain or Snow Lake, can be deadly avalanche hotspots in winter and should never be considered as snowshoe destinations. Consult a guidebook to find the best low-risk snowshoe routes.

Knowing how to navigate is also key. Snow tends to make the landscape look uniform and obscure landmarks. Finally, always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return and call them when you get home.

Clothing and Footwear: Lightweight ski pants, rain pants with long underwear, or snowboarding pants lined with a little fleece layer or regular trekking pants will work well. Snow in Western Washington is quite wet, so you'll want something water resistant. Layer your upper body with a quick-dry piece close to your body, then a fleece jacket that can be unzipped for ventilation. You want to be a little cold when you start because you will warm up quickly. For your feet, you'll want warm, waterproof boots. If your hiking boots come with materials like Gore-Tex, they will be just fine.

Equipment: Rent gear if you want to check out the different types. Most snowshoes now have aluminum frames with a decking material that will keep you on top of the snow. Teeth or cleats on the bottom are essential for the icy, hard-packed snow of Western Washington. Some shoes have straps that secure your boot to the shoe. Others offer a binding mechanism similar to ski boots.

In Your Backpack: Snowshoeing is hiking on the snow, so you'll want to carry the same essentials that you take hiking, including a map and compass, a hat and gloves, water, sunglasses, sunscreen and snacks. Always pack the 10 essentials and a few extra winter ones on any hike.

Etiquette: Snowshoeing is an increasingly popular activity, though not without conflict. Snowshoeing is permitted on all ski trails but snowshoers are requested to keep to one side and not walk across the ski track. On steep grades, snowshoers should keep in mind that skiers have the right-of-way. Do your best to move to one side and allow skiers to pass.

Permits: Depending on where you go, you may need a Northwest Forest Pass, a National Parks Pass or a Sno-Park permit. This winter, Sno-Park permits will be available for purchase online at www.parks.wa.gov/winter beginning November 1.

Stay safe, have fun, and let us know what you find by filing a trip report on WTA's website. Visit WTA's website for more snowshoeing tips, plus contact information for Sno-Parks and ranger stations.

www.wta.org/hiking-info/basics/skiing-snowshoeing-information