

# Cross country skiing opportunities abound in the Northwoods

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Cross country skiing has come a long way. Like many winter sports, its rise in popularity has brought about changes in technology and equipment, making it easier to learn and opening the sport up to all ages, from the very young to the senior sector.

It does take some practice and some patience, as well as skill building, but most outdoor enthusiasts can master the art of cross country skiing in a season. The key is to start slow and build skills as the season goes along. With the large number of trails across the Northwoods, some of which even allow dogs, cross country skiers are sure to find the perfect trail for them and the whole family. Here are a few of the opportunities to be found:

## WinMan Trails

Trails in the WinMan system vary from 4.0 to 10.0 miles. The trailhead and parking are located at the intersection of Highway W and Highway J north of Manitowish Waters. The trails are located on 1,300 acres of private and public lands and features classic and skate-style cross country skiing. Skiers should be aware trails intersect with snowmobile trails in places.

## North Lakeland Discovery Center Trails System

This 12-mile system is located at the North Lakeland Discovery Center. From the intersection of Highway 15 and County Highway W in Manitowish Waters, skiers should drive north on County W, approximately 1.5 miles to the Discover Center to find the trail head. Loops are available for all skill levels, winding through new and old growth forests as well as around Statehouse Lake and along the Manitowish River.

## NHAL

The Northern Highland American Legion (NHAL) State Forest provides 42 miles of combined classic and skate groomed trails, as well as 74.6 miles of ungroomed trails. Included in this system are the Escanaba Lake trail system loops and shelter, the Madeline trail system loops and shelter, the McNaughton trail system loops and shelter and the Raven trail system loops and shelter. Skiing on all trails in the NHAL requires a trail pass.

The Raven Trail system is located near Woodruff. It is good for all ski levels and features beautiful scenery around a lake. There are several loops of 1.4, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.2 miles. The intermediate and expert loops wind through the woods with views of Inkpot and Clear Lakes. The Nature Trail and the tracked cross country ski trail require a Wisconsin State Trail Pass.

The Escanaba Lake Loop is listed by All Trails as a moderately trafficked loop trail. It is located near

Sayner. It is listed as a moderate loop as far as skill level. Loop lengths are 2.3, 4.4, 6.6 and 8.5 miles. The trails will take skiers around several lakes and through a

variety of timber types. A shelter and fire ring are provided as well.

The McNaughton Trail System is located between Rhinelander and Minocqua. Loops include classic and skate trails. The 8.9 km Red Loop is groomed for skate while the yellow, blue and green loops are classic only. Parking and pit toilets are available.

The Madeline Trail System is comprised of approximately 10 miles of wide trails split into four routes. The Red Loop is 5.13 miles. The Blue Loop is 3.83 miles. The Green Loop is 3.58 miles. The Yellow Loop is 3.21 miles. All are open to cross country skiing. Pets are not allowed on ski trails, however.

More information on all of the trails on the NHAL can be found on the DNR website [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov).

## Razorback Ridges Trails

This 16-mile trail system is located near Sayner-Star lake on Razorback Road, where the parking area is located. Trails for beginners to expert skiers comprise the system. Snowshoeing is also allowed on this trail system. There is no fee for skiing this system, and pets are not allowed when there is snow on the ground.

## RASTA Trails

The Rhinelander Area Silent Sports Association has several trails for cross country skiers near Rhinelander in Oneida County.

The Cassian Two-Way cross country ski trail is located west of Rhinelander and can be accessed from multiple trailheads. The main trailhead is at 7578 County Highway K, but this entire trail can also be accessed from the Washburn Silent Sports Area if a longer route is desired. The 14.5 kilometers (9 miles) of trails are groomed for traditional tracked classic skiing to provide a round trip of 29 kilometers through remote county forests. The gently rolling terrain is designed to accommodate users with a wide range of skills. Of special note, the trail is a very social trail providing side by side skiing with friends. Dogs are allowed on the north section from the Beaver Lake Trailhead to the first road crossing (Sheep Ranch Road).

Nose Lake ski and snowshoe trails are located west of Rhinelander and offer 12.5 kilometer (7.8 miles) of

trail groomed for traditional tracked skiing. The trails feature gentle topography in remote county forests, making the system very popular with skiers possessing either a beginner or intermediate skill set. A most popular feature of the Nose Lake Trail is that dogs are permitted on the entire system. There is also a portable restroom in the parking area.

The Washburn Area Silent Sports Trails are located on Oneida County forest lands west of Rhinelander. Perch Lake County Park hosts the main trailhead. Trailhead features a picnic area on the shores of a spring fed lake, a warming shelter with covered outdoor patio and fireplace, and restrooms. The 21.6 kilometers (13.4 miles) of ski trails have multiple loops and are groomed for both skate and tracked classic skiing. The hilly glacial topography is a draw for intermediate and advanced skiers, while beginners will also find moderate trails leading from the parking lot. The trail system also includes 13 miles of ungroomed and marked snowshoe trails with multiple routes to please everyone, the novice snowshoer as well as the more spirited adventurer. These snowshoe trails are popular with fat bikers.

## Map it Vilas County

This interactive app can be used to find all types of trails throughout the county. Users can view a full area map, look for a specific trail, or choose from a variety of options they are looking for.

When choosing options, users can sort trails by the community in which they would like to spend time, the activity in which they would like to partake, and the length of trail. There are also options for searching only trails that allow pets, or that have disabled access.

Users can also look at a specific trail. Here, users will find trail information such as the length and location as well as what activities are available. Amenities are also listed here and any applicable fee. An interactive map also shows where in the county the trail is located.

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