

Area History

In 1906, Robert Lee Hatcher discovered gold near the summit of Skyscraper Mountain. One year later, the Alaska Gold Quartz Mining Company discovered the Independence vein on Granite Mountain and they installed the first stamp mill in the district in 1908. Business boomed for the following three decades until the United States entered World War II and gold mining was declared nonessential to the war effort.

Skiing was always a popular activity at Independence Mine and, after the mine closed, some of the buildings were converted to support a ski area. Rope tows and a T-bar were installed near the mine in the 1960s and the U.S. Army Biathlon team used the site as a training area. A three-hour bus ride took skiers from Anchorage to the mine on the weekends.

In 1980, much of Independence Mine was donated to the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation by Starkey A. Wilson. Although the ski area closed, the area near Independence Mine is still a popular place for winter recreation. Today, Independence Mine State Historical Park (SHP) provides visitors a glimpse of Alaska's mining heritage and a place to recreate all year long.



Hatcher Pass Corp sign, ca. 1966
Photos courtesy of Alaska Lost Ski Areas Project, www.alasap.org

For More Information

Mat-Su/Copper Basin Area Office:
7278 E. Bogard Road
Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 745-3975

www.alaskastateparks.org
www.alaskastatetrails.org

To report an emergency, call 911.

For weekly updates on snow conditions go to
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/asp/curevnts.htm>



Hiking up out of Gold Cord Lake to snowboard
back to Independence Mine
Photo courtesy of Justin Wholey



Welcome to
Hatcher Pass
East Management Area
Winter Use

Welcome

The Hatcher Pass East Management Area truly is a winter wonderland. Here, snow can arrive as early as September and may stay as late as June or July. This long winter season means that winter sport enthusiasts are able to enjoy their favorite types of winter recreation in early autumn and long after spring mud has replaced the snow in Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley.

Whether you're into skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, snowmachining, dog mushing, or post-holing, Hatcher Pass is the place to be when the snow starts falling. So gather your winter gear and come out to enjoy an exhilarating adventure in one of the most scenic road-accessible destinations in the state.



Enjoy the view from your snowmobile

Skiing

Winter is a fabulous time in Hatcher Pass with some of the best snow conditions in the state. The skiing season often starts in October with the cross-country ski trails in the Independence Bowl being the first in Southcentral Alaska to be set, groomed, and marked. These trails provide early training opportunities for local ski clubs and school teams.

Popular cross-country ski trails include Gold Mint Trail, Archangel Road, Reed Lakes Trail, and the road to Independence Mine State Historical Park. Ski tracks are also set in the open alpine meadows directly east of Independence Mine. Archangel and Independence Mine trails are usually groomed and marked.

Recreational Winter-Use Boundaries

New regulations for the Hatcher Pass Management Area took effect in January 2013. These regulations changed the designated areas for motorized and non-motorized winter recreation.

It's always a good idea to check the boundaries for motorized and non-motorized winter recreation before heading out. Go to <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/hatcherpass/hatcherpassboundaries.htm> for current recreational use boundaries and help make your day in the snow more pleasant for everyone.



Old Engineering Office and Warehouse at Independence Mine
Photo courtesy of Emily Angel

Highlights

Backcountry Skiing and Snowboarding

Hatcher Pass offers numerous opportunities for backcountry skiing and snowboarding with many traverses that only experienced winter recreationists should attempt. If playing in the backcountry is your thing, be sure to check avalanche conditions before you go.

Backcountry snowboarders and skiers can often find snow above the Summit Lake area from early October through early June. However, this corridor is also open to snowmachines.

Avalanche Safety

If you choose to play in this winter wonderland, know that there are inherent risks—avalanches can occur in most of Hatcher Pass. It pays to be prepared.

Variables such as slope angle and aspect, the quality of the snow pack, and wind all affect the level of avalanche hazard. Be familiar with assessing the snow pack stability and evaluating the avalanche hazard before venturing into avalanche terrain. Each member of your party should carry an avalanche beacon, a probe, and a shovel, and know how to use them.

Never travel alone.

For more information on avalanche safety and conditions at Hatcher Pass, go to www.hatcherpassavalanchecenter.org.



Snowshoeing
Photo courtesy of Emily Angel

Snowmachining

Hatcher Pass is one of the best snowmachining areas in Southcentral Alaska and one of the most scenic, too. Groomed trails and backcountry areas allow for a wide range of thrilling snowmachining adventures for riders of all skill levels. New riders can gain experience on the 22 miles of groomed and marked trails, while more experienced riders can enjoy the pleasures and surprises of the mountainous backcountry.

Remember that you can travel farther on a snowmachine in a half-hour than you can walk in a day and it's a good idea to bring snowshoes along for the ride.

All snowmachines must be currently registered to ride on public lands. This law is enforced and proceeds go to snowmachine-related project grants. For more information, go to the SnowMotr link at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/grants/snowmotr.htm>

Before You Ride:

- Know Alaska's snowmachine laws and regulations.
- Read your owner's manual.
- Check your snowmachine and equipment.
- Make sure you have adequate gas and oil.
- Wear proper clothing and a helmet.
- Check weather, snow, and ice conditions.
- Tell someone specifically where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Don't forget your avalanche beacon.

Be Sure To:

- Obey posted speed limits. If no limit is posted, let weather, lighting, and trail conditions determine a safe speed.
- Ride sober—alcohol or drugs impair judgment and slow reaction time.
- Be considerate of other trail users, private landowners, and fellow riders.

Snowmachining on the Hatcher Pass Trail
Photo courtesy of Emily Angel

Backcountry skiing
Photo courtesy of Justin Wholey

Uphill backcountry skiing
Photo courtesy of Justin Wholey



Enjoying the view on a snowmachine

Motorized Winter Trails

Hatcher Pass Trail 1



Access: Gold Mint and Fishhook trailheads

Travel Means: Snowmachine, ski, snowshoe, foot, and snowboard

Distance: 18 miles

Elevation gain: 2,000 feet

This trail starts at the Gold Mint Trailhead and parallels the plowed Hatcher Pass Road for three miles before it crosses the road. Once across the road, the trail follows the unplowed road up and over the pass, then down toward Willow to where the road is once again maintained near mile 32.4. This groomed and well-signed trail is an easy ride with beautiful scenery and lots of off-trail snowmachining once over the pass. From Archangel Road to where the trail crosses the Hatcher Pass Rd. near mile 16.8, the trail is a confined corridor where snowmachiners must remain on the trail. Please stay on the trail at all times and respect other users.

The Fishhook Trailhead at mile 16.3 of the Hatcher Pass Rd. is only minutes away from the pass and unrestricted riding west of the pass. Snowmachines must remain on the trail either direction from the trailhead.

CAUTION: Non-motorized use of this trail between Fishhook Trailhead and Archangel Road is NOT ADVISED due to steep hills, blind turns, and fast-moving snowmachines. Both motorized and non-motorized trail use is heavy between mile 17 and the Hatcher Pass summit.

Archangel Road Snowmachine Trail 2



Access: Gold Mint and Fishhook trailheads

Travel Means: Snowmachine

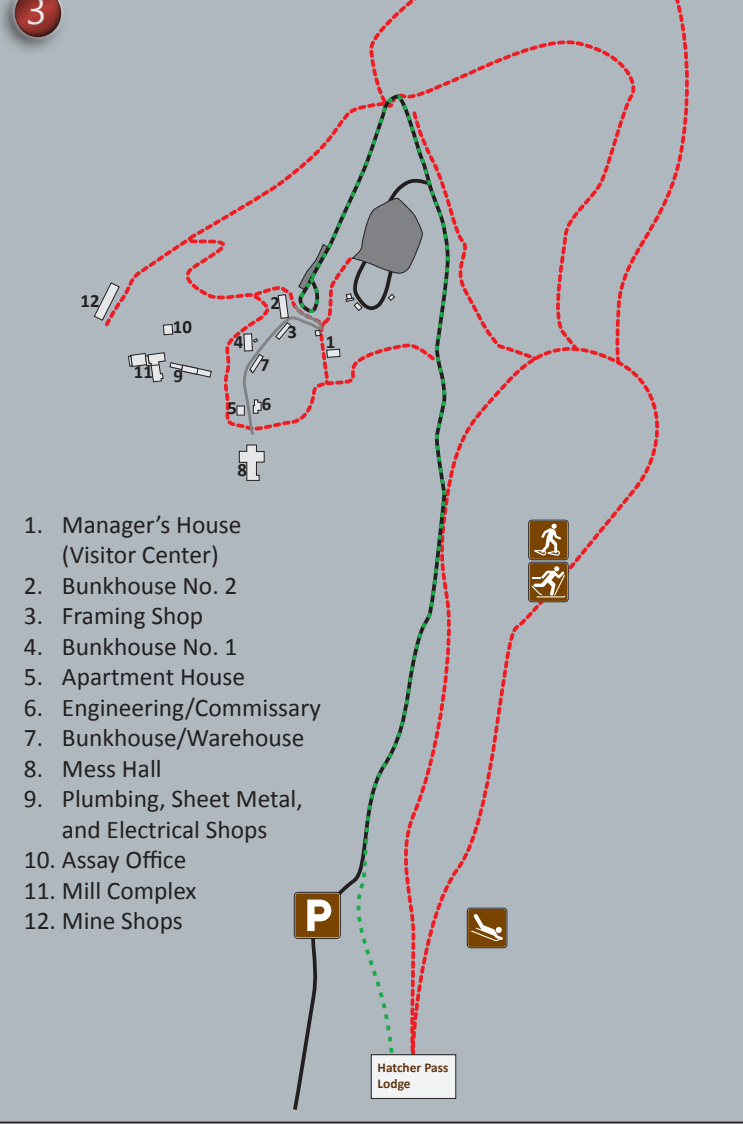
Distance: 4 miles

Elevation gain: 1,000 feet

This groomed snowmachine trail splits from the Hatcher Pass Trail about a mile from the Gold Mint Trailhead. It follows the unplowed Archangel Road up the valley to the old Fern Mine. For the first two miles, the trail has separated uses with non-motorized users on the left. Heading up the valley, snowmachines must ride on the right-hand (east) part of the valley. Once beyond the Reed Creek Valley, both sides of the trail are open to snowmachines. Reed Creek Valley is open to snowmachines up to and including Goodhope Creek.

Non-Motorized Winter Trails

Independence Bowl Winter Ski Trails 3



Independence Bowl Winter Ski Trails 3



Access: Independence Bowl parking area

Travel Means: Foot, snowshoe, ski, snowboard, and sledding

Distance: This trail network contains approximately 3 miles of groomed trail

Elevation gain: 1,000 feet

Independence Mine State Historical Park is closed to vehicles in winter. However, winter visitors may park in the Independence Bowl parking area below the gate and ski or snowshoe into the park. Winter recreation opportunities include sledding, backcountry snowboarding, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing on groomed trails or in deep powder.

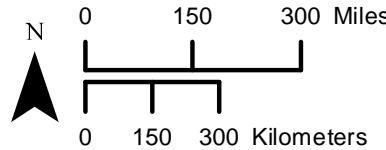
The Visitor Center is closed from Labor Day weekend through mid-June.



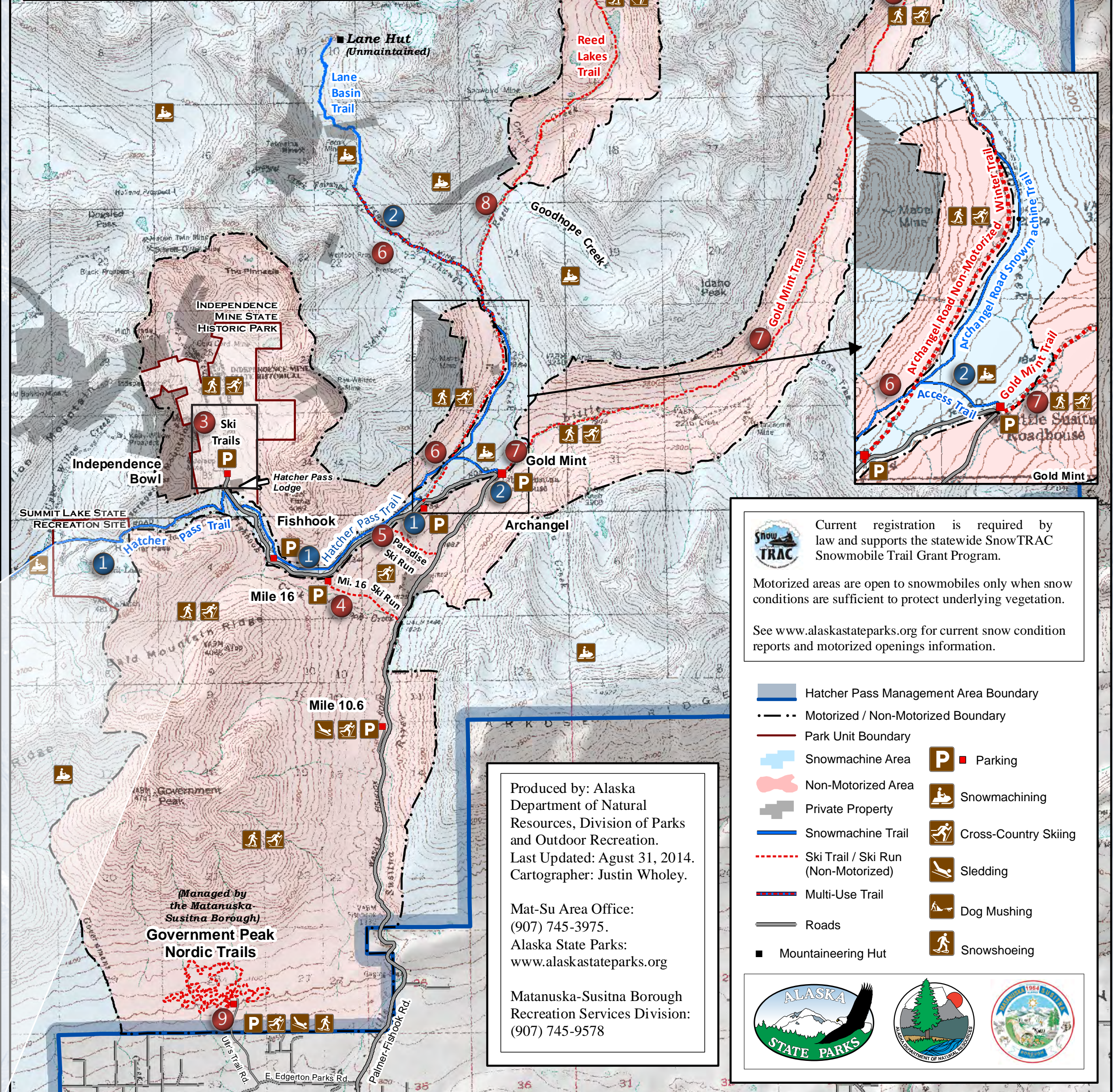
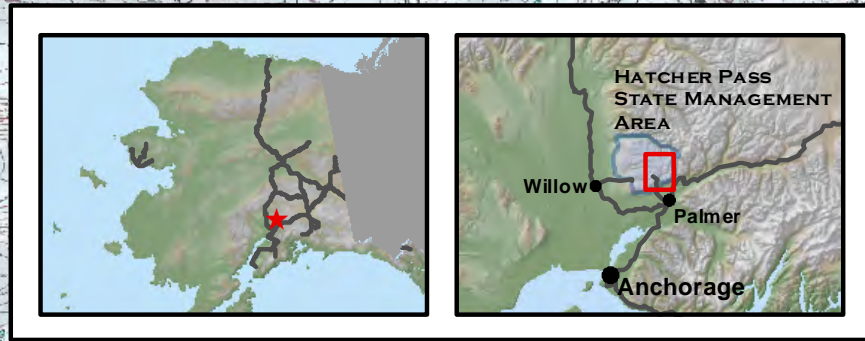
Alaska Pacific University elite Nordic skiers training at Independence Mine
Photo courtesy of Alaska Pacific University Nordic Ski Center

HATCHER PASS EAST MANAGEMENT AREA WINTER RECREATION MAP

Projected Coordinate System:
NAD 83, State Plane Alaska, Zone 4
Contour Interval: 100 Feet
1:83,350



Avalanche danger exists in much of the Hatcher Pass area. Know safe travel techniques, bring the necessary safety gear, and be proficient in its use. If you're unsure about how to be safe in the backcountry take an avalanche course.

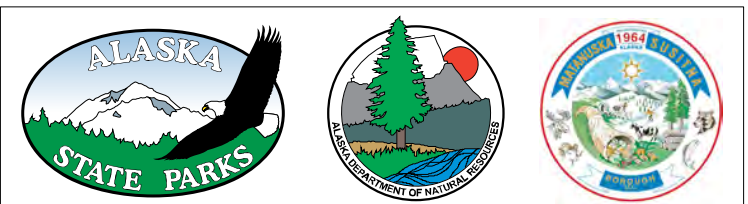


Current registration is required by law and supports the statewide SnowTRAC Snowmobile Trail Grant Program.

Motorized areas are open to snowmobiles only when snow conditions are sufficient to protect underlying vegetation.

See www.alaskastateparks.org for current snow condition reports and motorized openings information.

- Hatcher Pass Management Area Boundary
- Motorized / Non-Motorized Boundary
- Park Unit Boundary
- Snowmachine Area
- Non-Motorized Area
- Private Property
- Snowmachine Trail
- Ski Trail / Ski Run (Non-Motorized)
- Multi-Use Trail
- Roads
- Mountaineering Hut
- Parking
- Snowmachining
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Sledding
- Dog Mushing
- Snowshoeing



Produced by: Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation.
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Mat-Su Area Office:
(907) 745-3975.
Alaska State Parks:
www.alaskastateparks.org

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Recreation Services Division:
(907) 745-9578

Mile 16 Ski Run 4



Access: MP 16 of Hatcher Pass Road

Travel Means: ski and snowboard

Distance: 2 miles

Elevation drop: 2,000 feet

Beginning at Mile 16 on the Hatcher Pass Road and ending at Mile 12, this trail is popular with both alpine skiers and snowboarders. However, it is a steep freestyle run and **not** recommended for novices. Ski or snowboard here at your own risk and wear appropriate safety gear.

NOTE: Vehicles shuttling skiers and snowboarders should not turn around or park along Hatcher Pass Road between Mile 14.4 (Archangel Road pullout) and the Mile 16 parking area due to avalanche danger in this area.

Paradise Ski Run 5



Access: MP 14.8 to MP 12.6

Travel: Ski and snowboard

Distance: 0.5 miles

Elevation drop: 500 feet

This is a shorter ski run, with vehicle access to both the top and bottom of the run, but no parking at the top. Because it is in an avalanche-prone area, it is strictly a drop-off point and stationary vehicles are prohibited. Vehicles should use the Mile 16 parking lot to turn around.

Ski or snowboard on this steep hill at your own risk and wear appropriate safety gear. Limited parking is available at the bottom of the run. Skiers are urged to use extreme caution to not ski out onto the road.

Archangel Road Non-Motorized Winter Trail 6



Access: Archangel Trailhead

Travel Means: Foot, ski, snowshoe

Distance: 4 miles to the Fern Mine gate (private)

Elevation gain: 1,000 feet

Archangel Road usually closes to highway vehicles after the first "sticking" snowfall, becoming a winter recreation trail. Parking is available at the pullout along Hatcher Pass Road at the Archangel Road junction. The flat, gentle terrain is ideal for novice level cross-country skiing, walking, and snowshoeing. For the first two miles, the trail has separated uses. Non-motorized users must stay on the left trail, snowmachiners on the right. Once beyond the Reed Creek Valley, both sides of the trail are open to snowmachines. This trail is often groomed for winter recreation.

Gold Mint Trail 7



Access: Gold Mint Trailhead

Travel Means: Foot, snowshoe, ski

Distance: 16 miles round trip

Elevation gain: 1,000-foot plus gain

The Gold Mint Trail follows the west bank of the Little Susitna River until it reaches the glacier-rimmed valley near the end where the trail steepens. Many winter visitors enjoy skiing up the Gold Mint Trail or heading up into the mountains and going off trail to explore the high valleys and deep powder.

NOTE: Snowmachiners use the parking lot during winter as a staging point for the Hatcher Pass Trail to Archangel Road and Hatcher Pass.

Reed Lakes Trail 8



Access: Reed Lakes Trailhead

Travel Means: Foot, ski, snowboard, snowshoe

Distance: 9 miles round trip

Elevation gain: 1,600 feet

The High Glacier Peaks area, north of Reed Lakes, provides backcountry traverses amongst the mountains and glaciers that only experienced skiers and climbers should attempt. The area also boasts several backcountry mountain huts managed by the Mountaineering Club of Alaska and the American Alpine Club.

Government Peak Nordic Trails 9



Access: Mile 1.2 of the Edgerton Parks Road off the Palmer-Fishhook Road.

Travel Means: Ski, sled, snowboard, and snowshoe, winter bike, skijor

Distance: Approximately 4 miles of groomed trails, depending on time of winter

Elevation gain: 400-500 feet

Diverse day traverses and backcountry skiing make the Government Peak area popular in winter. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is in the process of developing multi-use non-motorized ski trails and a rentable chalet on the south side of Government Peak. The Borough also maintains a parking area for skiing and sledding at mile 10.6 of the Palmer-Fishhook Road. For more information on these facilities, call the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Recreational Services at 745-9578.