

High Country News

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Snowmobiling Issue



Photo by Montana Highway Commission

One of Montana's best known and most challenging snowmobile trails is the Big Sky Trail which starts just south of Bozeman and meanders down the spectacular

Gallatin Valley for 125 miles . . . at times paralleling U.S. Highway 191 until it reaches the snow capital of West Yellowstone. It's in Montana . . . snowmobiling at it's best.

Yellowstone Is Winter Mecca

An exciting new dimension to the Wyoming winter scene has been added for the 1970-71 season--the South Entrance to Yellowstone National Park. For the first time the road from Colter Bay in Grand Teton National Park to the South Gate will be plowed, making it possible for snowmobile enthusiasts to visit the wonders of Yellowstone from the South entrance. Prior to this time the trip from Colter Bay to Old Faithful, center of most winter activity in America's oldest national park, had been possible but extremely difficult in a day's time. Now, it will be an easy and enjoyable day's tour.

Yellowstone is the final jewel in the Wyoming winter crown. A winter vacation in Wyoming now features the spectacular scenic beauty of Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, skiing at any of the state's 14 ski areas, snowmobiling in seven national forests, ice fishing select Wyoming lakes, cross country skiing or snowshoeing or viewing the world's largest single elk herd at the National Elk Refuge north of Jackson or any one of a number of cutter or snowmobile races throughout the state. Wyoming's mountain ranges -- Teton, Wind River, Big Horn, Medicine Bow, --

and national forests -- Teton, Bridger, Bighorn, Medicine Bow, Shoshone, Black Hills and Targhee -- offer the ideal setting for a family winter vacation. The excitement this year centers around Yellowstone, and the Yellowstone Park Company has announced it will conduct tours of the park in large, heated, many passenger snowmobiles. Tours will start at the Flagg Ranch and operate to several points within the park, starting December 15. Daily bus service from Teton Village, site of the Jackson Hole Ski Area, the Town of Jackson and the Jackson Hole Airport, the

Flagg Ranch and return will be in effect from November 1 through April 15. The bus leaves Teton Village at 7:00 a.m. daily, arriving Flagg Ranch at 8:30 a.m. with intermediate stops in Jackson (7:15 a.m.) and the airport (7:30 a.m.) The return trip leaves Flagg Ranch at 5:30 p.m. and arrives Teton Village at 7:00 p.m. Costs are \$2.80 one way from Teton Village to Flagg Ranch and \$5.30 round trip, and \$2.50 from Jackson to Flagg Ranch and \$4.75 round trip. Snowmobile tours will be offered from Flagg Ranch to Old Faithful (\$19.25 round trip for adults; \$9.75 for

children under 12); Flagg Ranch to West Yellowstone (round trip--\$33 for adults and \$16.50 for children); Flagg Ranch to Mammoth (round trip--\$38.50 adults and \$19.75 for children) and from Flagg Ranch to West Yellowstone (one way-- \$20.00 and \$10.00 and Flagg Ranch to Mammoth (one way--\$24.00 and \$12.00). Yellowstone, the world's first and America's largest and still most fabulous national park, is magnificent in the spring, summer and fall and spectacular in the winter. The snow and cold temperatures make the park's 10,000 thermal (Please turn to page 4)



Photo by Jim Tallon

Jumping off a snowbank, Vicki Tallon makes a used snowmobile out of a new one.

Yellowstone Is Mecca...

features, including 200 geysers, even more dramatic. The wildlife herds together and can be seen in greater abundance in winter than in summer.

Next door to Yellowstone National Park to the south is magnificent Grand Teton National Park with the Tetons forming the backdrop for snowmobiling, skiing, cross country touring or viewing the world's largest single elk herd, the 8,000 to 10,000 strong Jackson Hole herd, which winters at the National Elk Refuge just north of Jackson.

Snowmobile tours in large, heated snow machines are offered by Barker-Ewing Guide Service, Jackson, or you can go it alone and view the wide variety of wildlife which call the 60-mile long valley home—moose browsing among the frosted willows, elk splashing across a side channel of the Snake River, flocks of Canada geese, ducks and trumpeter swans or a bald eagle soaring nearby.

Like the camping craze the snowmobile boom has taken a firm grip on Wyoming. Wyoming's national forests and two national parks provide the ideal setting for those seeking the solitude and splendor of the great outdoors bedecked in an ermine coat.

National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service officials have established a minimum of rules to provide for the safety and well being of the snowmobiler, and many trails have been marked for the convenience of the over the snow adventurer.

General safety precautions include always traveling with a companion, wearing enough warm clothing, avoiding questionable (avalanche) terrain and notifying someone of your proposed

route and expected time of arrival. It is advisable to contact National Park or U. S. Forest Service officials prior to your trip to determine regulations and trails for the area.

Races and safaris have grown in popularity as fast as the machines themselves. Races set for this season include those at Saratoga (first weekend in February), the Snowy Range Winter Festival (February 26-28) and the Dubois to Pinedale trek and Dubois 55-mile cross country race, both in February.

Several Wyoming dude ranches and lodges are launching full scale winter operations to cater to the winter vacationer.

Other winter highlights will include cutter races every Sunday in Afton, starting December 20 and continuing through to the Wyoming

Championships on the weekend preceding George Washington's Birthday. Afton is the only Wyoming community where the cutters are still used. A matched set of thoroughbreds, pulling a small sleigh, race over ice and snow, thrilling driver and spectator alike.

Ice fishing has grown in popularity, and for those armed with ice augur, warm clothing and the will to wait patiently and attempt to entice the wily trout, fighting walleye or the night loving ling, Wyoming's lakes and reservoirs offer a true challenge. The state record rainbow was caught through the ice at Burnt Lake, so ice fishing can have its rewards.

For a brochure on "Skiing Big Wyoming" or "Big Wyoming Winter Fun," write Wyoming Travel Commission, 2320 Capitol Avenue, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001.

Snowmachiners Reminded About Snowmobile Safety

PIERRE—Snowmobilers have been asked by South Dakota Highway Patrol Chief Delton Shultz to refrain from operating their machines on the state's highways.

The reason for this request, Shultz says, is one of safety.

"Until the legislature passes a snowmobile law, we are asking the State Snowmobile Association, individual clubs, and snowmobilers in general to use common sense while operating snowmobiles," he said.

Neighboring states have recorded fatalities and accidents involving snowmobiles, but South Dakota has none this far. "This is due," Shultz said, "to the cooperation of snowmobile owners and to good operating attitudes."

Fred Nemer, Snowmobile Association president said, "we certainly do not want even one fatality involving a snowmobile and we are

asking members and non-members alike to heed Colonel Shultz's advice."

Cross Country Snow Safari

PIERRE—The Cross Country Snowmobile Safari, Feb. 21-28, beginning at Watertown and ending in the Black Hills, will cover nearly 400 miles.

Bill Lemley, of the South Dakota Snowmobile Association and chairman of the event said elaborate plans are being made and everything is "going smoothly."

The event which is sponsored by the State Snowmobile Association is open to anyone who wants to make the trip, whether or not a resident of the state or a member of the state association.

Outdoors Omnibus

by
Jim Tallon

DON'T GET SNOWED ON USED SNOWMOBILES

Being an outdoor writer, you often get to hob-nob with the experts. Loyal readers of this column no doubt remember Turkboy, Madam Eva, and Al Ellis. Well, in Phoenix, Arizona, last August I ran into still another of my expert friends.

I was traveling east on McDowell Road in 111-degree heat when a snowball clobbered my windshield. Now mind you, it hasn't snowed in Phoenix since 1939. And even then, hardly enough to put together a good snowball. That, plus the tempestuous temperatures sent me into a moment of arm-waving panic. But the snowball evaporated nearly instantly in a puff of steam, and I thought maybe I was seeing things.

A second snowball splattered the passenger-side window and I knew something was up. I whipped my rig to the curve, rammed it into reverse, and backed up a hundred feet to see Dick Rhodes reaching into an upright freezer-refrigerator for a third snowball. Dick is Arizona's most avid snowmobile fan and promoter, bar none.

"Dick," I said. "What in the devil are you doing?"

"Hi, Jim," he said. "Didn't know that was you in the camper. Anyway, it's my humble way of attracting attention to my new snowmobile shop."

He jammed two snowballs into conical paper cups, poured fruit flavor on them and passed one to me. I wanted to put mine in my straw cowboy hat and might have but he suggested we go into his air-conditioned shop.

"What do you think?" he asked, crunching ice from his impromptu snowcone.

"Pretty nice," I said, looking over the new model snowmobiles. My eyes came to rest on a used machine. Considering the clime in which I lived, curiosity got the better of me.

"Dick," I said. "That's the first used snowmobile I've ever seen for sale."

"Low mileage," said Dick, picking up the ball, er, snowball.

"I can see why," I said, looking outside to see if my pickup-camper had sunk out of sight into the asphalt. "Just how does a guy go about buying a used snowmobile. I mean, what does he look for and how does he avoid the 'Honest John' types snowmobile wheeler-dealers?"

"Well," said Dick, getting serious about his favorite subject, "to begin with the machine should have that 'used-by-a-little-old-maid-schoolteacher' look. You know, not battered up. If a snowmobile shows mistreatment on the outside, it could well be the same inside."

"Like used cars, huh?" I said.

"Yes, but that's only a starting place. It helps if you're familiar with snowmobile engines. A machine could look good and still have engine troubles. At best, you can listen for foreign noises like rod knocks, and maybe get the seller to guarantee the machine. If you can take it for a test run, so much the better. Be sure it starts easy."

"Do you kick the tires... I mean the track?" I asked.

"No, but you should check the track for damage and be sure the wheels and bearings that it rides on are in good shape. That goes for the belt drive unit, too. Sheaves should be straight and belts should fit snugly. The best machines have chains that run in oil. Watch for wear on the sides of the sprockets. This means something is out of line and a chain will have a short life."

His snowball had melted now and looked like Kool-Aid. He took a sip before going on.

"You have to consider the frame and skis. If a frame is busted, you can always have it welded, but it may take a bit of work if the break is in the track tunnel. Skis can get bent up, but this doesn't necessarily mean the machine has gotten a lot of rough usage. Perhaps skis damaged by running over bare ground might be more of a mark of reckless treatment."

"What should a guy pay for a used machine?" I asked.

"That's a tough question," he said. "But as a rule, snowmobiles may depreciate as much as 40 percent the first year, depending upon the make. In two or three years, you start thinking about half price, but again it depends upon the brand, and of course, condition. That one you're sitting on. We shave 30 percent off it, and it's in top shape."

He grinned.

"I can put in that one... I mean... on that one for no money down with good credit," he said.

"All my buying power went up in steam like your snowball on my windshield, when I bought THAT," I said, jerking a thumb toward my new pickup-camper. "However, I've a few bucks ratholed and I'm very interested in buying a used, high quality, deep freeze-refrigerator."

"I just happen to have one that was treated with loving care by a little-old-maid-schoolteacher," he said, starting toward the door.

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