

Extreme Snowmobile Adventures: Cascade, Idaho West Mountain: Trails and Meadows and Bowls... Oh, My!



This view greeted us from atop the West Mountains over looking Lake Cascade in the distance

We started our day of riding by heading west across the Cascade Reservoir to the sno-park at junction AA on the Valley County "Snowmobile Trail Map" found at many locations in Cascade. The first thing I saw on this ride was a sign informing em that only trail riding was allowed... for the next three or so miles. I didn't know how to react to that one, as the trails were, after all, FRESHLY groomed, so I chose to wait. This was supposed to be a ride filled with tons of play areas, all leading up to "Hill 44," so named because some unlucky individual rolled his sled 44 times while trying to climb over the top.

After a few miles on the trail, our guide stopped to make sure it was off-trail riding that we wanted to do. "Oh yea," was the response echoed by all and away we went, taking a left off the

trail and heading up the hill and out of the fog which was plaguing the whole lower Valley County. This was up on top of the West Mountains, overlooking the Cascade Res. to the east, the Snake River Valley to the west, along with the Wallowa Mtns and plenty of beautiful scenery.

Already, after less than five minutes off of the trail, I was having my fill of fun and could see the exciting turns for the best that this day's ride had in store for me. The Cascade area had a 'January thaw' the prior day, bringing the average temperatures over 40° in most places, setting up the snow so that you could LITERALLY GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT GETTING STUCK. I was on a borrowed Trail RMK, so naturally I was not as equipped as all of the other 700 & 800 RMKs, but with the snow conditions as they

were, it really was not too much of an issue. More of an issue was my riding ability and extra 10 pounds on my waistline!

We stayed and played on the lower side of the West Mountain for quite some time until I did manage to get myself dug in just a wee bit. Seconds after that we descended right onto trail marker AB on the trail map. This junction was nicely marked with a sign freshly put up by the West Mountain Snowmobile Club. I knew this because I was lucky enough to get to ride behind Gene Eveland, Club President, most of the day. This junction was also a bathroom stop, so anybody whose breakfast had bounced

around too much stopped to shed a few pounds.

Quickly then, it was due north of the junction on the groomed trail (freshly groomed, that is, no tracks at all) past "Landmark Tree" and on towards numerous play areas and the famed "Hill 44." The play areas that we were shown on this mountain were simply incredible. Plus, at this elevation, a heavy skiff of virgin powder had fallen while lower elevations received rain. This was a wish come

true. We pinned the throttle and ripped across meadows and bowls with as much speed as our sleds could handle. Carving a turn here, whipping one over there and just plain having too much fun were some of the highlights!

Stopping on the crest of one of the play hills with my riding buddy Carl, we noticed that west of us was a hill, mellow on the north end and steep on the south end, dotted with sleds galore

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Stillwell, Landers and "Stretch" all take a break from being the crazy ones in our bunch of riders.



Stillwell catches a little air coming off a cornice above Poison Lake.



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and we knew we had reached our destination: Hill 44. We quickly ripped across the small draw between us and the hill to watch the fearless climb the crazy! What a blast! I ate my lunch as guys from our group and one other went up and down the hill. No one rolled, but a few sleds did just barely make the turn to the downside and gathered a few "Ooohs" and "Ahhs" from our bunch.

At this point, we chose to crest the hill to the north so that we could get

to the really steep chutes and play hills. That story will come at a later date. From that point we were directly overlooking Poison Lake to the NE and the Weiser River Valley to the west. The view from here is simply wonderful. Heavy fog covered the valley floor to the east, making for some splendid 'eye candy.' The photos in no way do the scenery justice.

At this point, a few in our group had to make tracks back so we boondocked across the west side of the mountain – side hill-ing, in and out of trees, and generally confusing me

– GOOD THING FOR MY GUIDES!. What fun! Before I knew it, we had descended on the trail again, this time north of the AD junction on my trail map. From there, it was a quick eight mile rip down the trail and into the fog to complete a totally exhausting day of extreme fun on the snow out of Cascade, Idaho.

If you would like more information on all of the extreme winter fun that can be had in Cascade, Idaho, you can browse the Cascade Web Page at <http://www.extremecascade.com>. The West Mountain Snowmobile Club has more info on riding in the area and their number is 208-382-6813 or HYPERLINK <mailto:genewen@micron.net> genewen@micron.net. The ISSA's number is 208-883-8476. While you are in the area, stop for some great food at the Chief Hotel & Restaurant 208-382-3315 and even make a bed for the night! The food at the Chief is better than excellent, and Jim is always there making your stay unforgettable (just ask for Jim and tell him we sent ya). Stay tuned for more riding out of Cascade, Idaho. See ya on the trail!



This is just one of the many play areas we ran into over the course of the day.

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