

## SNOWMOBILE TRAIL DESCRIPTIONS

The West Yellowstone area provides a wide range trails that meet the demands of beginning, intermediate, and experienced riders. Whether you prefer steady, mellow cruising with few elevation changes, or you are craving the powdery steeps, there are plenty of options to suit your taste. *SnoWest Magazine* traditionally awards West Yellowstone with a top position in the **Top 15 Trails in the West** for snowmobilers. Each year, the magazine sends out nearly 2,000 surveys and asks readers to rank their favorites according to ten different categories (from scenery and grooming to weather). West Yellowstone has held spot #1 or #2 for the past eleven years.

### WEST YELLOWSTONE AREA TRAILS:

**The Madison Arm Loop** is located north and west of West Yellowstone and is 20 miles in length. It will take you by the Madison Arm of Hebgen Lake. This could easily be considered the most relaxing ride of the trails in the Yellowstone area. The trail is well maintained and usually provides great wildlife viewing opportunities. If you are new to snowmobiling, consider this as a first ride before heading out to the other trails in the system. The northern edge of the Madison Arm Loop skirts along the edge of Hebgen Lake, while the west edge goes along the South Fork of the Madison River. (Caution: the ice along Hebgen Lake is not safe to ride on).

**South Plateau Trail** can be access from Electric Street right in West Yellowstone. This is a quieter trail and is recommended for the novice to intermediate snowmobiler. The trail runs along the boundary of Yellowstone National Park and is your best opportunity to view the moose of the region. You can ride this trail out and back, or link it up with one of the other trails to make a great loop ride. Be sure you know how long these loops are and where the nearest gas is along the way. (Be sure to pick up a map from the Chamber of Commerce or West Yellowstone businesses.)

The South Plateau heads south for 13 miles where it meets the Black Bear Cutoff (to Idaho) or 16.2 miles where it meets the Black Canyon Trail. It provides great views of the area's mountains, following creeks and rivers away from the crowds. There is an abundance of off-trail riding but make sure that you do not enter Yellowstone Park (the trail skirts the western edge of the Park).

See the snow ghosts of Two Top on the most famous trail in all of North America! **Two Top Trail** is a popular choice for its variety of terrain and 2,000-foot elevation gain. The trail is groomed, and powder fields abound. This trail has everything and makes it one of the most visited trails in the system. Whether you are a novice or an expert, you will enjoy this well-groomed trail. This trail is a large loop with plenty of extra off-trail riding for those in search of more adventure. There are numerous bowls out there with drop offs and overhanging cliffs. The bowls are great to ride, but make sure you know where you are out there.

On clear days you can view the Teton Mountains and be treated to an incredible panorama of the entire region. From the upper areas, the surrounding mountain ranges come into view, including the Wyoming's Teton's, Idaho's Centennial Mountains, Lionhead in Montana, and Yellowstone National Park. Constant driven winds create ghostly ice patterns plastered on the trees at the top of this mountain creating the famous "snow ghosts."

**The Big Sky Trail** provides some of the best backcountry snowmobiling in Montana. This 110-mile trail begins just north of West Yellowstone. The first portion is groomed, but the trail quickly turns into an un-groomed powder experience. The Big Sky Trail is not groomed as often

as other trails in the area. If you are in search of fresh powder, you may find it here. The trail begins from West Yellowstone and heads north along the western boundary of Yellowstone National Park. From West Yellowstone, there is seventeen miles of groomed trail followed by thirteen miles of 'un-groomed powder' until it reaches the Sunlight Basin Trail. About 9 miles out of town the trail crosses the highway and heads northwest. After the road crosses the highway, the area opens up into the cabin and Tepee Creek area. This area has open bowls, deep powder, happy snowmobilers and a forest service cabin that can be rented. Though the scenery can be breathtaking, you will seldom see wildlife due to the immense powder and thick forest. Deep fields of snow, and outstanding hill climbing opportunities are the hallmark of this well-known and challenging trail. This is a trail for more aggressive riders looking for backcountry access. (Try Carrot Basin and Skyline Ridge.)

**Lionhead Trail** offers an exciting experience for those seeking something more radical. Following the east side of the Continental Divide, the trail climbs to over 10,000 feet. It is also one of the shortest and steepest trips in the area at around 16 miles, but one of the most scenic trails with expansive vistas from the Teton to Yellowstone. This trail rides along the Continental Divide and then up to the top of Lionhead Mountain through a series of switchbacks that are not recommended for the inexperienced rider.

**Horse Butte Loop** travels the shores of Hebgen Lake. This trail is a great ride to introduce the novice rider into the snowmobiling community. The 20-mile loop takes you by Hebgen Lake and some of the best ice fishing in the west. If you are looking to get away from the crowds of the Yellowstone trail system, this is a great smooth ride for you. This trail is also a great ride when the weather is a bit too much on the higher trails.

Access the loop from the 4.8 Horse Butte Trail. (You can add another 15 miles by taking the Cougar Creek Trail.) This trail makes a ride through thick pines and open meadows and along the lake. Watch for the fire lookout and great views from the top of Horse Butte. There is off-trail riding through then trees and meadows, although some of the area is restricted (posted signs).

### **OTHER NEAR-BY TRAILS:**

**The Continental Divide Trail** offers a unique snow travel experience, connecting central Wyoming with our community via Yellowstone National Park. The trail system begins near Lander, Wyoming at Sinks Canyon, and winds through the Wind River Mountains near Pinedale and Dubois. The trail then passes through Togwotee Pass and Moran before entering Grand Teton National Park in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The trail follows the Rockefeller Parkway and ends at Yellowstone's southern entrance

### **Snowmobiling Island Park:**

Island Park offers incredible, crowd-free riding and huge amounts of snow, adding to the amazing network of possibilities with another 500 miles of groomed trails! Talk about powder - Island Park receives over 250 inches of light, fluffy snow a year! West Yellowstone's trail system is connected to those in Island Park, making it easy for visitors in either community to enjoy both