

## Deer Creek XC Ski by Dave Cooper



*A cold day of skiing 2 -small*

Winter has finally arrived in Colorado - with a vengeance. Along with the copious quantities of excellent powder snow has come the cold, requiring those who venture into the backcountry to dig out their warmest clothes, face masks and hand warmers. On a recent backcountry skiing trip we found that leaving any skin exposed to the elements risked frostnip. We also had to take extra precautions to avoid freezing our water bottles, plus keep our food in inside pockets to avoid breaking teeth on rock-hard energy bars.

A favorite early-season ski tour has, for many years, been the road up Deer Creek. Suitable for novice to intermediate skiers, the road climbs initially at a gentle grade, then steepens a little to provide more challenging skiing on the descent. Advanced skiers

**Getting to the Trailhead:** Montezuma can be reached either from Silverthorne or by driving over Loveland Pass on Highway 6.

If approaching via Silverthorne, take the Silverthorne exit from I-70 (Exit 205) and drive east on Highway 6 for 8.3 miles to Montezuma Road. This is 0.3 miles west of Gondola Road or 4.8 miles east of the Arapahoe Basin Ski Area. Turn south onto Montezuma Road, go straight at the stop sign and follow the road as it curves to the left. Continue on to the small town of Montezuma, a total of 5.5 miles from Highway 6. Drive through Montezuma, following signs to the trailhead, for a further 1.2 miles to a plowed parking area.

**Hike Statistics:** The trail gains 1000 feet in 2.2 miles one way.

**Difficulty:** A moderate ski on an old mine road, suitable for novice to intermediate skiers. The upper half of the tour is a little steeper and requires some downhill skiing abilities.

**USGS Quad:** Montezuma, CO.

may, if conditions are good, find steeper glades to ski at the head of the valley and also in the trees above the road. Only head above treeline when avalanche conditions permit.

With the longer days and more stable snow conditions of spring, there are several options to extend the tour.

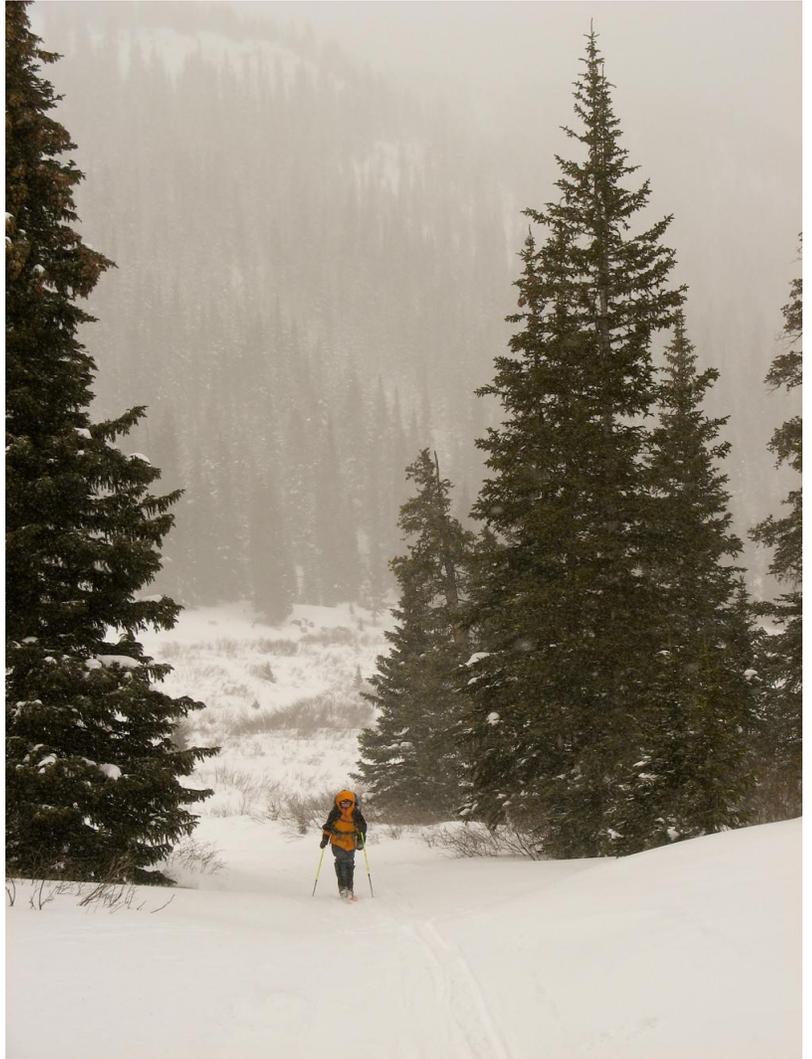
Be aware that you may be sharing this road with snowmobiles.

### **Ski Description**

From the parking area, follow the road as it climbs gently at a 7% grade, paralleling the creek. After 1.3 miles the road drops down to the creek (left) then continues along the east side of the drainage. From here the grade increases to 12% on average as the road climbs a little above the creek. At mile 2.0 the road makes a short switchback before continuing on a southeasterly tack. We ended the tour at mile 2.2, where the trees ended and the whiteout began. We didn't doubt that the forecast of a -30 degree windchill was accurate.

The run down is quick and fun when the snow is good, since the road is wide enough to allow you to make turns on the steeper sections.

*Starting up the hill after crossing the drainage - small.jpg*



### **Important update on trailhead parking in and around Montezuma.**

The parking area for Sts. John and the Wild Irishman Mine is now closed. The small parking area at the junction of Sts. John Road and Montezuma Road, that the County has historically plowed for skier/snowshoer parking, is now posted no parking. A phone call to the Dillon Ranger District confirmed that the town no longer allows parking either at this trailhead or at the Webster Pass trailhead. Skiers and snowshoers must park either at the Deer Creek trailhead 1.2 miles south, or at the Peru Creek trailhead, 0.7 miles north on the Montezuma Road.



GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)

Trailhead Parking: 39,33,51N / 105,51,38W, 10591 feet  
Treeline: 39,32,11N / 105,52,18W, 11562 feet

