

Second Creek - Ski/Snowshoe Tour

by Dave Cooper

The area around Berthoud Pass always seems to be favored with more than its fair share of early season snow. This year is no exception.

There are several excellent ski/snowshoe tours on both sides of the Pass. Three prominent drainages on the north side of the Pass offer short but fun half day tours in the shadow of the Continental Divide.

Getting to the Trailhead: From the summit of Berthoud Pass on US Highway 40, drive north for 3.1 miles to the Second Creek parking area, located on the outside of a large switchback.

Statistics: Trailhead to the A- Frame (11,325 feet): 725 feet of elevation gain in 1.0 miles one way.

Difficulty: An intermediate half day ski tour with an abundance of excellent telemarking slopes.

USGS Quad: Berthoud Pass, CO

As you drive north on US 40 from the top of Berthoud Pass, the first of these drainages is Current Creek, followed by Second Creek and finally First Creek. Second Creek offers perhaps the most moderate terrain of the three, and also provides access, when conditions permit, to the Continental Divide itself. Friends and I have enjoyed extended tours all the way to Parsenn Bowl at Winter Park.

Tour Description

Typically there will be a well-defined ascent trail and many descent tracks. If you're on skis then climbing skins make the ascent easier. Head up through trees, staying on the right (north) side of the drainage. After 0.5 miles a steeper hill sparsely dotted with trees makes a great ski hill. Many people stop here and yo-yo the slope.

Moderate slopes offer opportunities to practice your downhill skills

To continue on, stay on the right side of the drainage as it turns to the northwest. Initially stay to the left of a rocky knoll which separates First and Second Creeks, then curve right to gain the top of this little ridge at a



stand of trees after one mile. Hidden in this stand is the famous A-Frame, somewhat rundown these days and apparently awaiting a replacement. (For more information go to <http://www.grandhuts.org/>). Good skiing can be found on the slopes next to the A-frame, plus the views down-valley are outstanding, so this is a good place for a lunchstop.

The A-Frame

The tour can continue beyond the A-Frame by staying on the ridge as it heads west, soon merging into a wide gentle bowl as you leave treeline. On a nice day the tour can continue all the way to the head of the drainage, but be careful to avoid the corniced ridges and avalanche terrain. Views from the Continental Divide are quite spectacular. It will be obvious that this high bowl is not the place to be on a stormy and windy day.



Enjoy the fast run down, which offers lines for both intermediate and advanced skiers.



Moderate slopes offer great skiing



