

Tie Hack Loop - Ski / Snowshoe

by Dave Cooper

This week's trail is named after the tie hacks, loggers whose specialty was cutting railroad ties using only hand tools.

Located along the west edge of South Park, the route follows trails and logging roads as it undulates through the dense forest and open meadows of the foothills of the Mosquito Range.

The loop can be skied or snowshoed in either direction. If skiing, especially with marginal snow cover, I'd recommend heading in a clockwise direction. This way you climb the steeper hills rather than flying down them. With good snow and equally good downhill technique the tight turns and narrow trails will entice the experienced skier to try the loop in a counterclockwise direction. It is best to hit this trail after a recent snowfall.

Getting to the Trailhead: From the traffic light in Fairplay, head south on US Highway 285. After 1.2 miles turn right (west) on Park County Road 18 and drive 3.9 miles on this road to a parking area on the right, signed as the Tie Hack Tour Winter Trailhead. Make sure you stay straight (left) on CR18 after 1.2 miles, where the road turns to gravel.

Statistics: 900 feet of total elevation gain in 5.1 miles round trip. Highest elevation reached is 10,750 feet.

Difficulty: A moderate ski / snowshoe outing on old logging roads and narrow trails.

USGS Quad: Fairplay West, CO

Hike Description

From the parking area head northwest along the four wheel drive road, which may be wind-scoured until you reach the trees. Continue until reaching the loop trail after 0.8 miles. Turn left onto the trail through an opening in the fence (the trail is closed to motorized vehicles) and follow the blue diamonds west through dense aspen. Soon pass a sign pointing out Sheep Mountain, directly ahead.

After 1.6 miles the trail curves around the left side of a small open area. A blue diamond on a post at the far end of the opening indicates where the trail re-enters the woods.



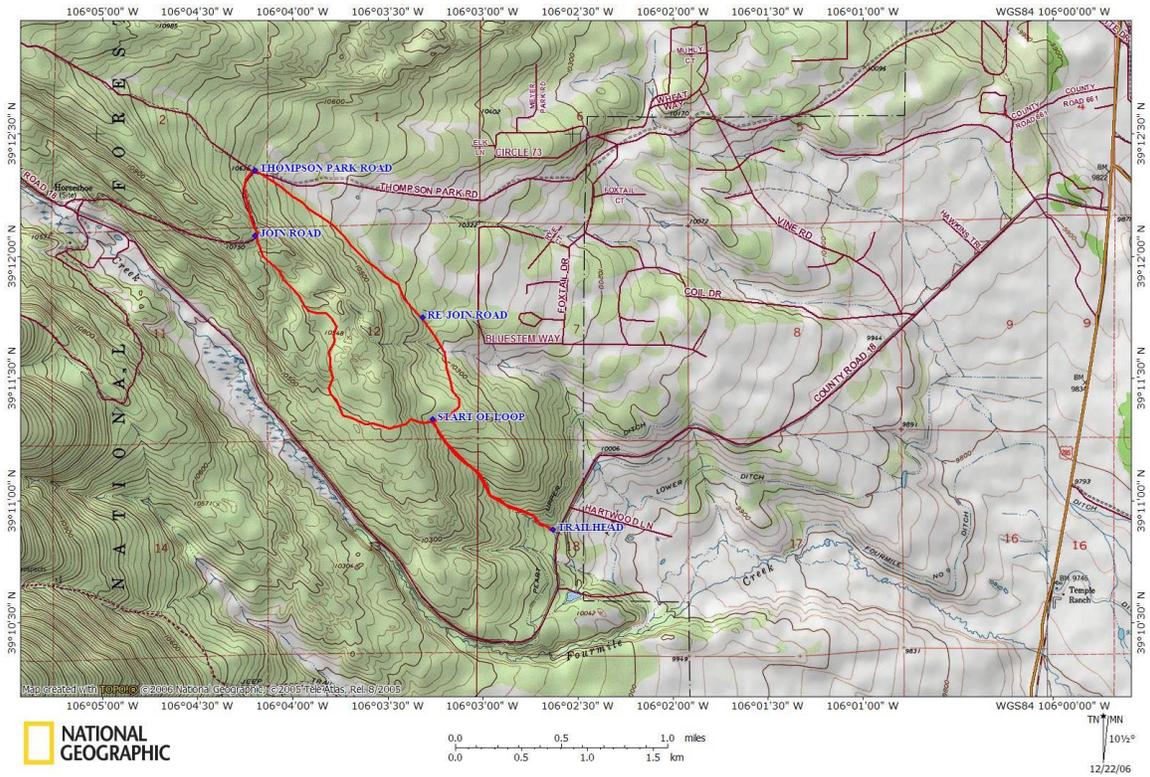
As the trail winds through aspen forest you will catch glimpses of Sheep Mountain

The trail stays generally on a small ridge as it wanders northwest, gradually gaining elevation until joining a logging road at 2.3 miles. Turn right (north) on the road and quickly descend to the Thompson Park Road at 2.6 miles.

Turn right on the Thompson Park Road and immediately angle right again off the road on a ski trail, marked with blue diamonds. Continue to descend gradually to the southeast through delightful open forest as the trail diverges from the road.

The trail crosses an area of logged trees, presumably part of the tie hacked area. Continue to follow the blue diamonds through this area and keep an eye peeled for the point where the trail once again heads to the right, into the woods.

At 3.7 miles the trail re-joins a logging road. Continue southeast on this road and return to the start of the loop after 4.3 miles. Another 0.8 miles takes you back to the parking area.



GPS Latitude / Longitude NAD83 (Deg., Min., Sec.)
 TRAILHEAD: 39,10,53N / 106,2,38W, 10049 feet
 START OF LOOP: 39,11,20N / 106,3,16W, 10410 feet
 JOIN ROAD: 39,12,5N / 106,4,12W, 10787 feet
 THOMPSON PARK ROAD: 39,12,21N / 106,4,12W, 10673 feet
 RE-JOIN ROAD: 39,11,45N / 106,3,19W, 10384 feet



