

## A Three-Day Ski Tour of The Lovely Methow Valley



**Follow that dog! Skiers at Gunn Ranch. Photo by Methow Valley Sports Trail Association.**

The words “Methow Valley” and “cross-country skiing” have become nearly synonymous among Nordic ski enthusiasts. Located at the base on the eastern flanks of the North Cascades, the Methow Valley is a sunny and relaxed winter destination known for world-class cross-country skiing.

In the Methow, over 200 kilometers of groomed, interconnected trails are surrounded by more than a million acres of wilderness and forest lands. The Methow Valley ski trails are divided into three distinct areas, all linked by the Community Trail; each area offers a range of possibilities for every type of skier. Dog lovers will appreciate the 50-plus kilometers of trails that allow dog access, not to mention three huts that allow for canine overnight guests.

Here's a suggested itinerary for a three-day trip to the Methow that will make the first-time skier eager to ski again and seriously whet the appetite for avid Nordic skiers who have never had a chance to ski the Methow before.

Novices or mixed-ability groups will enjoy spending their first day on the **Mazama Trails**, a great area for learning to cross-country ski. Machine-groomed tracks over flat and rolling farmland, along the Methow River, and through aspen and pine woodlands offer scenic day tours. Some visitors plan their entire trip around lodge-to-lodge skiing via the Mazama Country Inn, Mazama Ranch House, North Cascade Lodge and the Freestone Inn. The Mazama Trails are all valley-bottom, so you can hit the Mazama Store for a bakery treat while you wait for the snow to soften after a cold night.

The **Sun Mountain Trails** offer scenic views, mixed terrain and the first morning sun on your second day of exploring. These trails are ideal for families or groups with mixed abilities that want to see the Methow from a different perspective. Youngsters will enjoy short rolling loops, while more ambitious skiers can go for longer expeditions. Everyone can reconvene at a convenient warming hut.

On the third day, skiers looking for a challenge or journey might try the **Community Trail** or **Rendezvous Trail**. The Community Trail runs 30 kilometers from Mazama down to the town of Winthrop. This gentle trail is rated “easy” most of the way, with a 5-kilometer stretch in the middle that includes some short climbs and rolling terrain over ancient glacial moraines. Plan your rest stop at the incredible Tawlks-Foster Suspension Bridge along the way. For the seasoned skier, you can't beat the snow, sun and scenery of the Rendezvous Trails. Enjoy views of the North Cascades and the Methow Valley from 4,000-foot-high trail-side overlooks. The most ambitious skiers can ski 30 kilometers from Cub Creek to Mazama. This is a great reconnaissance trip so that on your next three-day trip to the Methow, you can experience an overnight expedition using the hut-to-hut system. Five huts are dispersed along the Rendezvous Trails and are available for nightly rental all winter long, with optional freight hauls.

Three days is a great start, but, really, one could spend an entire winter exploring the endless trail system in the Methow Valley. See you there! ♦

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### FOR MORE INFO

Visit the Methow Valley Sport Trails Association website at [www.mvsta.com](http://www.mvsta.com) or call (509) 996-3287.