



The Sno-Rag

The Platte Valley's Winter Adventure Guide
Saratoga, Encampment, Riverside & Ryan Park, Wyoming

Inside:

Winter Events
Safety Tips for Snowmachines

Trail Maps
Winter Survival Basics

and more!



A FREE publication of The Saratoga Sun for 2024

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Welcome to Winter in the Platte Valley

Where snow and ice make wintering here nice!



Thank you for picking up a copy of the Saratoga Sun's 2024 Sno-Rag!

While there are plenty of things to do in the Valley in the summer, there are also a number of activities for visitors in the winter months as well. The Platte Valley is home to two blue ribbon fisheries, the North Platte River and the Encampment River, during the summer but is also home to one of the earliest and longest-running ice fishing derbies in Wyoming! Indeed, the Valley hosts a number of winter events that draw people from near and far. Many of these events, such as the 40th Annual Saratoga Ice Fishing Derby, have long been a major feature of cold weather activities. Other events, such as the 8th Annual Saratoga Skijoring Races, have injected new life into winter tourism for Saratoga and the surrounding areas.

Meanwhile, events such as the 16th Annual Wyoming Open Pool Tournament capitalize on one of Saratoga's most popular winter pastimes and brings in both professional and amateur billiard players. If hanging out in and around Saratoga isn't what you're looking for, the Valley is surrounded by 2.2 million acres of National Forest that provide plenty of options. Snowmobiling,

snowbiking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing are all popular pastimes in the area. In here, you'll find maps for snowmobile trails, courtesy of the Wyoming State Parks Trails Program, as well as trails for cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Before heading out on your adventures, grab a warm drink or a hearty breakfast from one of our local eateries. When you return from a day on the ice or in the snow, a number of fine restaurants provide an option for a warm meal—and perhaps a cold drink—to bring an end to your winter adventure.

Included in the SnoRag are details on the events mentioned above, as well as many others that take place in the Valley. As of press time, all of these events had been scheduled to take place but we encourage readers to reach out to event organizers to determine if they have been postponed or canceled.

You can also reach out to the Saratoga/Platte Valley Chamber of Commerce at 307-326-8855 or the Saratoga Sun at 307-326-8311 for more information closer to the date of the events.

Stay warm and stay safe!

THE SARATOGA SUN

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Whether you've been out all day in the cold and snow or you just need to nurse your aching joints, there is no better medicine at the end of the day than a soak in Saratoga's mineral hot springs.

Located along the North Platte River, the hot springs are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and free to the public.

The springs were used originally by Native American tribes in the area—the Utes, the Arapahoe and the Cheyenne—who came from far and wide to enjoy the springs they believed had headline properties. As settlers came into the area, a smallpox epidemic ravaged the native communities. When the hot springs failed to cure the disease, many native tribes soon viewed the springs as “bad medicine” and abandoned them.

The first pioneers of Saratoga had no such fears of the hot springs. As the popularity of the springs grew, local resident William Caldwell built a three-room house next to them, complete with hot tubs for weary travelers and soldiers from nearby Fort Steele. The perceived healing properties of the springs brought in people suffering from rheumatism, blood disorders, eczema, stomach trouble, kidney problems and other illnesses. They flocked to Saratoga, which was originally named Warm Springs.

In the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed a stone-encircled pool and the pools continued to grow in their popularity. Their renown has continued into the 2024 Sno-Rag

present, with visitors from across the globe making the trek to the hot springs. While few today believe the springs can cure serious diseases, they remain a popular balm for the stresses and aches which arise at the end of the day.

Repeat visitors and local residents swear nothing soothes like a soak.

Since 1982, the hot springs have been owned by the Town of Saratoga. A heated bath house facility with showers, toilets and changing area next to the springs is maintained by the Town.

The temperatures of the hot pool itself average around 108 degrees Fahrenheit. A smaller pool known as “The Lobster Pot” near the south end averages around 119 degrees Fahrenheit and is recommended only for the brave ... or the reckless. A “not-so-hot pool” which averages 95-100 degrees sits to the east of the main pool and is ideal for those who are less inclined to the higher temperatures. Alcoholic beverages and glass containers are expressly forbidden at the hot springs, which is also under surveillance by the Saratoga Police Department. It is recommended by health professionals that visitors avoid visiting the hot springs after consuming alcohol or while smoking as the constriction of blood vessels can lead to fainting. Visitors are strongly advised to bring water with them while soaking and should exit the pool if they begin to feel lightheaded.

The Upper North Platte River Valley The Ideal Location for Snowmachiners



The Platte Valley is an ideal spot for snowmachining, but don't just take our word for it. Take it from Ed Glode, manager of Saratoga's Polaris dealer.

"We have two mountain ranges, a good trail system and we get great snow," said Glode.

The snow in both the Snowy Range and Sierra Madres don't just attract local snowmachiners, but bring many out-of-state outdoor enthusiasts as well. Glode estimates the ratio is about 50-50. Indeed, on a winter day in Saratoga one can see trucks hauling snowmachine trailers at the local gas stations and restaurants as they make their way to the mountains.

In the Snowy Range, there are more than 300 miles of groomed and ungroomed trails while there are nearly 150 miles of similar trails in the Sierra Madre range. The ideal amount of snow for sledding is around 18 to 24 inches, said Glode. Historically, the peak season for snowmobiling has been in January and February. March and April, however, also often provide a good base for sledders exploring the Snowies.

"Sledding in three feet of snow requires the group to be experienced, otherwise everybody will keep getting stuck. Four feet of snow is about the maximum for a modern sled," said Glode.

Over the years, the snowmachine industry has evolved in a number of ways, according to Glode.

"The high performance new machines were getting into nitrous oxide and custom-built engines. The hot stuff now is sleds that are lighter, the suspension built better and using turbo," said Glode. "The turbo charger is better for the high altitudes we have versus in the midwest."

The newer machines, said Glode, are better at taking the many hills one can find in the Snowy Range and Sierra Madres. In addition to snowmobiles, one can see snow bikes carving a path in the snow covered mountains around the Platte Valley. These newer additions to outdoor winter recreation are basically a dirt bike with a ski on the front with a track system on the back.

Like other outdoor winter enthusiasts, snowmachiners face risks such as avalanches and exposure to the elements. Before going out into either mountain range, snowmachiners are encouraged to wear personal locator beacons. Beacons sold in the Platte Valley will communicate with Search and Rescue in the area.

Snowmobilers are also reminded of the Snowy Range Ski Area. Located on Highway 130, it can only be accessed by way of snowmobile if coming from the west side of the Snowy Range.

The Safer Snowmachine

Take these items on your outdoor excursion



Cell Phone

A cell phone that uses the main provider in the area you are going to be in.

In many rural areas, large

cellular providers do not have coverage while smaller providers such as Union Wireless do.

Full Face Helmet/Clothing

A full-face helmet designed for snowmobiling can help protect against facial injuries.

Proper clothing should be waterproof and wind proof.

Dress in insulated layers including boots, snow pants, snow jacket, long underwear and gloves.



Extra Fuel

Bring along extra fuel. It can be used when your machine runs out or to start a fire in a survival situation.



Rope

The rope you bring doesn't need to be strong enough to tow a snow machine, but should be strong



enough it can be used in making a lean-to or a tarp shelter.

Extra Batteries

Make sure to bring extra batteries for any electronic devices you are carrying.

Also, make sure any rechargeable devices are fully charged.



GPS/Maps/Spot GPS

Bring a Global Positioning System (GPS) that can provide your location.

Most newer units will allow you to upload maps of the area you plan to visit. Maps help get a better terrain overview. Maps of the National Forests and BLM lands can be purchased from local ranger districts or sporting goods retailers.

A Spot GPS is basically a satellite texting device that can send your location to emergency management personnel via satellite.

Emergency Avalanche Locator Beacons are also available at area sporting goods retailers.

The devices emit a radio signal to help rescuers locate avalanche victims.



Fire Starting Kit



Make sure to have a fire starting kit with waterproof and wind-proof matches and a

striking device in a water-tight case. There are also magnesium and flint striker kits.

Extra Food & Water

Be sure to bring enough food and water to survive 24 hours or more in the



wilderness.

A simple afternoon on a snowmachine could turn into a survival situation quicker than you think.



Come-along & Tow Strap

A come-along is used to free a stuck

snowmachine when no assistance is available.

A tow strap should be strong enough for another snow machine to help free one that is stuck.



Collapsible Snow Shovel

A collapsible snow shovel can be used to dig out a snow machine or to make a snow cave for shelter in case of getting stranded overnight.



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Trail Preparation

Burning the midnight oil to keep the trails safe and fun



The Good Times Valley, nestled between two mountain ranges, is a great place to start an adventure on literally hundreds of miles of trails.

The trails available are among the best in the nation, with the Snowy Range trails having been honored as top 15 trails for several years by SnoWest magazine. There are over 300 miles of trails meandering throughout the Snowy Range, with most groomed by one of several agencies or organizations including Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails, the United States Forest Service and local snowmobile clubs. Maintenance on the trails begins before skiing or snowmobiling begin with work

crews staking and grooming trails early in the season.

During the season, trail maintenance—such as tree branch trimming, removal of fallen timber and general grooming—are done during nighttime hours to avoid interfering with those enjoying the trails. Grooming at night also allows the trails to freeze, making for a safer experience and helping ensure the trails last longer.

Many trails also feature warming huts, small structures that have a wood stove installed. These huts allow trail users to stop in, start a fire and get a bit of warmth during the day's activities on the trails.

On the western side of the Snowy Range, there are a wide variety of services available in the towns of Saratoga,

Riverside and Encampment including sporting goods retailers, general provisioners and snowmobile sales, repair and rental services.

On the western side of the Valley, the Sierra Madre mountain range also offers visitors a network of nearly 150 miles of trails with about 50 miles groomed and the rest ungroomed. In the Sierra Madres, there are no services available, but the towns of Encampment and Riverside offer many services to visitors.

For more information about the trails, see the maps inside this guide on pages 16 through 18, visit the website at wyoparks.wyo.gov or pick up a map anywhere snowmobile equipment is sold locally.

Open and available to the public all winter long!



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Snowmachine Safety Tips

A fun day on the powder should be balanced with safety in mind



When out snowmachining, please remember these important safety tips.

1. Make sure someone knows that area you will be snowmachining in and what time you are returning. Don't deviate from your plan.
2. Know where you are. Have a GPS, be able to use it and have maps that you know how to read as a backup.
3. Don't snowmachine alone. Don't separate from others in your group. Avoid areas prone to avalanches.
4. Try to have a cell phone that uses a local carrier. Turn off your cell phone when snowmachining. This will save battery life. Turn your phone on only when you need to use it.
5. Emergency situations can occur at any time. Always be prepared to spend the night, if necessary. The most important thing for overnight stays is the ability to start a fire.
6. Wear proper clothing that is wind-proof, waterproof and insulated. A full-face helmet is recommended for any snowmachine activity.
7. Bring enough extra food and water for the people on your trip to eat and stay hydrated for a day.
8. Make sure your machine is in good running condition before you go snowmachining. Watch the fuel level in your snowmachine and, if possible, carry extra gasoline with you.
9. Check the weather forecast for the area you plan to be in. While snowmachining, watch changes in the weather and know weather conditions can deteriorate very quickly.
10. If you get lost or stranded, remain calm and don't panic. Develop a survival plan using the resources you have available to you. If you set off an emergency beacon, stay at your location until emergency responders arrive.

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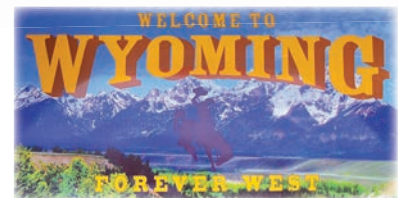
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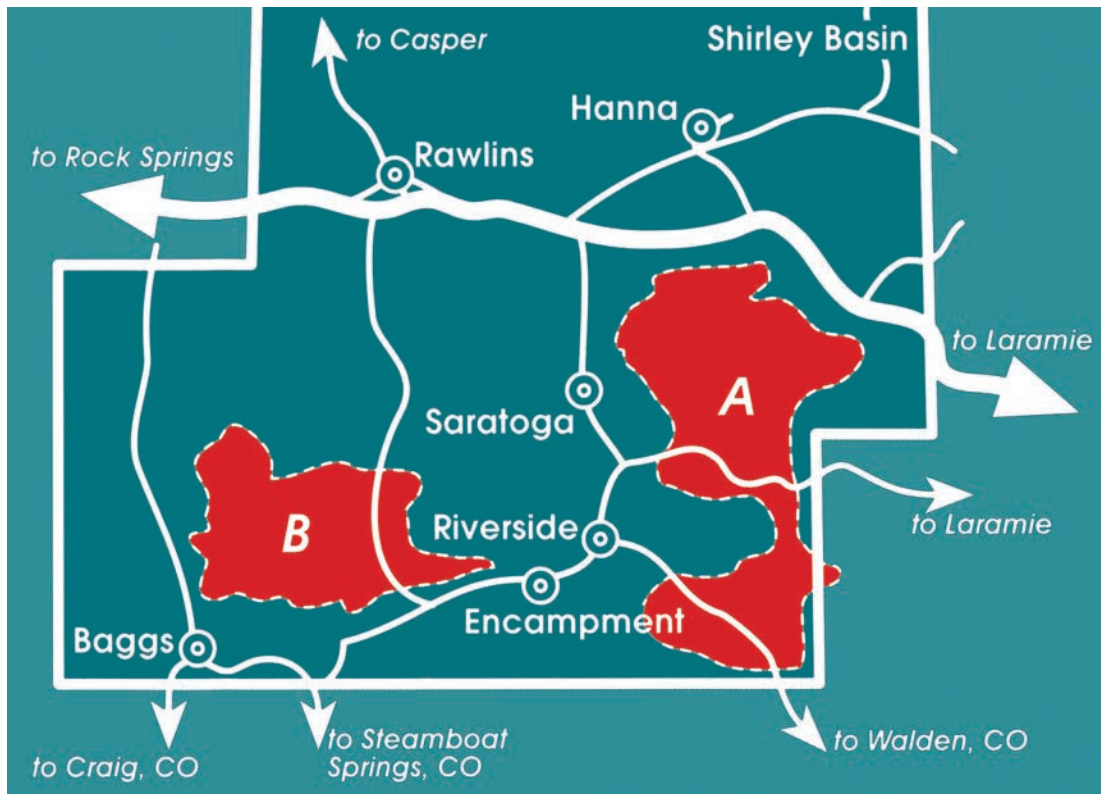


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Trails in the Valley

Nearly 500 miles of trails at either end of the Platte Valley



The Platte Valley offers 472 miles of trails to explore in two separate areas. The skill level needed in these areas for the skier and/or snowmobiler ranges from novice and intermediate to extreme expert.

Area A: The largest and most developed area. It spans the width of the Snowy Range and a good portion of its length. This area is accessible from Saratoga, Riverside and Encampment (See map on pages 16 & 17).

Total miles: 324. Groomed: 174. Ungroomed: 150. There is a possibility of logging activity on the northern end of the Snow Range trails and there may still be impacts in the southern end in the Mullen Fire Burn Scar. Please use caution.

Area B: Accessible from Baggs in the west and Encampment and Riverside from the east. This area borders wilderness and features some of the most beautiful high country in the world. Area B also has the start of the Hog Park and Steamboat Springs trails.

Total miles: 148. Groomed: 49. Ungroomed: 99. See page 18 for map.

Please keep these important things in mind:

- Respect private property.
- Go prepared: see page 13 for winter survival tips.
- Buy your snowmobile sticker BEFORE you go!
- The United States Forest Service patrols for safety and stickers.
- Reported downed signs at the United States Forest Service Office

Ski & Snowshoe Trails

Hundreds of miles of trails await you in the Platte Valley



When it comes to the Good Times Valley, the same trail systems popular with summer hikers can offer outdoor challenges for both skiers and snowshoers from the novice to the very advanced.

The Brush Creek trail system is located in the Snow Range southeast of the town of Saratoga. Managed by the Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District of the United States Forest Service, the trails wind through aspen, lodgepole pine stands and reclaimed clear-cuts on the western side of the Snowy Range. The trails are just under six miles and are suited to beginning skiers and shoers, as well as those of intermediate skill.

The Bottle Creek ski area, south of the town of Encampment, offers around eight miles of trails for the winter enthusiast. The trails include an ungroomed aspen run and challenging terrain. Because of its remote location, visitors should be aware that cell phone coverage in the area is spotty and unreliable. It is important to follow all safety precautions and to let someone know where you are going and when to expect your return.

Avenza maps of the area, available on a mobile app, can be found at wyomingcarboncounty.com/resources/maps. When downloaded, the maps will give coordinates and positions.

The trails in the Bottle Creek ski area are also groomed by the United States Forest Service. Both are scheduled to be groomed on Wednesdays during the winter, but the remote locations and weather may mean grooming is delayed.

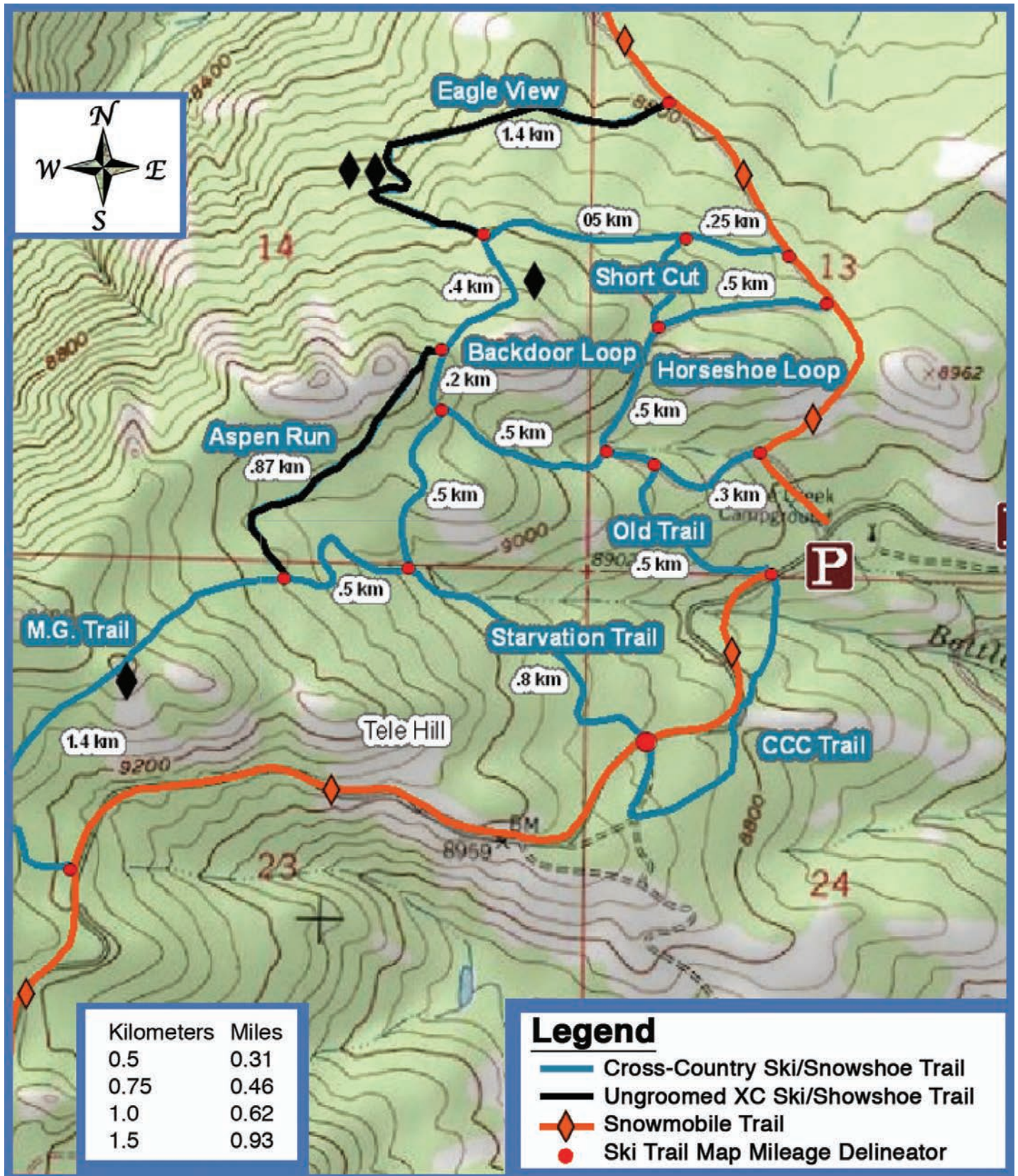
Beginners and experienced skiers might also find Forest Service roads make good trails as well. To best experience these paths, skiers and snowshoers should get started early in the morning before snowmachiners arrive.

The United States Forest Service warns of hazards including: changing weather conditions, snow, avalanches, landslides, caves, overlooks, falling trees or limbs, high or rushing water, contaminated water, wild animals, mining remnants, excavations, decaying structures, a wide variety of equipment and rapidly changing road or trail conditions. Skiers and snowshoers should dress in layers and stay warm and dry to prevent hypothermia. Bringing a backpack is recommended, as many skiers shed their layers while exercising in the sun. Just as with other outdoor winter activities, sunscreen is recommended due to the solar reflection off the snow. Skiers should remember to plan their trip around their physical condition and experience in order to avoid overexertion. Any skier on a new trail should plan similarly and, when getting tired, determine which is faster: finishing the trail or returning the way they came.

Do not ski alone and always let someone know where you are going and when to expect you to return home. You should also carry extra clothing, food and survival equipment.

Please see [pages] of this guide for maps of the Brush Creek and Bottle Creek trail systems.

Bottle Creek Cross Country Ski Trails



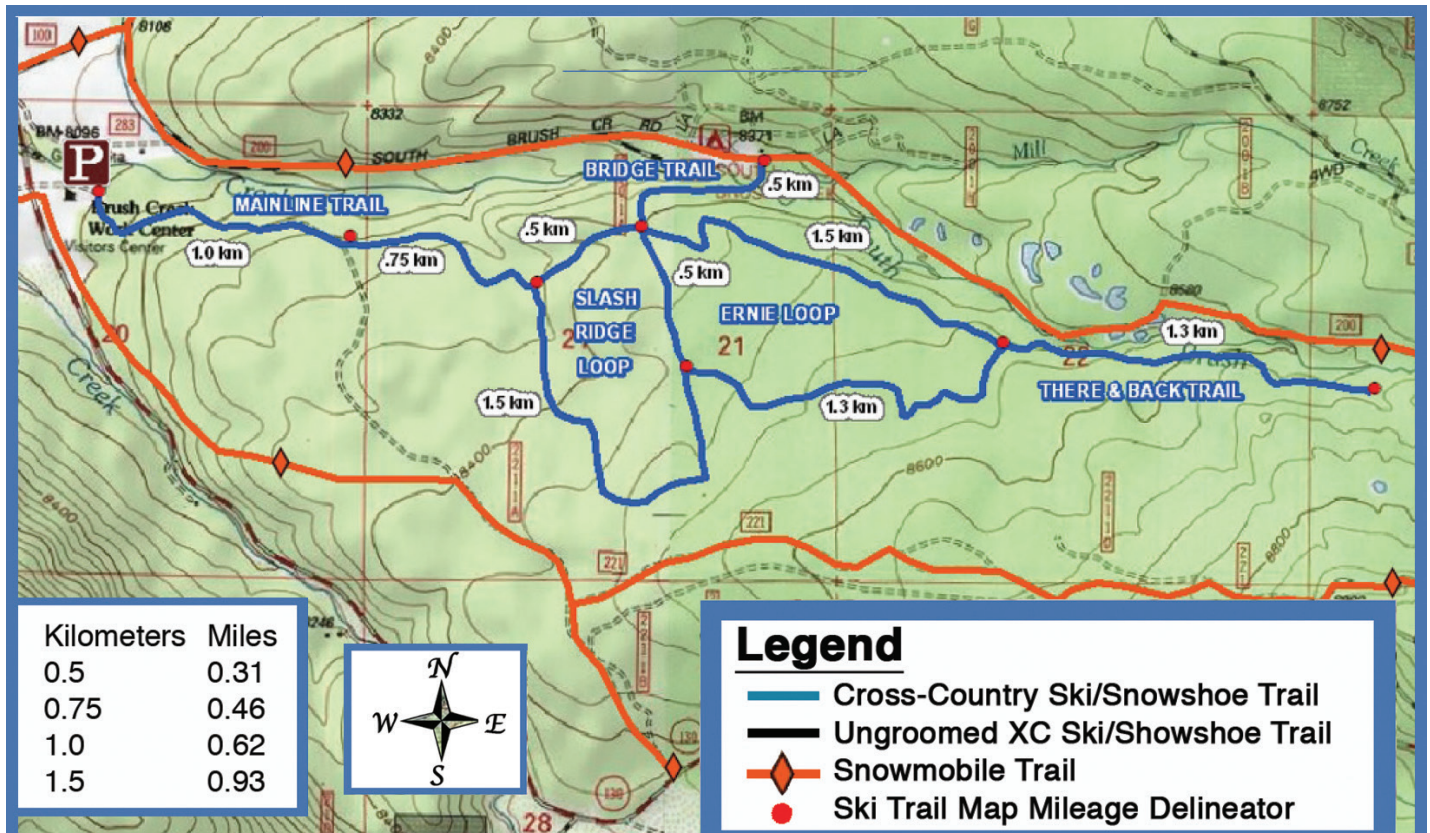
Avalanche Danger

Be aware of any dangers before you hit the powder



Running around on fresh powder can be fun, but with recreation there's always risks. Snowmachiners, cross country skiers and snowshoers should always be aware of avalanche danger in the area they are recreating. Fortunately, there are resources to check whether or not there is avalanche danger. One such resource is the website ewyoavalanche.org which observed both the Sierra Madres and the Snowy Range. It is also important to check the Wyoming SNOTEL Site Map. SNOTEL is an automated system of snowpack and climate sensors operated by the National Resources Conservation Services, which is a part of the United States Department of Agriculture. Recreationists who plan to be in areas where there is significant avalanche activity should consider buying a personal avalanche beacon. The devices emit a radio signal which can be tracked by search-and-rescue equipment, increasing the likelihood of an avalanche victim being found in a timely manner. The devices are available at several Valley retailers including Shively Hardware North and Koyoty Sports, both in Saratoga.

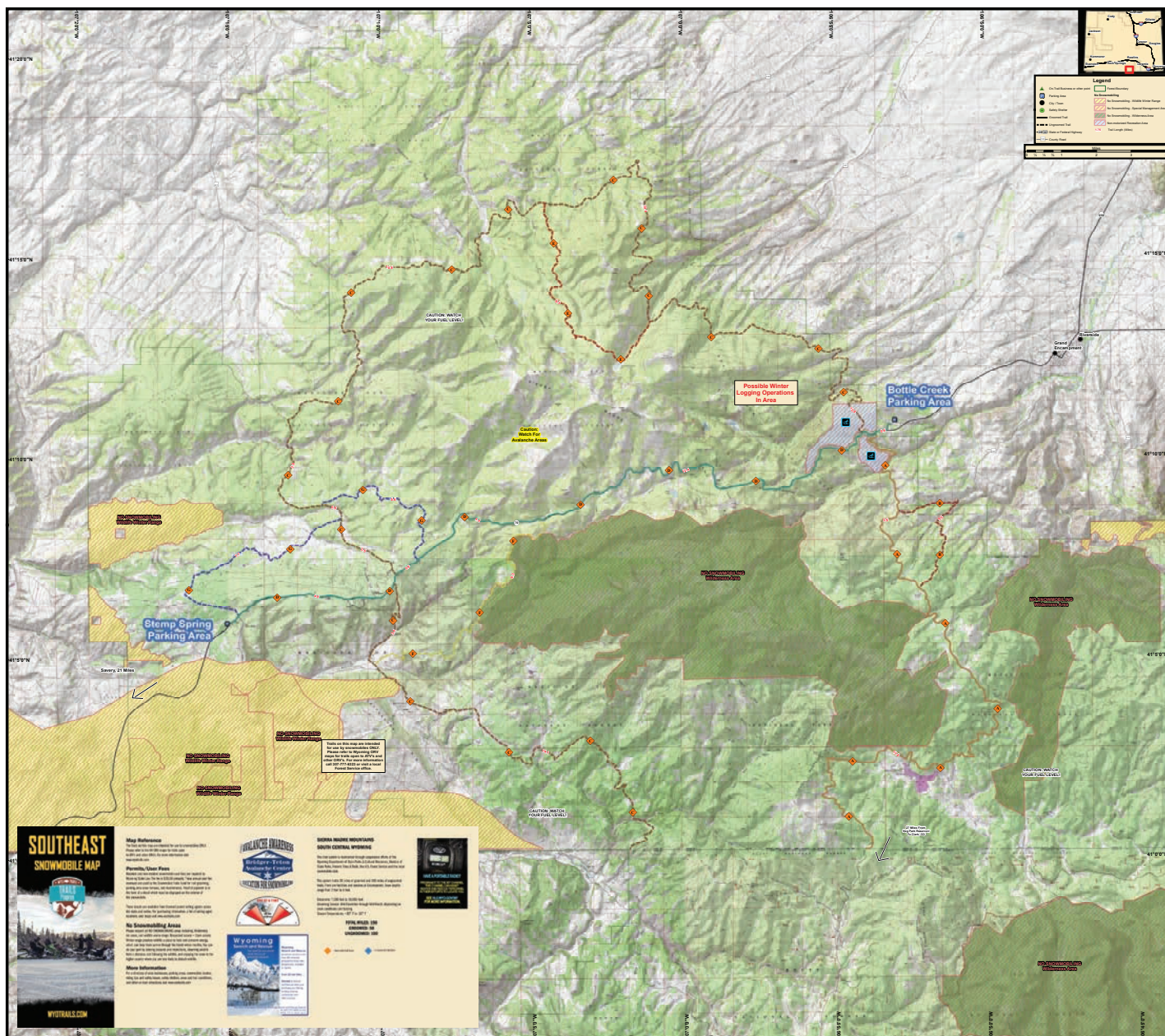
Brush Creek Cross Country Ski Trails



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Sierra Madres Map



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The 40th Annual Saratoga Lake Ice Fishing Derby is returning for 2024!

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BAD WEATHER OR NICE, YOU'LL FIND US ON THE ICE!

40th Annual Saratoga Lake Ice Fishing Derby

Get hooked! Bad weather or nice, you'll find us on the ice!



Are you ready to get hooked?

The Saratoga/Platte Valley Chamber of Commerce's 40th Annual Saratoga Ice Fishing Derby returns on January 20th and 21st, 2024. Last year, the derby was put "on ice" following the rotenone treatment of the lake to remove illegally introduced yellow perch. This year, the derby is back and better than ever!

Test your angling skills at Saratoga Lake just north of Saratoga and cast for more than \$6,000 in guaranteed cash prizes and up to \$40,000 in additional prizes. The largest fish measured each hour during the two-day event earns \$100. The fishermen with the largest fish will get the opportunity to win \$2,000, second place will be awarded \$1,000 and third place will be awarded \$500. At the derby, organizers have included three specially-marked trophy fish worth \$20,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000 if caught during the two-day event. In 2022, Trevor Dusza caught the largest fish of the weekend at 4.1 pounds and 36 inches in length and girth and won \$2,000.

Small fry fishermen—children age 14 and under—can enter for a chance to win a grand prize of \$200 in cash and a merchandise package. Hourly awards of \$20 are also available. At the last event, Levi Goodwin of Saratoga won the small fry division with a catch that was 3.8 pounds and 33 inches in length and girth.

Over the past 40 years, the Saratoga Lake Ice Fishing Derby has evolved to include other events to make the weekend even more fun. The event was started by Chuck Box, who was the Chamber CEO at the time, and one of the first grand prizes for the trophy fish included a new CJ5

Jeep. Nobody caught either trophy fish that year, however. Other events over the years have included the Best Hut contest and Best Fishing Story.

The most recent addition is that of the Biggest Sucker Contest. Instead of throwing a sucker back under the ice, contestants are encouraged to bring them up to the judging tent. Last year, the largest sucker was caught by Emily Conkling who was awarded \$250. Tres Atkins and Reagan Tanner tied for most suckers on Saturday winning \$75 each and Reagan Tanner caught the most suckers on Sunday to win \$100.

The Saratoga Lake Fishing Derby runs from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on January 20 and from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on January 21. Event registration for adult anglers is \$35 while small fry anglers are only \$10. Interested persons can register at the Saratoga/Platte Valley Chamber of Commerce at 210 West Elm Street in Saratoga during office hours. Online registration will be open until 7 p.m. on Friday evening, January 19, and people can also register at the Chamber office until 8 p.m. Registration will also be available at the lake on Saturday morning beginning at 6 a.m.

To register online, visit saratogachamber.info/play-here/fishingderby.

Anglers will also have concessions available to them from the American Legion Post 54 and the American Legion Auxiliary.

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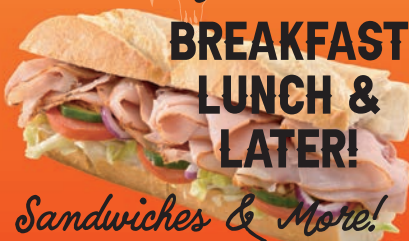


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38th Annual Sierra Madre Winter Carnival

Treasure hunts, pancake breakfasts and ... human saucer bowling?



The 38th Annual Sierra Madre Winter Carnival, January 26-27, 2024, offers wonderful opportunities for winter fun in Encampment for participants of all ages.

The carnival begins on Friday, January 26, with a fun-filled treasure hunt. Teams will dash around Encampment—at the posted speed limit and obeying all traffic laws—to find clues for the hunt. The treasure hunt traditionally begins in the Tower Meeting Room at the Grand Encampment Opera House at 622 Rankin Street. Winners receive a cash prize and all participants can enjoy a light dinner.

Don't stay out too late, though, as the next morning you'll want to attend the VFW Pancake Breakfast which is also held at the Grand Encampment Opera House. Those who have served our nation also serve an amazing and fulfilling breakfast: the pancakes are fluffy, the eggs are delicious and the coffee is hot. You'll need all that energy for the rest of the day.

The real fun begins with the Kids' Sled Races. Participants race down McCaffrey Street where kids get cash prizes for placing in their age groups. Meanwhile, there's also the "Build Your Own" sled races where past participants have built bizarre contraptions using shopping carts, trash cans and bathtubs. This category has prizes for both the fastest sled and the most creative. Registration is at 8th Street and Rankin Street. There is an entry fee for the "Build Your Own" sled races.

As if that wasn't enough, "Human Saucer Bowling" is an-

other great event which is popular with both children and adults. The event is exactly as it sounds: participants ride down McCaffrey Street on a saucer sled and try to knock down sand-filled two-liter bottles. It's much harder than it sounds.

Other events during the day include the "Sixth Street Snowmobile Sprint" where snowmachine enthusiasts can put their skills to the test and spray some powder in the air. Helmets and eye protection are required. If snowmobiles aren't your thing, perhaps try "Snow Golf" which is put on by Mother Mountain Anglers.

The chili and break cook-offs are also well attended events as the Valley boasts some of the best home cooks in Wyoming. The chili cook-off features a colorful array of entries and includes categories for red, green and white chili.

After a long day out in the snow, the fun continues into the evening with the ever popular Casino Night at the Grand Encampment Opera House. Try your luck at Blackjack, Roulette, Craps and some games invented by locals such as Chicken Poop Bingo. Yes, that's right, a game where your luck depends on poultry. While there, you may even get the chance to talk with different local personalities.

Buy your chips at the door and bid on unique prize baskets donated by local businesses in the Platte valley Community. It all goes towards the good cause of supporting the GEM of Encampment, the Grand Encampment Museum. For more information, contact the Town of Encampment at 307-327-5501.

8th Annual Saratoga Skijoring Races

A unique Norwegian winter sport given a Western twist



The winter sport of skijoring is set to return to Saratoga for the 8th year in a row with the annual Saratoga Skijoring Races.

Combining horsepower and skiing, this rapidly growing sport will give visitors and locals alike plenty of snowy winter thrills—and a few spills. The event is organized by the Saratoga Lions Club, which hosted its first skijoring race in 2017. With a few growing pains here and there, the Saratoga Skijoring Races have quickly become one of the most popular in the circuit.

Skijoring can vary from event-to-event. While the similarity is that a skier is being towed through an obstacle course—typically consisting of jumps, slaloms, moguls and others—it varies as to if the skier is being towed by a horse, dog or a vehicle. The Valley's skijoring event, held annually east of Saratoga at Buck Springs Arena, uses horses to propel skiers and combines the Valley's love of equestrian events with its history of skiing.

Teams of racers will compete not only for bragging rights, but for thousands of dollars in cash prizes. While skijoring is becoming more commonplace in the Valley as it prepares for its seventh consecutive year, the sport is one steeped in tradition and history. It's also becoming increasingly popular each year among younger competitors. The word skijoring is Norwegian in origin, meaning "ski driving." Equestrian skijoring, which was especially popular in France, was demonstrated at the 1928 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz, Switzerland.

Since then, the sport has become popular in North America with many towns across the country holding events that attract thousands of competitors and spectators. While

some events are held in town, with horses and skiers racing down a main thoroughfare packed with snow and filled with obstacles, the Platte Valley and the Lion's Club relies on its long history of another equestrian sport which preceded skijoring. With the history that Saratoga had in holding successful chariot races at Buck Springs Arena, that knowledge has further improved the experience that skijoring teams have come to expect when visiting Saratoga.

The weekend will begin on Friday, February 2 with team registration and a welcome party for participants at the Historic Hotel Wolf in Saratoga. Saturday, February 3, the races will begin at 9:30 a.m. at Buck Springs Arena. After the day's races, participants are highly encouraged to take in the amenities Saratoga has to offer. On Sunday, February 4, the skijoring competition will continue at 9:30 a.m. at Buck Springs Arena. The races will run until winners are determined and cash prize payouts will be awarded at a ceremony to be held in the backroom of the Hotel Wolf. Registration opens December 1 and those interested in competing must fill out the registration form online at www.saratogaskijoring.com. Registration for Open 3-D is \$25 per participant or \$50 per team, amateurs can register for \$20 per participant or \$40 per team and juniors—those under the age of 18—can register for free. Registration fees are due at team registration at the Hotel Wolf on Friday at 5 p.m.

Those who will be bringing their horses to the event can take advantage of free horse boarding arranged by event organizers. Horse owners can make boarding arrangements while signing up online.

26th Annual Ben Romios Memorial Poker Run

Raise funds for local search and rescue teams while enjoying a day in the snow

Though volunteers do most of the work, search and rescue operations in the harsh Wyoming winter don't come cheap. Search and rescue teams need fuel and special equipment in order to save lost snowshoers or stranded snowmobilers. These teams rely heavily on the charity of Valley residents and visitors to continue providing their vital services. Luckily, giving can be fun.

An annual benefit in Encampment serves to raise money for search and rescue operations in the Upper North Platte River Valley as well as honor those who risk their own safety for the benefit of others. The 26th Annual Ben Romios Poker Run is scheduled for February 18, 2024. This annual event is held in honor of the late Benjamin F. Romios, an Encampment resident and 1995 graduate of Encampment High School. Romios, an experienced snowmachiner, tragically lost his life in January 1998 in an avalanche while snowmobiling with four other individuals. Romios, who passed away at the age of 21, was a member of the Encampment Search and Rescue and had helped organize the unit.

The Ben Romios Memorial Poker Run will begin at 9 a.m. on February 18 when participants meet in the Bottle Creek Parking Area just west of Encampment on Wyoming Highway 70. An entry fee of \$10 for participants also covers the cost of lunch.

Those on the run can participate on snowmobiles, cross country



skis or snowshoes as they collect "playing cards" at various stations to form a poker hand. Rather than holding onto actual cards, each station will punch a card held by a participant. A part of the proceeds will go to a scholarship fund for Encampment students that honors Romios.

For more information or to register, contact Cory Nuhn at 307-329-7055.

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4th Annual Frozen Fore

Carbon County's Winter Golf Classic makes for an 'ice' time



When the snow arrives, it may seem like it's time to put up the irons and wait until after the thaw to play another round of golf. You may think that, but you would be wrong. At least in Saratoga!

Carbon County's

Winter Golf Classic, the Frozen Fore, is set to return for a fourth year in 2024. Started in 2021, this fundraiser for the

Saratoga Museum quickly became one of its most popular events. In 2022, there were more than 100 participants for the event, which annually takes place on the frozen Saratoga Lake.

The concept of Frozen Fore is simple enough: a golf scramble played with two irons and a tennis ball. A temporary golf course is formed on the ice and Saratoga Lake's own sandy beach serves as a sand trap. There are also cash prizes, a longest drive competition, raffles, and food and beverages provided by American Legion Post 54 and the American Legion Auxiliary. Like many other winter activities in the Valley, this event takes place snow or shine, so dress for every weather.

The event will take place on February 17, 2024. Registration can be completed online at saratogamuseumwy.com.

16th Annual Wyoming Open

A world class billiards tournament nestled in the Platte Valley

Pool players from around the world will converge on Saratoga for the 16th Annual Wyoming Open Pool Tournament. The tournament has grown quite a bit since its inception in 2008, and especially in the past few years. In 2016, 35 tables were used for the event while, in 2018, nearly 50 tables were spread across Saratoga from the Platte Valley Community Center to local bars. Because organizers had close to 100 players on previous waiting lists and a limit on the number of available tables has been reached, the event has been expanded to four days to maximize the participation. Event organizer Mark Osborne says one exciting and well-attended event will be Thursday night's Open Pro-Am in which any player might join a professional in a Blind Draw Scotch Doubles. The Pro-Am costs \$20 to enter and has \$1,000 added to that night's pot.

The Wyoming Open regularly attracts Billiard Congress of America Hall of Fame members such as Rodney "the Rocket" Morris, Johnny "the Scorpion" Archer and trick-shots specialist Mike Massey. The event has also attracts the likes of Shane "the South Dakota Kid" Van Boening, who is considered to be one of the best pool players of all time with more than 100 professional titles to his name, and Corey "Prince of Pool" Deuel. A good mix of professionals from around the globe also attend the event.

Players will be divided into four divisions by player skill level: the Masters Division, the Expert Division, the Classic Division and the Sportsman Division. Expert and Classic women's brackets were added to the 2018 Open and will be

continued this year.

There will also be a junior's division, the Nubbin's Juniors, which will be played Saturday and a

Hard Luck

Bracket played on Sunday.

A "Saratoga" bracket will also be played during the event. Saratoga, a game created by event originator Ed Glode, has grown in popularity across the region. A hybrid of 8-ball and 9-ball, the game is played with 13 balls—6 stripes, 6 solids and the winning ball—where the stripes and solids are run in rotation. Players must hit their own balls in numerical order from one to six to get the winning eight ball. The Wyoming Open is sponsored by the Saratoga Lions Club and Discover Carbon County. The Open begins at the Platte Valley Community Center and is typically held the first weekend in April.

For more information, contact Mark Osborne by phone at 307-710-1447 or by email at wyoingopen@gmail.com.





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