

SECTION 16: WIDOWS CLEARING TRAIL TO THE BRIDGES TRAIL

SNAPSHOT:

This varied section begins on an ungroomed trail within the Green Mountain National Forest, traverses the groomed trails of Middlebury College's Rikert Nordic Center, then follows a new backcountry route through National Forest before finishing on a short snowmobile corridor trail.

LENGTH: 9.0 miles (9.5 to/From Natural Turnpike Winter Parking)

DIFFICULTY:

This is an easy-to-intermediate ski with some short steeper portions on the new backcountry section. The terrain is rolling; there are multiple access points; and the middle of the route is groomed ski trail.

DIRECTIONS TO TRAIL ACCESS POINTS (south to north):

1. Widow's Clearing Trail Parking Area - Ripton

From the village of Ripton head east on Rte. 125 for approximately one mile. Turn right (south) on FR 32 and go 1.8 miles. The parking area is on the left (east side) of the road. From the parking area, follow the Widow's Clearing Trail approximately 0.6 miles south and then east to join the CT.

2. Chatfield Parking Area (Rte. 125) - Ripton

From the village of Ripton head east on Rte. 125 for approximately 3.5 miles. Turn right (south) on Brooks Rd. (FR 67) to the Chatfield Parking Area.

3. Rikert Nordic Center - Ripton

From the village of Ripton head east on Rte. 125 for approximately three miles. The cluster of yellow buildings on your left is the Breadloaf Campus of Middlebury College, the site of the Rikert Nordic Center. Turn left (north) and park near the large barn.

4. Natural Turnpike Parking - Ripton

From the village of Ripton take Natural Turnpike (FR 59) north and then northeast for approximately 3.5 miles to the intersection of FR 59 and FR 54. Bear left on FR 54 and the parking lot will be immediately on your right. Ski south for a tenth of a mile on a small snowmobile trail, and then turn left (east) on a major snowmobile trail and unplowed road (FR 59), to join the CT after 0.5 miles. To ski south on the CT, ski straight ahead on FR 59.

NOTE: The plowed but gated portion of FR 54 and the western half of FR 59 (plowed) together are known locally as "The Natural Turnpike." The CT Side Trail (yellow blazes) follows the eastern, unplowed portion of FR 59 0.5 miles to the CT.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION:

From the Widow's Clearing Trail Parking Area follow the Widow's Clearing Trail 0.6 miles south and then east to join the CT (0.0). The CT winds through rolling terrain north to the Water Tower Trails: the Sundown trail (0.7) and the North Star Trail (0.9) where there is a trail map posted of the Water Towers Trails. Keep right (southeast) at both of these trail junctions to remain on the CT north. Continue skiing east and downhill and over a bridge about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to Widow's Clearing (1.7), the site of an old farmhouse with an old foundation and stone walls. Continue east and down a steeper hill through the woods to Chatfield Parking Area (2.3) on FR 67 just south of Rte. 125. Turn left (north) on FR 67 (also called Brooks Rd.) and follow it over the Middlebury River to a large field. Head northwest across the field and down into a dip and back up to Rte. 125 (2.7).

Cross Rte. 125 onto an unnamed trail and join the trails of Middlebury College's Rikert Nordic Center. Stay right and continue straight on Picnic Loop at the Horse Pasture. At the junction with

SECTION 16: WIDOWS CLEARING TRAIL TO THE BRIDGES TRAIL

the Battell trail (3.0), turn right (east) onto Battell to follow the CT north, or turn left (west) on to Battell to get to the Rikert Nordic Center (yellow building) in 0.3 miles.

Note: The Rikert Nordic Center has several one-way trails to facilitate racing and training. To conform to the Center's one-way traffic, the inbound and outbound CT Side Trail routes (yellow blazes) to and From the Rikert Nordic Center are different. Please follow the yellow CT Side Trail blazes to reach the Rikert Nordic Center (yellow building) 0.3 miles west of the CT and obey the one-way and other ski center signs. If races are in progress you may be directed to follow an alternate route.

To Rikert Nordic Center From the CT (0.3), follow the yellow CT Side Trail blazes:

At the junction with the Battell trail, turn left (west) on to the inbound portion of the Battell trail, ski 100 yards then turn right staying on Battell. Follow the yellow CT Side Trail blazes to get to the yellow ski center building. Be sure to check in and pay the appropriate trail fee at the Rikert Nordic Center.

To the CT From Rikert Nordic Center (0.3), follow the yellow CT Side Trail blazes:

After checking in and paying the appropriate trail fee, head southeast across the field and entire the woods on the outbound portion of the Battell Trail. Follow the yellow CT Side Trail blazes to the Horse Pasture and the junction with the CT on the far (east) side of the Horse Pasture. Turn left on Picnic Loop to join the CT north, or turn right on Picnic Loop to follow the CT south.

CT north of Rikert Nordic Center:

At the junction with the Battell trail, turn right (east) onto Battell to follow the CT north. Follow the Battell trail northeast for a ¼ mile crossing the Brandy Brook and take your next left up a short hill to the junction with the Gilmore trail. Turn right (north) on the Gilmore trail and immediately cross Steam Mill Rd. (FR 59) (3.2). Continue following the Gilmore trail for less than a ½ mile where the CT turns left off the Gilmore trail onto more intermittently groomed trails. Follow the intermittently groomed trail over a bridge and eventually up some slightly steeper grades for ¾ mile to the Brown Gate trail just northwest of FR 59 and the brown gate (4.4).

The CT turns left (northwest then west) on the Brown Gate trail and continues downhill for ¾ mile. Continue straight on the Brown Gate trail at the junction with the Kiwi trail and over a bridge next to a beaver dam. Continue following the Brown Gate Trail southwest a couple hundred yards up a hill to the junction with the Blue Bed House trail. The CT turns right (northwest) on the Blue Bed House trail following more rolling terrain. At about ½ mile, a short side trail marked with orange blazes leads left (west) 0.2 miles to the old Blue Bed House ruins on the right side of this trail. The CT continues northwest to the Blue Bed House meadow (5.9) where views of Robert Frost Mountain can be seen in the distance northwest. Continue skiing downhill through the meadow and into the woods past a trail that leads left (southwest) to the Robert Frost Cabin about a mile away. Continue straight on the CT down a steeper hill to the Wagon Wheel Rd. (6.1), an intermittently plowed road and the end of intermittent Rikert grooming.

Turn right (east) on Wagon Wheel Rd., follow for 200 yards, and turn left (northeast) on the CT which parallels Wagon Wheel Rd. for a bit. After a series of long gradual ups and short downs, the CT climbs some steeper pitches before turning north and level for about ¾ of a mile. Eventually the CT intersects Steam Mill Rd. (FR 59) (8.8), which is also a major snowmobile trail. Turn left (north) onto FR 59 and follow the snowmobile trail for 1/3 mile where the CT exits the snowmobile trail to the right (north) on the Bridges Trail (9.1). To reach the Natural Turnpike Parking area at the junction of FR 59 and FR 54, stay on the snowmobile trail following yellow CT Side Trail blazes and continue west for approximately 1/2 mile. At bottom of hill, turn right off of

SECTION 16: WIDOWS CLEARING TRAIL TO THE BRIDGES TRAIL

FR 59 and stay on the snowmobile trail to reach the parking area.

DISTANCE TO LANDMARKS:

Mileage Northbound	Landmark	Mileage Southbound
0.6 to CT	Widow's Clearing Trail Parking Area	0.6 to CT
0.0	Widow's Clearing Trail/CT junction	9.1
1.7	Widow's Clearing	7.4
2.3	Chatfield Parking Area	6.8
2.7	Rte. 125	6.4
3.0	Battell Trail Jct. – Rikert Nordic Center	6.1
3.2	Steam Mill Road (FR 59)	5.9
4.4	Brown Gate Trail near FR 59	4.6
5.9	Blue Bed House Meadow	3.2
6.1	Wagon Wheel Road	3.0
8.8	Steam Mill Road (FR 59)	0.3
9.1	The Bridges Trail (FR 59/CT junction)	0.0
0.5 to CT	Natural Turnpike Winter Parking (FR 54)	0.5 to CT

SIDE TRAILS AND LOOPS:

The extensive, groomed trail network at Rikert Ski Touring Center provides many opportunities for loops and side trail exploration. Be sure to stop in at the ski center to pay the fee and pick up a trail map. Follow the directional signs on the trails, as many of the trails are one-way to facilitate races and training.

Where the CT north leaves the Wagon Wheel Road, a side trail, flagged in blue and green, leads 3.4 miles to the village of Ripton and the Chipman Inn. Once in Ripton, catch the Snow Bowl Bus back to Rikert Nordic Center or Chatfield Parking, or into Middlebury. Check out <http://actr-vt.org/snow-bowl-shuttle-bus-map/> for the bus schedule and route.