

SECTION 17: BRIDGES TRAIL TO LINCOLN GAP

SNAPSHOT:

This section is a mix of back-country trails with a few short, steep climbs and descents; a partially plowed road; wide, groomed snowmobile trails; and an ungroomed, unplowed forest road to the top of Lincoln gap. There are wonderful views of the Breadloaf Wilderness along the way.

LENGTH: 12.3 miles

DIFFICULTY:

The ski along the Bridges Trail between Forest Road 59 and Forest Road 54 includes a few short, steep, climbs and descents. The ski along FR 54 is flat and easy, but is shared with snowmobiles and is partially plowed. Between Spruce Lodge and South Lincoln Rd. the route is at first wide and level, then steep and narrow. From South Lincoln Rd. to Lincoln Gap is all uphill but is not particularly steep.

NOTE: FR 54 and the western, plowed half of FR 59 are known locally as "The Natural Turnpike." After leaving the groomed trail network of the Rikert X-C Ski Center, the CT follows a short portion of FR 59 (unplowed), the Bridges Trail (non-snowmobile), and then joins FR 54 heading north to Lincoln.

DIRECTIONS TO TRAIL

ACCESS /EXIT POINTS (south to north):

1. Natural Turnpike Parking - Ripton

From the village of Ripton, take 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. Turn left to ski north on the CT.

2. South Lincoln Rd. - Lincoln

From the general store in Lincoln, take East River Rd. approximately one mile southeast toward Lincoln Gap. Turn right (south) on South Lincoln Rd. (FR54) and go approximately three miles to a point where the CT markers can be seen in a field on the east (left) side of the road. Park along the shoulder of the road where there is good visibility in both directions. Do not park here if snowplows are busy.

3. French Settlement Rd. - Lincoln

From the general store in Lincoln, take East River Rd. approximately one mile southeast toward Lincoln Gap. Turn right (south) on South Lincoln Rd. and go approximately 2.2 miles. Turn left (east) on French Settlement Rd. and go 1.1 miles to the end of plowing and the CT. Do not block the snowplow turn-around. To head north on the CT ski up (east) the unplowed portion of French Settlement Rd. To head south on the CT, walk west (downhill) on French Settlement Rd. 0.2 miles and turn left (south) into the woods where you see the CT blazes.

4. Lincoln Gap Rd. - Lincoln

From the general store in Lincoln, take East River Rd. approximately one mile southeast toward Lincoln Gap. After crossing the New Haven River go straight (east) on Lincoln Gap Rd. for approximately 2.6 miles to the end of plowing. Do not block the snowplow turn-around. There is not a lot of parking here so try to car pool. Ski up the unplowed portion of Lincoln Gap Rd. to access the CT.

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ROUTE DESCRIPTION:

From the FR 54/FR 59 parking lot, 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 northbound on the “Bridges Trail” after 0.5 miles.

From the **FR 59/Bridges Trail intersection (0.0)**, ski northeast into the woods on the CT. Please sign in at the trail register box so we can gauge the level of Trail use on this section of the CT. The Trail soon enters a clearing and then goes back into the woods, along a stream. Bear left over the first of eight bridges and head uphill. The trail follows a route that gradually levels off coming to a “T” intersection. The CT goes to the left. (The trail to the right leads to a beaver pond complex with views of Breadloaf Mountain.) Following a logging road, the CT rolls east and then north through some small stream valleys, crossing six bridges, and eventually descends a short, steep hill. The trail swings left over the last bridge, up another short hill, through a small field and intersects the Natural Turnpike, **FR 54 (1.5)**, which is also VAST Corridor #30.

Cross the road and into the woods again. The CT drops down, swings left and then right and soon intersects a snowmobile trail. A bridge will be on your left. Turn right on to the VAST trail. Here you ski up hill, the route gradually climbing until it levels out. The trail dips briefly and approaches a steep hill. WATCH for on coming snow machines, they may not be able to see you. Ski down the hill, and left where the trail levels off and soon reaches the Forest Service road, FR 54 again. Turn left following the forest road north. CAUTION: BE ALERT FOR SNOWMOBILES AND CARS. Plowing ends just beyond the intersection with **Eagle’s Nest Rd. (2.7)**. Continue skiing north on the snowmobile trail (unplowed FR 54). At a log landing just before **Spruce Lodge (3.8)**, a private hunting camp, veer left (northwest) and leave FR 54 and the snowmobile trail. Ski about 0.6 mile on a wide, level logging road and then turn sharply left (west) to ski uphill on a secondary logging road. The Trail narrows as you climb over a knoll and begin a twisting descent. Near the height of land the CT exits the Green Mountain National Forest and descends across private land, past a barn and a mobile home, and crosses a bridge to reach **South Lincoln Rd. (5.7)**. Please stay on the Trail and respect this landowner’s privacy and property.

Turn left (north) and walk or ski a few hundred yards on South Lincoln Rd. Resume skiing in the large field on the right (east) side of the road, angling northeast to join a logging road entering the woods. Follow the logging road over a bridge, and, after a short distance, turn left (north) onto an old road leading uphill through evergreens. The CT curves around to the right (east) and then makes a sharp left (north) turn into a dense conifer stand. After a short distance, turn right (east) to join a VAST snowmobile trail. CAUTION: WATCH FOR ON-COMING TRAFFIC. Follow the VAST trail across **Masterson Rd. (6.3)** and continue straight ahead. The Trail bears right and uphill a bit before it descends steeply to the left and across a bridge. USE EXTREME CAUTION on this section of the Trail. It is a blind corner and snowmobilers are not used to skiers on this portion of the Trail. After crossing a second bridge the CT leaves the VAST trail, turning right (northeast) into the woods, a beautiful birch-beech-maple forest. The Trail gradually climbs and soon meets a **woods road (6.7)**. Turn right (east) onto the woods road. Farther uphill the CT bears left (north) again through older hardwood forest and eventually intersects **French Settlement Rd. (7.8)**. Turn right (east) and walk or ski the shoulder about 0.3 miles to the end of the plowed portion of the road.

From the snow plow turn-around, ski uphill and straight ahead (east) on the unplowed portion of French Settlement Rd. There is cabin on the left. Please stay on the Trail, as the cabin is private property. After passing the cabin, the CT enters the Green Mountain National Forest. Follow the Trail straight ahead to a bridge (built in 2002) and into a clearing (a possible camping site). The

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CT trends uphill and through this clearing, where blazes may be difficult to spot due to deep snow. Look for blazes on wooden stakes. The Trail enters the woods again and passes through a gate onto **FR 202 (8.3)**. Just beyond the gate and to the right is a large meadow, also a good location for camping along the CT. Ski north on FR 202 to its junction with the **Lincoln Gap Rd. (10.2)**. Turn right and, depending on how high up Lincoln Gap Rd. has been plowed, either ski or walk northeast up the road 0.8 miles to **Lincoln Gap (11.0)**. To reach the end of plowing in Warren, ski east (downhill) from Lincoln Gap on the unplowed road approximately one mile. Total distance from FR 54/FR 59 parking lot to the top of Lincoln Gap, then back to Lincoln Gap Rd. parking is 12.3 miles.

DISTANCE TO LANDMARKS:

Mileage Northbound	Landmark	Mileage Southbound
0.0	FR 59/Bridges Trail intersection	11.0
1.5	FR 54 (Natural Turnpike)	9.5
2.7	Eagle's Nest Rd.	8.3
3.8	Spruce Lodge	7.2
5.7	So. Lincoln Rd.	5.3
6.3	Masterson Rd.	4.7
6.7	Woods road	4.3
7.8	French Settlement Rd.	3.2
8.3	FR 202	2.7
10.2	Lincoln Gap Rd.	0.8
11.0	Top of Lincoln Gap	0.0

SIDE TRAILS AND LOOPS:

The loop made by FR 54, the Bridges Trail, and FR 59 is approximately 3.5 miles long. Except for the Bridges Trail, this loop is shared with significant snowmobile traffic.

The Cooley Glen and Emily Proctor hiking trails can be accessed from FR 201, near the middle of this section of the CT. These trails are more suitable for snowshoeing than skiing. Call the GMC (802-244-7037) for more information on trail conditions.