

Shabomeka

LEGPOWER

Pathfinders

A 60 km network of beautifully scenic paths for non-motorized use only meandering through a wide variety of habitats in the forest heartland surrounding Shabomeka Lake in the Madawaska Highlands of the Land O' Lakes region of Eastern Ontario. Hiking and mountain biking in the spring, summer and fall. Ski touring in the winter.

Under the Occupiers' Liability Act, path users are deemed to willingly assume the risks of injury. Exemplary consideration for the paths and for others is expected of all users. Those with motorized vehicles are of course asked to refrain from using or altering the paths. Use of the Shabomeka LEGPOWER Pathfinders paths implies a responsibility on the part of the user to regard their use, whether on private property or Crown Land, to be a privilege, not a right. You are expected to conduct yourself as a guest, not an intruder.

The sLp path network is just southeast of Bon Echo Provincial Park. 3.7 km north of Cloyne turn east off Hwy 41 onto Head Rd. at the south end of Mazinaw Lake. Pass Cedar Lodge, cross the bridge. Just past Bon Echo Family Campsites (1.0 km from Hwy 41) turn left onto Shabomeka Lake Road for 5.7 km to a short causeway, where Shawenegog Lake Lane begins. After 0.4 km turn left into driveway 1067 marked PEARCE 22/23/EKELI (Norwegian for 'Sheltering Oaks'). The pathhead is 1067B.

SKI TOURING

Please DO NOT use skinny Nordic skis on the paths.

It's important to understand the vast difference between ski touring (ungroomed) and Nordic (groomed) skiing in terms of conditions, equipment, and technique. Ski touring tracks LOOK like grooves, but are really raised rails, as the only packed snow is directly under the skis. A ski travelling only a centimetre or two off the centre of the 'rail' will fall off into the soft snow on either side, effectively destroying the track for others, as well as wrecking the skier's own enjoyment. Touring skis are wide because that makes them effective in soft snow. Nordic skis are very narrow to operate most efficiently in hard grooves, or packed snow for 'skating'. There is no incentive in Nordic skiing to learn to glide the skis exactly parallel to each other because they HAVE to go parallel in the machine made tracks. Thus, Nordic skiers find it impossible to stay on touring tracks/rails with their skinny skis, and very difficult even when they use wide skis. Nordic skiers also find the 5 cm spacing between ski touring tracks awkward, as they are used to the crotch-splitting 20 cm spacing of machine-made tracks.

The essence of ski touring is tip and edge control, two factors pretty much missing in Nordic skiing. Ski paths, especially after a thaw, consist of many small to large moguls. Every time the centre of the ski goes over the apex of a mogul it will want to pivot. Only constant precise positioning of the tip by ankle and knee will prevent the ski from pivoting off the track. Similarly, the varying texture of the snow will make the ski want to cant and slide instantly off the track. Again, only ankle and knee edge control can counter this. The paths are not groomed, and since you won't be able to count on another skier preceding you to lay a track, you'll have to assume you'll be breaking your own track. A FLAT and EVEN track, that is, as a courtesy to those who follow. This is when having learned to parallel glide becomes very important. Developing this skill will take a lot of practice, but it's worth it. Practise gliding rather than clomping around flat curves, and telemarking on all downhill curves.

Touring skis should be from 60 mm to 75 mm wide. They're light, extremely stable, and will break track all day long. Check out ski sales. Wide, unfashionable skis are generally the ones being sold off at very low prices. The only way to decide between 'wax' and 'waxless' (neither being perfect) is to try each. Waxed skis and technique can almost eliminate 'herringboning' up hills. Poly-soled skis are good for both early or late in the season because of their abrasion resistance. The classic type of 3-pin Nordic Norm binding works best for ski touring. The standard 'armpit' pole length is fine, especially for deeper snow, but baskets should be at least 100 mm in diameter.

For ski touring, clothing 'fashion' is obviously not a big factor, as there are not a lot of people out there to impress. Wear the outdoor clothes you feel most comfortable in. Don't forget to dress in layers that you can remove when you get too warm, as in hiking and cycling. A small knapsack will hold discarded jackets, sweaters, and gloves, as well as your waxes, compass, matches, lunch, drinks, and an indispensable tool: a small hand windshield scraper to get frozen slush off the bottom of your skis, and packed snow from under your boots.

Please DO NOT use snowshoes on the paths. Snowshoes aren't quite as destructive as that ski touring nemesis – the cursed snowmobile, but they do ruin the ski touring experience.