

TAWATINAW VALLEY CROSS-COUNTRY SKI AREA

The Essentials

Name of Area	Tawatinaw Valley Alpine & Nordic Centre
Location	100 km north of Edmonton
Km trails	22 km
Km classic	22 km
Km skate	22 km
Trail Rating	Easy to advanced
Signage	Good
Grooming	Good to very good. Usually done over weekends.
Facilities	Heated ski chalet at base of ski hill with washrooms, change area & cafeteria serving hot snacks
Trail Fees	\$5/day. Season pass available.
Access Points	<p>Ski lodge & upper parking area.</p> <p>The trails are to the side and behind the downhill ski area. Main access is from the ski lodge although this entails a 2 km climb up to reach the rest of the trail system. You can avoid this by driving round to the upper parking lot. (From ski lodge return to main road turn left, proceed past a farm & take first left & follow dirt road up hill for ~2 km to upper parking area on left. Note: This road is not always ploughed so 4-wheel drive or winter tires are recommended).</p>
Other facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downhill ski area & lodge only open weekends & holidays • When closed can access trails from upper parking lot – but no bathroom facilities here.
Loppet	Classic 7.5 ,15 & 30 km in February usually before the Birkie
Description of trails	All trails are set with a classic track & a skating lane. They undulate through aspen & birch forest. Other trails go through a farm, past barns and haystacks. A long 5km flat loop called Vowel Howel to the north borders fields & is great for skating. The inner area bounded by the Hwy 101 trail has a maze of nicely undulating trails that are good for both classic & skating. The Yodeller trail up from the lodge is a one way trail as are a few others including the exciting Home Run which takes you back to the lodge on the other side of the ski hill in a matter of minutes.
Trail map	Available at chalet or download from website
Website	www.skitawatinawvalley.com
Trail conditions & more information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone ski hill manager at 780-698-2103 • Nthn Alberta ski area report linked to ENSC website
Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proceed north from Edmonton through St Albert on Hwy 2. • Continue on Hwy 2 for about 60 km through Clyde Corner where the highway doglegs right & left. • 21 km north of Clyde Corner turn right (east) at the Tawatinaw Valley sign. • After 3km you descend into a valley & can see the ski hill on the left. Park in the parking area by the ski lodge. • Travelling time about 1hr 10m from centre of city.

Mike's Two Skis Worth

Those of you that know me well know that this is one of my favourite ski areas. Why may you ask? Well it's relatively close to Edmonton, it has a heated lodge that serve hot snacks, a warm changing area and the trails are great for both classic & skate skiing and what's more they are never crowded. Plus the scenery is lovely. In a typical (if there is such a thing now) ski season it retains the snow long after Edmonton. Often you can still have great skate skiing here until early April.

The trail system is like a maze on top and can be rather confusing. New maps have been installed at major junctions with you are here signs for the 2009/10 season and this should greatly help skiers find their way around the trails. Copies of these maps can be down loaded from the website.

Some of my favourite trails are Geiger Counter which has a couple of steep descents through farmland and Little Secret which after a windy descent to some abandoned farm buildings climbs up steadily through a small hidden canyon. If I want a long easy skate, I take either the Vowel Howel loop or go out & back on the Nice 'N Easy trail. The Home Run offers an exhilarating 2 km mainly downhill ski back to the ski lodge. However, be careful, it can sometimes get a little slick on the lower section.

I have found it useful before going out to Tawatinaw, to contact the ski hill manager in advance to obtain the most recent trail conditions over the weekends. This is because sometimes I have found that they have not started grooming the trails until the Saturday after they have completed the downhill area.

I have also found the 30 km loppet here is a good primer for the 55 km Birkie, occurring as it usually does a week or so before the Birkie. The 30 km course is two laps around the trail system.

If you decide to go to Tawatinaw mid week when the downhill area is closed, you can either park near the lodge or in the upper parking area where there is an honesty box.