

# DENVER LIFE

March/April 2008

CULTURE | ADVENTURE | STYLE

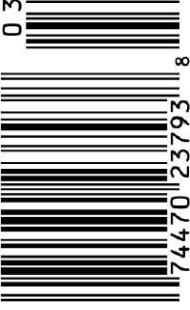
## Alternative Answers

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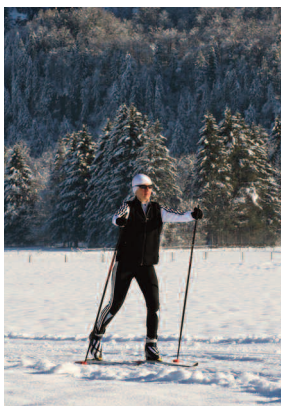
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# Nordic Adventures



## GEAR UP!

Find all of the essential cross-country ski gear you'll need at these local retailers:

### ALPENGLOW

710 Golden Ridge Rd. Suite 104, Golden, CO  
303.277.0133

### BOULDER NORDIC SPORT

1717 15th St., Boulder CO  
720.227.9400  
[bouldernordicsport.com](http://bouldernordicsport.com)

### LARSON'S SKI AND SPORT

4715 Kipling St.,  
Wheat Ridge, CO  
303.423.0654  
[larsonski.com](http://larsonski.com)

### NEPTUNE MOUNTAINEERING

633 S. Broadway, Suite A,  
Boulder, CO  
303.499.8866  
[neptunemountaineering.com](http://neptunemountaineering.com)

### REI (Flagship Store)

1416 Platte St., Denver, CO  
303.756.3100  
[rei.com](http://rei.com)

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPORTS

790 Kipling St.,  
Lakewood, CO  
303.232.6834

### WILDERNESS EXCHANGE

2401 15th St., Suite 90,  
Denver, CO  
303.964.0708  
[wildernessexchangeunlimited.com](http://wildernessexchangeunlimited.com)

Cool sweat wicks through polypro, air visibly releasing with every forward kick. The quiet of skis sliding across packed snow lulls a stressed mind. Indeed the sport of Nordic skiing, also known as cross-country skiing, is just as graceful as it is invigorating. Those already equipped with Nordic know-how, enjoy the casual and friendly atmosphere of this fluid winter sport, while reaping outstanding health benefits and taking pleasure in the peaceful surroundings of Colorado's snow-laden winter wilderness.

Joan Rossiter, Director of the Colorado Mountain Club Denver Group Cross-Country School, likes backcountry cross-country skiing because "it gets you out away from the crowds. It's usually a quiet and beautiful area, and it's a little more social than downhill skiing." Neel Jacobs, Assistant Manager at AlpenGlow in Golden likes cross-country skiing because of the fluidity. "You have the glide and kick which makes it more enjoyable, and you can cover more distance in less time," he says.

In Colorado, if there is snow you can cross-country ski, the questions become groomed or backcountry; guided or solo; day trip or vacation; rent or buy gear? While deciding to rent or buy new or used skis and boots, stop by the library section at gear shops like REI, Wilderness Exchange and Neptune Mountaineering. Guidebooks such as "Winter Trails Colorado" by Andy and Tari Lightbody, and "Colorado Hut to Hut" by Brian Litz, detail numerous trails all over the state and important access and safety information. Or, find your sales person's secret stash by contacting your local Ranger District. Each of the 11 National Forests covering most of Western Colorado has local Ranger District offices. There, friendly people will bury you in handouts and hand-drawn maps of commonly used trails and roads. Talk to the trail expert and learn the best trails and current conditions. They also sell topographic maps and area guidebooks.

For experienced and advanced skiers, the Mt. Evans Wilderness Area, located just 45 miles from Denver, offers a number of challenging trails including the Chicago Lakes, Resthouse Meadow and Captain Mountain trails. Herman Gulch, at exit 218, off I-70, is another local favorite for a difficult trek, while Grizzly Gulch at the Bakerville Exit and Steven's Pass off US 40 are more moderate. Novice skiers will want to start out with some easier trails such as Buno Gulch or Geneva Park off Guanella Pass Road. Away from the highway, Colorado Mountain Club's Boulder Group runs a cabin at the popular Brainard Lake servicing a variety of easy to difficult trails. Volunteers serve hot cocoa and stoke the fire for day visitors, and CMC members can reserve overnight stays.

Closed summer roads, and hiking trails also make great backcountry routes taking skiers into the wilderness, while protecting them from extremely deep snow. Rocky Mountain National Park's hiking trails become a haven of backcountry kick and glide trails. Always be aware when venturing off the groomed trail, know how to avoid avalanche danger and do not disturb wildlife, for your own safety as well as theirs.

If you're looking to get even further from the crowds and have a few days to explore, venture to the Uncompahgre, Grand Mesa, San Juan, Rio Grand or Gunnison National Forests of Southwestern Colorado. The San Juan Hut System, 10th Mountain Division Hut trail (including Summit Huts and Braun & Friends Huts) and Leadville Backcountry yurts make a great adventure vacation. Huts and yurt prices vary, from \$28-\$41 per person, per night depending on the hut, to \$85 per night for a yurt sleeping up to five people. In the heart of hut country, the San Isabel National forest hosts groomed cross-country skiing at Tennessee Pass Nordic Center, Mount Massive Golf Course, and the Colorado Mountain College Trails near Leadville.

Closer to Denver, the Frisco, Breckenridge and Gold Run Nordic Centers offer nearly limitless groomed trails (94 km combined total) for classical track skiers and skate skiers. They also provide group and private lessons for all levels, rentals and warming huts. Passes are available per day as well as for the season and per family. Most alpine ski resort towns also groom Nordic trails—Eldora, Crested Butte, Keystone, Steamboat and Vail/Beaver Creek to name a few. CMC also runs a cross-country school for all levels, teaching skills at Frisco Nordic Center, Loveland's Bunny Hill and in the backcountry.

When catered meals, private cabins and guides are necessary, guest ranches are the answer. Visitors at Latigo Ranch in Kremling ski 60 km of groomed trails and 200 square miles of backcountry in Routt and Arapahoe National Forests right from their porches. Vista Verde near Steamboat entertains guests with skiing photography classes, wine tastings and private hot tubs. Skiers enjoy 30 km of groomed trails and 500 acres of guided and unguided backcountry. Outside Aspen, cross-country skiers can rent cabins and explore the Ashcroft ghost town on skis, and then enjoy lunch or dinner at Pine Creek Cookhouse. Shuttle service to and from Aspen is provided for \$20 round trip.

Whether you enjoy going solo, with a group or involve the whole family, Nordic skiing offers something for everyone. If your children can walk, they can learn to cross-country ski, and many faithful skiers have been known to simply bundle up an infant or toddler to take them along in a fully enclosed child pulk sled that easily glides over the snow-packed trails. No matter where you go, getting outside to enjoy the beauty and exercise that cross-country skiing provides will give you stories to tell and a new reason to love winter.

## WHERE TO GO?

For information about cross-country skiing in Colorado, Nordic Centers, Guest Ranches, Clubs, Events and other news across the state, visit the Colorado Cross Country Association Web site at [colorado-xc.org](http://colorado-xc.org)



## RACING THROUGH WINTER

Somewhere throughout Colorado, there is a cross-country ski race taking place every weekend during the month of March. Whether you're an avid Nordic skier looking to compete, or a beginner who wants to try a race for the first time, check the list below for upcoming races. For more 2008 races visit [colorado-xc.org](http://colorado-xc.org) and [racingcolorado.com](http://racingcolorado.com)

All races are open to the public. To score in the Colorado Cup Series, racers must be members of the Rocky Mountain Nordic Association and participate in the \* races.

Key: C = classic F = freestyle (skate)  
\* = Colorado Cup scoring race

### MARCH 2008

**3/1 25TH ANNUAL ALPINA STAMPEDE**, Snow Mountain Ranch  
42km C\*, 42km F, 21km C, 21km F, 10km F, 2km F

**3/8 WILSON CUP**, Vail, 20km F\*

**3/8 SUPER TOUR**, Crested Butte, 22.5k Backcountry

**3/8 TOPATEN TELLURIDE**, Part of the Telluride Nordic Challenge Series Cup, 10km

**3/8 MESA MELTDOWN**, Skyway Nordic Center, Grand Mesa, 5 or 20 km F

**3/15 AMERICA'S UPHILL**, Aspen, 2.5 mile trek up Aspen Mountain

**3/15 NORTH ROUTT COURUERS DES BOIS**, Steamboat Lake, Steamboat Springs, 45 and 90 km

**3/21 FULL MOON SKI & SNOWSHOE TOUR**, Crested Butte

**3/22 VAIL CUP**, Vail, 25km F\*

**3/22 HAAKAN MEMORIAL NORDIC FESTIVAL**, Steamboat Springs, Race Details TBA

**3/25-26 SPECIAL OLYMPICS**, Frisco, Nordic Center Cross-country, Alpine skiing & snowboarding, figure skating and snowshoeing. Watch Special Olympics and support fellow x-country skiers.

**3/29 BRECKEBEINER**, Breckenridge Nordic Center, 60 km

**3/30 ELK MOUNTAIN GRAND TRAVERSE**, Crested Butte, 40 miles of rugged backcountry from Crested Butte to Aspen