

SECTION 16: WIDOW'S 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 X-C Ski Center, and finally shares a busy snowmobile corridor trail.

LENGTH: 8.1 miles

DIFFICULTY:

This is an easy-to-intermediate ski. The terrain is rolling; there are multiple access points; and much of the route is groomed ski or snowmobile 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 0.4 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 Ski Touring 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 Ski Touring Center. Turn left (north) and park near the large barn.

4. 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. 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 follows both the eastern, unplowed portion of FR 59 and the gated FR 54.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION:

From the Widow's Clearing Trail Parking Area follow the Widow's Clearing Trail south and then east to join the CT (0.0). The CT winds through rolling terrain north to Widow's Clearing (0.4), the site of an old farmhouse with an old foundation and stonewalls. Continue east and downhill 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 and join the trails of Middlebury College's Rikert Ski Touring Center.

Note: The Rikert Ski Touring Center has several one-way trails to facilitate racing and training. To conform to the Center's one-way traffic, the northbound and southbound routes of the CT through the Rikert Ski Center are different. Please follow the CT blazes and obey the one-way and other ski center signs. If races are in progress you may be directed to follow an alternate route.

Northbound through Rikert Ski Touring Center trail network:

Cross Rte. 125 onto an unnamed Rikert's trail. At the Horse Pasture intersection, turn left (west) and then right (north) on Partridge Crossing, and then left onto the Battell Trail heading toward the ski center building (3.3). After checking in and paying the fee, using the bathroom, buying some soup, etc., continue northeast from the building on the Inner Frost Trail. This takes you downhill, over a bridge, and across a road. Go uphill and make a right off the groomed trail. At the next two intersections, which are very close together, stay right, heading onto the Outer Holland Trail. Take the next right on Brown Gate Trail and follow it around a beaver pond and past the intersection with the Middlebranch Trail. Eventually Brown Gate intersects Steam Mill Rd. (FR 59) (5.6), which is also a major snowmobile trail. At this point the Catamount Trail leaves the Rikert Trail System.

Southbound through Rikert Ski Touring Center trail network:

Heading south on Steam Mill Rd. (FR 59), turn right (west) onto Brown Gate Trail. Follow Brown Gate past the intersection with Middlebranch Trail and around the Beaver Pond. Turn left on Outer Holland Trail and pass several trail intersections. Take Myhre Trail downhill, across Steam Mill Rd., and across a bridge to the ski center building. After checking in and paying the fee, head east away from the building, skirting the north and east edges of a large field. Go left on the Battell Trail and then right on an unnamed trail to Rte. 125.

Continuing north from the Rikert trail system, turn left (north) onto FR 59 and ski north on the wide, groomed snowmobile trail for several miles. Approximately 0.5 miles north of the Skylight Pond Trail parking area the CT exits the snowmobile trail to the right (north) and heads into the woods on the Bridges Trail (8.1). To reach the parking area at the FR 54/59 intersection (if you are not continuing north on the CT), stay on the snowmobile trail and continue west for approximately one half mile. Turn right into the woods (also a snowmobile trail) to reach the FR 54/59 parking lot.

DISTANCE TO LANDMARKS:

Mileage Northbound	Landmark	Mileage Southbound
0.0	Widow's Clearing Trail/CT junction	8.1
0.4	Widow's Clearing	7.7
2.3	Chatfield Parking Area	5.8
2.7	Rte. 125	5.4
3.3	Rikert X-C Center Building	4.8
5.6	Steam Mill Rd (FR 59)	2.5
8.1	Natural Turnpike Alternate	0.0

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.