



# TRAIL TIPS

*Beyond what a*  
**SMUGGLERS' NOTCH  
RESORT TRAIL MAP  
CAN REVEAL**

BY REBECCA KLEIN

IT'S A STANDING  
APPOINTMENT.

I return to “The Doc” the same week every February. Not just for a single visit. I cram in as many as I can.

When I arrive for the first time each year, my heartbeat quickens as the familiar swirl of excitement, coupled with a tinge of nervousness, hits.

Like meeting up with an old friend and having the conversation immediately click, it only takes a few moments — or turns, that is — until I feel like I never left.



Watch for comments from our facebook friends at the end of each section!

photo: Jim Deshler / [deshlerphotography.com](http://deshlerphotography.com)



“**T**he Doc” — as my family affectionately calls it — is Doc Dempsey’s Glades.

If you’re new to Smugglers’ Notch Resort or haven’t heard of the trail, it’s a steep mogul run, peppered with trees, on Madonna Mountain, off Catwalk. To get there, take a left from the top of Madonna I lift and cruise down the first hill on Upper Chilcoat. Turn left on Catwalk, and you’ll see Doc’s on your right.

During that first encounter each year, as I come to a halt with the fronts of my skis clinging to the point of no return, I have to give my legs a pep talk into taking on that first mogul. While I watch expert skiers like my brother gracefully swish over the mogul tops, I take it slower and relish those moments

when I stop thinking and get into a mogul rhythm.

Doc Dempsey’s, along with many trails of varying terrain at Smuggs, enable skiers and snowboarders of multiple levels and comfort zones to go at their own pace.

Whether you’re seeking amazing views, looking for runs for everyone in the family to enjoy, on the prowl for the tougher trails, or any combination of the above, read on for insider tips.

### **POSTCARD PICTURESQUE SPOTS**

You’ll find breathtaking views and hidden treasures on all three of Smugglers’ mountains, especially

when you know where to pull over. Alex Martin, the Station Manager for Smuggs TV, spends double digit hours a week all season scoping out the trails for memorable video footage.

For intermediate and advanced skiers and riders, he suggests riding to the top of Madonna and taking in the mountain views from all directions. “It’s one of the longer lift rides in the east, but there’s something nice and contemplative about it,” shares Alex, who points out that the views start from the chairlift. “Some people like going up with headphones. For me, it’s about all of that stuff melting away and getting to be a part of nature.”



As you're riding up the lift, he advises not to be disappointed if you see cloud cover. "The summit is high enough that if the clouds are really concentrated and low hanging, you can get above that. That's a really neat effect — where you're like this pin needle sitting on top of the clouds."

"At the top, you can look over the back side and see Mt. Washington in New Hampshire on a clear, sunny day," he describes. "The view is fantastic. It really gets you in the right mindset, whether you have been skiing that day or are just starting out."

To get the best shot of the vista from the top of Madonna, he recommends later in the day when there is a better chance for some sun.

If you're interested in a cruiser run with good views, Alex suggests Chilcoat, a long intermediate trail. As you descend towards the Madonna II lift, you can look out and see the Village, the Notch, and most of Mount Mansfield.

Or, consider winding down Drifter, another blue trail, accessible by taking a right from the top of Madonna (watch for signage as Drifter is sometimes marked as a black diamond, depending on conditions). Looking down you can see the entire Sterling Mountain area, Stowe, and Mt. Mansfield. If you're a glades fan, keep your eyes open for Red Fox Glades midway down. Along with the captivating snow covered tree views, this trail has a more



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## trail tips

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open feel, making it ideal if you're an intermediate skier or rider new at tree runs. When you reach the end of the glades, you'll end up in one of Alex's favorite spots. Turn around and look back up at the moguls and trees — the backlighting is spectacular.

Jeff Spring, the operations director of Smugglers' *Snow Sport University*, echoes Alex on the suggestion of Drifter for views and encourages also trying Catwalk. "There's coniferous vegetation," which he relates to the feeling of "being in this full wooded, real gnarly part of the mountain but without the fear factor since the terrain is not as intimidating as most black diamond trails. It feels kind of like you're sneaking around the mountain."



Best photo spot ... "on the chairlifts. The trees (especially on M1) are absolutely stunning."

"I love the top of Madonna looking down Upper Chilcoot with my ski bums making turns in the background for the perfect picture."

"Best photo option I thought was coming down Rumrunner at the lookout after the sharp turn."

### FAMILY TIPS

If you're skiing as a family — with, say, a child who has skied the upper mountains and a younger sibling who is almost ready — Jeff recommends the intermediate trail Snow Snake, accessible from either of the Morse Mountain lifts, for the views and one-size-fits-many terrain.

"It feels like you are mid-mountain, all by yourself for that first part," he shares and adds that you can look up and enjoy the view of the upper mountains.

"It's got some fun turns and distinct pitches," describes Jeff. "The second half just opens up and you can get some speed on the bottom section of the run to connect back to the mid-station of Morse."

It's also a trail that can help determine if everyone in the family is ready to venture to the upper mountains. If everyone can link turns on Snow Snake and stop in control, Jeff suggests the next step of Rumrunner on Sterling. On

Rumrunner, be sure to stop by the upper fence line to take in the ice formations, adds Alex.

If a green run is everyone's speed, consider Log Jam off of the Morse Highland lift. The more novice members of the family can take advantage of the width and gentle pitch, and those with a little more experience can take on the terrain features such as spines, rollers, and small jumps that are set up during certain times of the season.



Best family runs: "Morse Highlands! The lift operators are the best, they

help our sons take the lift together by themselves (one of my favorite pictures is of them in the lift chair ahead of us, talking together and laughing), and the spot at the top of Timberrr has a beautiful backdrop. Another plus, you can have a family pic at the bench across from the top of the lift with Sam's Run in the lower background."

"Log Jam is fun for everyone! My kids say it's like a roller coaster!"

Crazy family run: "Upper Chilcoot, Catwalk, Upper FIS, lower Doc's, top of Father Bob's, Link, Dan's Ford, Lower Chilcoot. Some bumps for everyone!"

### THE "I ROCKED SMUGGS" TRAILS

Are you an expert skier or rider craving that "I Rocked Smuggs" experience? I experience it every time I do a few runs with my brother Ben. With him, adventure isn't a possibility. It's a promise. For thrill seekers with expert skills, he suggests the steep Madonna and Sterling Lifelines. "People can watch you from the lift and prove that you were actually there," he observes.

His other tip doesn't have a trail name. "As long as you enter on an open trail and leave on an open trail that's fair game," reports Ben. I had no idea of all the off trail skiing available to experts within the resort's boundaries until following his lead.

Ben keeps his eyes open for tracks going into the woods and then checks a trail map to see where it might go.



"JUST MADE MY MORNING READING ABOUT ALL THESE PLACES -N- SPOTS CAN'T WAIT TO BE BACK IN FEB."

**PLAY IT SAFE:** As noted on the resort's trail map, woods between open trails are not marked trails, are not patrolled, and have no skier or snowboarder services. If you decide to ski or snowboard within the ski resort area boundary, enter from and exit to an open trail. Skiers and snowboarders accessing these wooded areas are solely responsible for themselves. You should be an expert skier or snowboarder, and you should stay in groups of three or more for safety reasons. If you are skiing on your own or with one other person, wait at the top of the trail for someone else to join you.



photo: Jim Deshler / deshlerphotography.com



## trail tips

“More often than not it might be a trail on the map in future seasons and you will have been one of the first to ski it,” he reveals.

Jeff Spring suggests a gladed trail that doesn't have a sign but appears on the trail map as Pirate's Plank. From Upper Pipeline on Sterling, after passing a hairpin turn toward Treasure, watch for a right turn into the woods. The challenging tree trail shoots you back out on Lower Treasure after crossing Exhibition and Black Bear.

For experts hungry for an accomplishment, Jeff says it doesn't get tougher than the Headwall on Madonna. “It's the steepest trail in the east. It's challenging terrain that you need to be prepared for. Go with a friend or grab a coach to make sure you're ready!” he says. “For some serious bragging rights, try Robin's Run on your way there, and then turn left onto the Headwall, which is designated as the portion of Lifeline from Robin's Run out to Red Fox Glades.” These expert trails are usually only open in the best of conditions.



Best run: “Upper FIS to Robin's Run to lower Black Hole”

“Robin's Run to lower Freefall and meet the wussier members of the family at Times Square (the intersection on Link)”

“Any run while the kids are in camp is great. As is a warm up beverage in the Black Bear Tavern”

As for me, I'm counting down the days until my next appointment with “The Doc.” I have one goal: to overcome that moment of hesitation I've experienced more than half of my life before taking on that first mogul. Or, perhaps I should sit back and realize that the added adrenaline at the top only makes the achievement sweeter.

*Rebecca Klein is a communications consultant and freelance writer in Baltimore. Rebecca has been visiting Smugglers' since her childhood. It's only fitting that her St. Bernard is named Smuggs. She thanks her parents, Elaine and Roger Klein, for many vacation memories.*

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