

FORT SASKATCHEWAN CROSS-COUNTRY SKI AREA

The Essentials

Name of Area	Fort Saskatchewan
Location	35 km north east of Edmonton
Km trails	~15 km
Km classic	15 km
Km skate	15 km
Trail Rating	Mainly easy with a few intermediate sections
Signage	Poor
Grooming	Good to very good
Facilities	West lodge sometimes open on weekends in the afternoons. The heated toilets are open to the public daily from 8 am to 8 pm.
Trail Fees	None
Access Points	1. River Valley Road by lodge (on access road to boat launch) 2. Downtown by old Fort museum
Other facts	Trails looked after by Fort Saskatchewan Nordic Ski Club
Loppet	None
Description of trails	<p>The trails roughly parallel the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River. They now start from the lodge on the west side of downtown and continue to the old Fort Museum in downtown.</p> <p>There is a nice 4 km undulating loop starting from the lodge. This is in a fairly open area and the tracks can sometimes get blown in. Off this loop is the new Oxbow trail that follows close to the riverbank and heads off to the west for a few km to a turn-around point.</p> <p>Proceeding east from the lodge the trails loop through an open area along the river before climbing up to the top-of-bank trail. The main trail proceeds above the river in front of the houses for several km before dropping back down again. The trail climbs slowly up through some trees, crosses over Highway 15 by means of a footbridge before descending down to the river bank and then goes as far as the old Fort Museum where there is a turnaround point. The distance back to the lodge is 6 km from here.</p>
Trail maps	Download from club website
Website	www.fortsasknordic.ca
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/Fort-Saskatchewan-Nordic-Ski-Club-210356715800578/
Trail conditions & more information	Club website or from Nthn Alberta ski area report linked to ENSC website
Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proceed north east from Edmonton on either Hwy 15 (Manning Freeway) or Hwy 21 to Fort Saskatchewan • If approaching from Hwy 15, head south & cross the river and then turn right (west) at the junction with Hwy 21 • Turn right at 2nd to last set of lights into Westpark Blvd – see below • If approaching north on Hwy 21 turn left at 2nd set of lights into Westpark Blvd. Then follow the brown boat launch signs to the river, i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Turn right into Westpark Dr ○ Turn right into River Valley Dr • The lodge is located on the left at the bottom of the hill. Park outside the lodge. • Driving time from centre of Edmonton is about 35 - 40 minutes.

Mike's Two Skis Worth

A small but dedicated band of local Nordic club volunteers keep these trails regularly groomed. Signage is sparse but it is generally easy to find your way around the trail system.

This is an ideal place for novice skiers particularly for those that want to improve their skating technique without having to climb up an endless succession of hills. The snow here often lasts well into late March and I have had some excellent late season skate skis, especially when I have caught it right usually in the mornings before the heat of the day softens the snow too much. The trails along the river are mainly flat except where they climb up to the top of bank trail.

These days I usually start from the lodge at the west end of the trail system. The 4.5 km loop that starts from the lodge has some nice ups & downs. Until the trees mature this area is a bit exposed and visibility can be a challenge in poor light. Also, these trails in places can sometimes get drifted in. I then cross the road by the lodge and continue along the riverbank trail towards town. This section used to be cut up a bit by walkers but the nearby paved bike trail is now ploughed in winter for other users so there is less foot traffic on the ski trail. Once on the top of bank section the surface improves as there is a separate parallel trail for walkers. This is fast flat section which is nice for skate skiing. I then continue over Highway 15 towards the town trailhead by the old Fort Museum.

The trails used to extend beyond here crossing several roads through Turner Park and beyond to end close to a refinery. These trails are no longer groomed in favour of the newer trails by the main lodge.

For opening times of the ski lodge please see the club website.

Compiled by Mike Stern 05/11/09
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