

# EMBARK

ADIRONDACK ADVENTURE GUIDE — WINTER 2020-21

- Ski trips near Paul Smiths
- Explore the Silver Lake Wilderness
- Skinny Slide on Upper Wolf Jaw Mountain
- Lake Placid Slide to the Whiteface summit
- Prepare for winter camping
- Try a shortcut to the top of Cliff Mountain

# Snowshoe, cross-country ski outings from Champlain Area Trails

It's a bright morning after a heavy overnight snow — a great day to snowshoe or cross-country ski in the Adirondack Park. But today you want to ski through woodlands and fields on low hills instead of endless slogs on forested mountains or “highway” skiing on groomed courses. Plus, you want to ski for a couple of hours, not all day. Hopefully, you'll be the first, and break trail.

Where do you go? Try the Champlain Area Trails network in New York's Champlain Valley.

CATS trails have an inspiring history. As the last part added to the Adirondack Park, the Champlain Valley has little public land and until CATS began in 2009, it had few hiking trails. That's when CATS embarked on a new path to making trails. It reached out to landowners to have trails through revocable agreements. As a land trust, CATS also conserved properties and made permanent trails.

To date, CATS has created more than 60 miles of trails with the goals of linking communities, connecting people with nature and promoting economic vitality. CATS hosts town-to-town Grand Hikes and “challenge hikes” which people complete to get commemorative patches. Every year, CATS updates and publishes comprehensive maps of trails in the Champlain Valley.

Reach for your CATS map, and see you've got two of them — one is of the northern valley — that's Clinton County. And the other is the central valley — Essex County. Open that one, and check out the legend showing trails good for cross-country skiing.

Starting in the north, you see the Poke-O-Moonshine Observer's Trail, a 5-mile round trip that's a challenging ski through forests on the popular state-owned mountain. It mostly follows a fairly wide path, so you can usually slow down if it gets too steep.

In Willsboro, you see a number of trails good for skiing — Riverside, High Point and Ancient Oak are a few — but your eye goes to Sophie's Lair, which offers up to 7 miles of skiing on a network of trails with easy ups and downs through woodlands and by fields. That's a good one because at various points you can choose to go back to the trailhead and then to Turtle Island Cafe or Essex Inn for apres ski refreshments.

Essex has a whole network of trails. You notice the Bobcat Trail on Walker Road west of Whallonsburg. You may have hiked there last summer and have nice memories of a bird-filled meadow, diverse woods and a series of beaver ponds. At the southern end, there's a nice straight downhill leading out into a field that would be fun to ski.

Then there is Westport and all its trails. State-owned Split Rock Wild Forest offers miles of trails with some going down to the lake and others that look across it to Vermont. DaCy Meadow, Viall's Crossing, and Wildway Passage Trails all look good, and because you may invite a friend who has only skied once, you may focus on Hidden Quarry Trail. Almost a mile long, it goes through easy fields and friendly forests and then by an old quarry that supplied stones for the nearby Route 22/9N. If the timing is right, after the ski you can get a beer at Ledge Hill Brewery.

Then you look farther south. McConley Spring Trail in Moriah looks to be a moderate and enjoyable trail. Coot Hill has a great view but is more difficult. Penfield Pond in Crown Point offers a fun and fairly



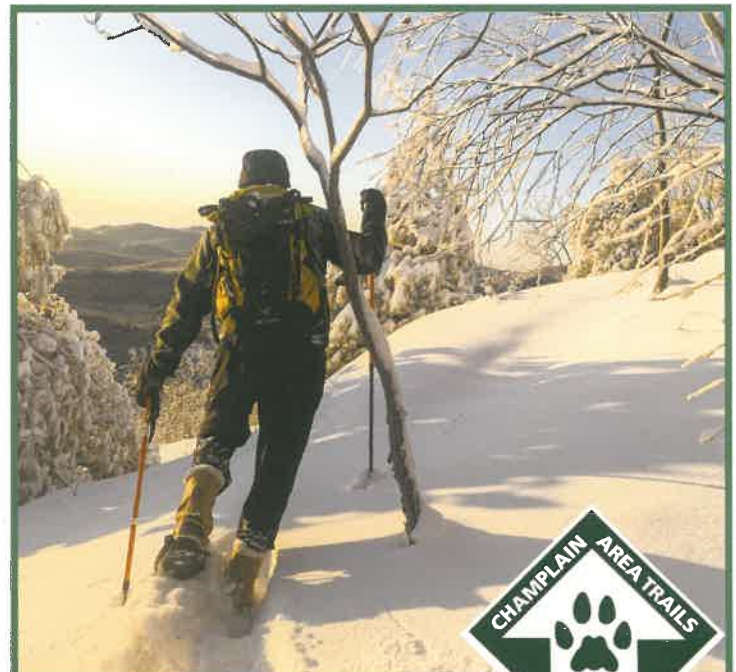
PHOTOS BY CATS

easy ski along the lake near the historic village. Then there's Ticonderoga and the miles of diverse trails through the open forests of Pharoah Lake Wilderness or in town along the LaChute River.

So, it's time to get out and explore new trails. Knowing they aren't crowded, you gather your gear, put it in the car and smile knowing you'll soon be breaking trail on a snowy Champlain Area Trail.

Champlain Area Trails is a nonprofit organization that saves land, makes trails, connects people with nature and promotes economic vitality in New York's Champlain Valley. Information on CATS events, activities and trails is available at [www.champlainareatrails.com](http://www.champlainareatrails.com) and by following CATS on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

To get free copies of the CATS maps, call 518-962-2287, email [info@champlainareatrails.com](mailto:info@champlainareatrails.com) or visit the website.



Discover the low peaks of the Champlain Valley. Short hikes on easy terrain on 60 miles of CATS trails. For our free maps of the Central and Northern Champlain Valley, call 518.962.2287 or visit [www.champlainareatrails.com](http://www.champlainareatrails.com)

