Other Cross Country Ski & Snowshoe Opportunities along Highway 89

The Little Belt Mountains provide a multitude of opportunities for cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Snow depths near Kings Hill Pass average 90-70 inches annually, and the ski season in higher elevations can run from November through May.

**Un-groomed, Marked Trails**

**O’Brien Creek Trail** 7 miles - Moderately Difficult

Starts at Kings Hill Pass on Highway 89, and traverses the O’Brien Creek drainage to its end in Neihart. A car shuttle is required to ski this trail one-way. Watch for snowmobilers on the lower portion of the trail. Dogs are allowed.

**Ranch Creek Trail** 10 miles - Difficult

Starts at Kings Hill Pass on Highway 89, climbing Purdyhry Peak to the ridge, and then follows Mizrak Ridge, making several steep runs before entering clearings above Mizrak Bowl. Stay on the Trail (Mizrak Bowl) is avalanche prone. The trail proceeds to the head of Ranch Creek, and then drops into Ranch Creek, following a logging road out to Highway 89. A car shuttle is required to ski this trail one-way. Watch for snowmobilers on the lower portion of the trail. Dogs are allowed.

**Deadman Ridge Trail** 7 miles - Difficult

Starts at Kings Hill Pass on Highway 89, following a forest road behind Kings Hill Cabin to Deadman Ridge, along which it proceeds south until it drops into Deadman Creek and reaches the highway. The lower portion of the route is not completely marked, and skiers should travel with someone familiar with the route. A car shuttle is required to ski this trail one-way. Dogs are allowed.

**Other Recommended Places**

**Jefferson Creek Road 267 - Beginner**

60 miles south of Great Falls on Highway 89. This road and area are closed to motorized vehicles in the winter and offer un-groomed opportunities for beginner cross country skiers and snowshoers. The trail is a gentle hike along Jefferson Creek road, ending in an open meadow. The round-trip is approximately 8 miles, but users can turn around at any point and shorten their trip. Dogs are allowed.

**Crawford Creek - More Difficult**

This moderate trail starts behind the Belt Creek Ranger Station and crosses back and forth across the creek as it climbs approximately 2 miles west. Please leave gates as you find them, and do not cross the private land at the top of the trail without permission. Dogs are allowed.

**Memorial Falls - Beginner**

60 miles south of Great Falls on Highway 89, this is a short 1/2 mile hike to a picturesque waterfall. The Memorial Falls Trailhead might not be plowed in this case, park at the Jefferson Creek Road parking area 1/2 mile south of Memorial Falls Trailhead. Dogs are allowed.

**Area History**

The Silver Crest Ski Area is on the historic Kings Hill Scenic Byway, US Highway 89, the 71-mile route between Armartington Junction on US 87 and US 12 near White Sulphur Springs. By 1919 much of the old route was completed. At that time, the Little Belt Mountains were part of the Jefferson National Forest. The photo below shows the county line at Kings Hill Pass in 1925.

The names of the trails at Silver Crest reflect the last 130 years of mining and timber history in the area.

**Ski Trails**

Silver Dyke is a mine in the Neihart Area, and refers also to veins of silver deposits. **Wha Tenga Way** is named after a Chinese laundry in Neihart that served miners for decades. **Gold Run** is a mine in the Barker-Hughesville area. **Kornet** is an exclamation miners made when they struck gold. A **sluice box** is a device used in placer mining that has riffles on the bottom to catch the heavier gold as water flushes material from one end to the other. **Quicksilver** was a commonly used name for mercury, which was used in the processing of gold and silver. **Silver** refers both to U.S. Highway 89 and gives a nod to a significant period in the history of Neihart and Kings Hill. **Hometake Mountain** refers to the homeowners or people that owned the land in the past. **Neihart Pines** refers to the trail, often called the "Fire Trail," that supplies, materials, and passengers to and from Great Falls to Neihart for over 50 years.

**Snowshoe Trails**

**Springboards** were flexible platforms on which early loggers stood to fell a tree. **Cruising** survey timber stands and estimate the quality and amount. **Chasers** are loggers who unhook logs from skidders or cables.
Trail Etiquette: It is each skier's duty to ski responsibly, under control, able to stop, and with consideration for others. Be courteous. You may encounter skiers of different abilities along the trails. Pass on the left if overtaking a slower skier, giving audible signals when passing. Don't block the trail and be watchful for oncoming skiers, particularly on uphill and downhill sections or where visibility is limited. On ungroomed routes, snowshoers can protect established ski tracks by staying to the side, not on the ski tracks. No snowshoes are allowed on groomed ski trails.

Cross Country Ski Trails

Using Ski Trails: Use of groomed and ungroomed trails is free to the public. No dogs, snowshoes, or other forms of transportation are allowed on groomed ski routes in order to keep the groomed surfaces in good condition for skiing and to keep the trails safe.

Silver Crest Groomed Ski Trails
All trails are two-way travel. The ski trails are identified on the map by loop (A, B, C, D, E) and by trail name. The distance between major junctions is marked on the map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ski Loops</th>
<th>Individual Trails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loop B</td>
<td>2.7 mi, 4.5 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loop C</td>
<td>3.9 mi, 6.2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loop D</td>
<td>5.2 mi, 8.3 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loop E</td>
<td>3.0 mi, 4.8 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>89er 1.6 mi, 2.7 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gold Run 0.7 mi, 1.1 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homestake Meadow 0.9 mi, 1.4 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mount Eureka 1.7 mi, 2.7 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Niehart Flyer 1 mi, 1.6 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quicksilver 0.5 mi, 0.8 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silver Dyke 0.9 mi, 1.4 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sluice Box 1.1 mi, 1.8 km</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sluice Box Hill 0.1 mi, 0.2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wu Tang's Way 0.8 mi, 1.2 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avalanche Safety & Awareness
What are the RED FLAGS of unstable snow pack?
- Recent avalanche activity
- Wind
- Heavy Precipitation
- Sun
- Cracks in the snow surface
- Rating temperature

Be Informed, Be Trained! The Forest Service National Avalanche Center web site has online avalanche awareness & skills training:
http://www.fsavalanche.org/
The Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center in Bozeman offers classes and more local condition information:
http://www.mtavalanche.com/

Know the Forecast! Check the weather and forecast before you go, and be prepared for changes. This QR Code will take you to the National Weather Service Current Condition and Forecast page at the nearby Porphyry (PHYM) Lat: 46.835278°N Lon: 110.7175°W, Elev: 8323 ft.

Snowshoe Trails

There are three loops designated for snowshoers inside the Silver Crest Cross Country Ski Area. You can also travel the outside of all of the loops for a longer loop. The trails are marked with red diamonds to distinguish them from the cross country trails. When snowshoe trails cross groomed ski trails, please cross in the shortest distance possible. Snowshoeing is not allowed on the groomed Silver Crest ski trails.

Snowshoe Loops
- The Cruiser 0.7 mi, 1.1 km
- Springboard 1.3 mi, 2.1 km
- The Chaser 2.2 mi, 3.5 km
- Chaser Springboard 2.7 mi, 4.4 km
- Cruiser

On Snowshoe Trails

Need snowshoes?
The Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest has a limited number of snowshoes in various sizes that can be checked out with no charge for three days. See our contact information on the back of this map.

- Plan your route and stick to it. Let someone know where you are and when you plan to be back.
- Getting Lost: Even light snow and wind can cover your tracks and make finding your way back hard. Plan for the worst. Carry a compass and map and know how to use them.