



Earning your Turns

A Day of Bike-Supported Skiing Adventure

BY BRIAN MOHR

PHOTOS BY BRIAN MOHR AND EMILY JOHNSON



It's rare that our trips to the ski hill or trailhead don't involve a few errands, a visit with friends or family, or a longer drive to a not-so-local spot. This, combined with other realities, such as snowy roads, cold weather, and limited daylight, make it challenging to use our bikes to go skiing. However, come March, when Old Man Winter begins to relax his grip, a little bike-supported skiing adventure becomes hard to resist. It's a simple and beautiful concept: we get our first good bike ride of the spring, we spend the day skiing, and we leave the car at home.

It was a crisp and sunny morning in March this year, when we finally broke out the bikes. Our trusty, dusty BOB trailers also came off their hooks in the shed. As always, tires were checked and inflated, chains got lubed, and brakes were tested up and down the driveway track. We pack our ski packs as we normally would for a day of skiing adventure, and lash our skis and poles to the sides of the packs. This package fits neatly into our BOBs, with the ski tips extending beyond the rear end of the trailer, and the tails left with enough room to prevent any rubbing on the rear wheels of the bikes. We typically stuff one ski boot inside our packs, and strap the other inside a plastic bag atop the pack. Dressed in our usual lightweight, soft shell ski pants, some gloves, and a couple of layers up top, we kick off these rides by rolling down our snow-covered driveway feeling unusually free-spirited.

This year, our friend Peter Wadsworth joined

us for our first good bike-to-ski adventure of the season. Before setting off, he accepted one last sip of coffee as we assured him it was all for a good cause. He said he needed a good butt-kicking, anyhow. "I haven't hopped on my bike in months... but it's too early in the spring to pass up a good day of skiing," he said.

We initiate most of our rides from home, which means a solid 800-foot dirt road descent to the banks of the Mad River in the valley below. The descent always gets the endorphins flowing, and it makes the 800-foot climb home later in the day worthwhile. Rolling through Moretown village, we usually spot a few neighbors, and scheme about paddling the Mad River in our canoe. In no time, we find a nice pace, and follow the quieter back roads toward the bigger mountains that our valley offers upriver. Sometimes we'll stop for a treat along the way—a fresh-baked pastry usually hits the spot—or squeeze in a few quick errands. Whether we are heading to a local backcountry trailhead or to the Mad River Glen or Sugarbush ski areas, it is rarely more than a 90-minute trip one-way.



With Peter, we had our sights set for Mad River Glen ski area. We opted for a variation on the usual approach that involves riding to a spot well below the base area—a spot from which we could enjoy a leg-stretching, 20-minute uphill ski (using skins) to the base area before hopping on the lifts. This approach also leaves us set up for a bonus ski descent back to our bikes, which we leave tucked away in the woods.

Within 90 minutes of leaving our home in Moretown, we were skinning up through the hardwood forest. The softening snow under our skis whispered that it was going to be a fine day in the mountains. We arrived at the base area under brilliant sunshine. Emily broke out the sunscreen, we connected with a few friends, and spent the afternoon enjoying the Green Mountains in their glorious early-spring form.

Peter had not been riding lifts much, and with the 800-foot climb back to our house in his mind, he took a break to enjoy a giant homemade sub on his favorite Red Hen Bakery bread. He offered us a bite, but neither of us could fit our mouths around it. After a nice selection of lift-served runs, we finished off the afternoon with a few late-day runs on Mad River's "Sunnyside," before beating the shadows back to our bikes on the mountainside below.

After washing our faces in the stream and transitioning back to bike mode, it felt great to be back on the bikes. The downriver ride back to Moretown rolls ever-so-subtly downhill, and a tailwind out of

the south is not uncommon on a warm spring day. We munched on a snack, gulped down some water, and in no time found ourselves back in Moretown Village. We are usually not the only ones out cycling on days like this, but we have yet to spot another skier on their bikes. Today was no exception. We know there are other skiers who ride, and it would be fun to see them biking to ski.

We often pedal over to the river for a little inspiration before tackling the final climb home. It's a super-scenic climb with great views of the mountains that we ski. We timed it just right when Peter was with us, with the sun showing off its final half-hour of rays, and the clear skies giving us views from Mount Mansfield in the north to the Breadloaf Wilderness in the south. We stopped to take it all in for a moment. I even talked Peter into lapping the upper portion of the final hill so I could re-snap a few photos in the scenic light. Home was just around the corner. Cold beer was waiting in the fridge. Days like this add new meaning to "earn your turns," and remind us of the unlimited potential for world-class adventure right here in Vermont. [7]

Brian Mohr and Emily Johnson very rarely let a day go by without paddling a river, climbing a mountain, or wandering up a stream bed. They can be contacted through their website, www.EmberPhoto.com.



Bikers: Emily Johnson and Peter Wadsworth. Skier: Ben Falk. Photographer: Brian Mohr / EmberPhoto.