

Cross-Country Ski Trails near State College PA

by Jon Nelson

When snow conditions permit, there are several areas close to State College to consider for a ski outing. Here is a short list of possibilities, while a more comprehensive list of trails can be found on Howard Pillot's website at: <https://crosscountryskipa.com/>

Penn State Golf Courses - PSU has two golf courses that permit xc-skiing. Located in town with close-by parking, the courses are semi-hilly. Trails do tend to get drifted, and you might have to contend with joggers, dog walkers, etc. Good for a fast classic ski or skate. A website is here: <https://www.pennstategolfcourses.com/golf-courses/blue-white-golf-courses>

Black Moshannon State Park - Located at higher elevation on the Allegheny Front, **Black Mo SP** is a favorite destination. The Lake Loop and Star Mill Trails are good for beginners. More advanced are Moss-Hanne and (old) Ski Slope Trails. Skaters like to use the Snowmobile Trail. (Historical note: moose never occupied central PA and "moshannon" translates as "elk place.") Maps are available at the SP office or at: <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/BlackMoshannonStatePark/Pages/default.aspx>

Rock Run Trails - Located in a semi-wilderness setting in **Moshannon State Forest** is a system of trails that date back to the 1980s. A few of the trails follow old grades of narrow-gauge railroads. There is a parking lot on Route 504 (aka Rattlesnake Pike). The start of this 8 to 12-mile system is on the Allegheny Front and Woodland Trails and loops include Ridge Trail (intermediate skill) and Valley Trail (beginners). You will want to have a map from Howard Pillot's website or a SP office. A daypack is recommended. Purple Lizard Maps also has a blog post on the area at: <https://www.purplelizard.com>

Stone Valley Recreation Area - Stone Valley has over 20 miles of trails with varied terrain. Trails close to the Environmental Center and lake get heavily used by hikers. Backcountry ski trails include Homestead, Sawmill, and Shavers Creek. Go prepared as this is intermediate skiing with some steep downhills. Parking is located at the Center or on the southeast side of the lake. A map is available under "Hiking" on the Center website at: <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/campusrec/stonevalley>

Other Nearby Ski Areas - The **Scotia Barrens Gamelands** (SGL 176) is located close to State College. A longtime favorite of skiers, some trails have gotten rougher over time. Close-by state parks with trails suitable for xc-skiing include **RB Winter, Parker Dam, Prince Gallitzin, and Greenwood Furnace**. The **Quehanna Wild Area** and **Rothrock State Forest** have numerous trails with some suitable for backcountry skiing. A system of trails off I-80 with good snow possibilities is **Rockton Mountain** (beginners). Directions to the

trails are found on Howard Pillot's website. There are a number of loops in the 4 to 6-mile range, with a board map near the parking lot. Purple Lizard also has a blog post on the area. Nearby town parks that get skied include Circleville, Slab Cabin, and Walnut Springs. Two new areas to explore are **Whitehall Park** and **Musser Gap Trail**, located off PA45 and Whitehall Road: <https://pahikes.com/blogs/rothrock-state-forest/musser-gap-hiking-on-the-musser-gap-trail>. And if you are especially brave and there is fresh snow, the local bike paths and rails-to-trails are sure to look inviting for a brisk early morning ski.



Cross-Country Skiing on the Penn State Golf Course

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