

Winter 2024 // Vol 1 // Issue 2

ANCHORAGE PARK FOUNDATION

PARKS & TRAILS



TRY WINTER

Make this the winter you love

by finding what brings you frosty joy

Anchorage Park Foundation

The Anchorage Park Foundation is a community-based nonprofit that mobilizes public support and financial resources for improving Anchorage parks, trails, and recreation opportunities.



Winter Trail Safety Tips

Whether you're walking the dog, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, or winter biking, you will encounter other adventurers on the trail. Before hitting the trail consider checking snow conditions, research winter trail usage (some trails in Far North Bicentennial Park are mushing only in winter), pay attention to signage to avoid going the wrong way on a trail, and be respectful of others, stay out of tracks if you are not skiing.

Winter Solstice

By Susan Pope

White sky, white earth. Mountains of snow. I've escaped my house to cross country ski on this December, nearly-solstice morning. Miraculously, though none of the roads to get here have been plowed, someone cleared a way into the parking lot at the trail head at Abbott Loop Community Park. But where are the edges? I squint, trying to discern figure from ground, driving toward what appears to be a vast wall of white. Winter solstice may be the darkest time of year, but today, it is the whitest.

I aim my car toward a haphazard collection of vehicles at the far corner of the lot. Like a blind person, I adjust my course when I sense my tires drifting into deep snow. A slight curve, then a corner, then faint tracks that lead to a pickup truck parked in a row by itself. I pull in next to it and thump, hit the snow berm with my bumper. Touch down!

I unload skis and poles from my car and snap brand-new boots into ancient fish scale skis. I glide easily over the dry, fresh snow. Arms, hands, legs, feet flow in harmony. My body takes over and my mind runs free. Against the pure white background colors emerge—spruce green, cinnamon brown knots on the old birch trees, gray rim ice against the black flow of Little Campbell Creek. More color: dog walkers, skiers, fat-tired bikers wrapped in layers of bright blue, pink, and orange. All of us, eager to savor the best of winter—the joy of icy air skimming our cheeks, frosting our hair, and turning our fingers into popsicles.

LOCAL WRITER

This is the antidote to my seasonal seesaw between lethargy and frenzy. So much to do, so little energy. I'm hosting a yearly gathering of friends and family tomorrow. Food and presents to buy, cooking, cleaning, yikes!

Yet, an hour or more on the trail clears my mind and renews my body. My husband and I moved into this hillside neighborhood forty years ago because of its proximity to a vast network of trails connecting to Chugach State Park, the Tour of Anchorage, the U-Med district and downtown. This year-round access to trails and parks is what keeps us in the neighborhood and convinces us to stay in Anchorage. Where else can you travel on foot from mountains to sea in a day?

Anchorage's parks and trails have sustained us through parenting, grandparenting, a pandemic, and into a healthy elderhood. They have kept us moving and enjoying the beauty of our city whether taking a leisurely walk along the Coastal Trail, skiing along Chester Creek, or picnicking on the beach at Kincaid. Because of our community's dedication to parks and trails, there's a place outside for every ability and sensibility. Healthy parks sustain a vibrant city. They're well worth the investment.

Susan Pope writes nonfiction from her home in Anchorage. In her memoir, [Rivers and Ice: A Woman's Journey toward Family and Forgiveness](#), (Riddle Brook Publishers) she follows the threads that bind five generations of her family to Alaska.



Volunteer



Donate

Trail Etiquette

Be considerate of others.

Keep dogs leashed and close to you.

Scoop the poop.

Pack out what you pack in, don't litter.

Keep to the trail to minimize erosion and damage.

Park only in approved areas.

Wheels yield to heels.

Report graffiti or trail hazards at 907-343-GONE





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Anchorage is Dena'ina Homeland

DENA'INAQ ELNENA CH'TIYUX
meaning, you are walking on Dena'ina land

Indigenous Place Names Pronunciations



If you are unsure how to pronounce an Indigenous place name, listen to Native Village of Eklutna Chair and CEO, Dena'ina scholar, and Anchorage Museum Curator Aaron Leggett pronounce each Dena'ina place name and explain its meaning in the Dena'ina language.

Discover more about the Indigenous Place Names Project



Anchorage is a Winter City

Anchorage is a true Winter City, and we love it. As a northern city, winter plays a central role in our lives, shaping our experiences and creating unforgettable stories. The first snowfall is a moment of pure joy for many of us, as it gently blankets our city in soft, white beauty. We eagerly await the first opportunity to skate, ski, or take a winter walk.

From November to April, Anchorage transforms into a snow-covered paradise for outdoor enthusiasts with endless recreational opportunities. Anchorage has hundreds of miles of lit groomed trails for activities like cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, sledding, dog mushing, and skijoring. Alpine skiers and snowboarders have several choices for alpine skiing all within 45 minutes of Anchorage. Winter isn't just about outdoor activities; it's also a time for community events and festivals that help us celebrate and stay connected throughout the winter.

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info@anchorageparkfoundation.org

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Cover Image: Portage Lake, by Gretchen Weiss-Brooks

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Anchorage Park Foundation
3201 C St #111, Anchorage, AK 99503

TRY WINTER

Our northern climate makes a long, dark, snowy winter inevitable. Shutting things down and hibernating until spring can be tempting –or– we can embrace our climate and make it easier and more enjoyable to be active outdoors. Anchorage Park Foundation is working with partners on a winter city strategy to celebrate our season of snow. Winter recreation is an opportunity to improve livability, community health, and economic value to our city. With more people actively using our parks and trails the city feels more inviting, vibrant, and attractive to both residents and tourists.



Get Started with Gasline Trail

Accessing the Gasline multi-use trail located in Hillside Park with parking at the end of Hilltop Ski Area Road, offers a fantastic opportunity for newcomers to winter sports to immerse themselves in a winter wonderland. Parking is ample, and the trailhead is well-marked, providing a stress-free start for those unfamiliar with winter environments. This accessibility ensures that beginners can focus on enjoying their new winter activities without the added concern of navigating complex or remote locations.

For those looking to try fat tire biking, the Gasline Trail is an excellent choice. The trail provides a smooth and manageable surface for beginners to get accustomed to biking in snowy conditions. Fat tire bikes, with their wide tires, offer enhanced stability and traction, making it easier to balance and control the bike on the snow. New riders can appreciate the relatively flat sections of the trail, which allow for a gentle introduction to winter biking without overwhelming challenges.

Cross-country skiing is also ideal for those new to winter sports. The Gasline Trail is groomed regularly by the Nordic Ski Association of Anchorage making a smooth, groomed surface that is well-suited for classic skiing, which involves a straightforward, rhythmic gliding motion, or skate skiing. Beginners can benefit from the gentle terrain that helps them practice their technique and gain confidence without

facing steep hills or challenging conditions. Additionally, the picturesque landscape offers a serene setting for learning and enjoying the beauty of winter.

Snowshoeing is another great option for novices on the Gasline Trail. Snowshoes are designed to distribute weight more evenly across the snow, preventing the wearer from sinking too deeply. This makes traversing snowy terrain more accessible for beginners. The Gasline Trail's well-maintained path can be a starting point for taking your snowshoes off-trail to float over the deep snow. The gradual inclines and scenic views near the trail provide a rewarding experience, helping beginners build confidence in their snowshoeing skills.

Finally, winter hiking on the Gasline Trail is perfect for those who prefer a more relaxed winter activity. With its easy-to-navigate path and manageable terrain, beginners can enjoy a leisurely winter hike without the need for specialized equipment. The trail provides a beautiful backdrop for observing the snowy landscape and wildlife, making it an enjoyable experience for those new to winter environments. Remember to dress in layers and keep dogs leashed and off ski tracks.

The accessibility and variety of winter sports available on the Gasline Trail make it an ideal location for newcomers to explore and enjoy the winter season in Anchorage.



Rentals, Bus, Shuttles, & More

Rentals

When trying a sport for the first time or for families with growing children, renting winter gear is often more practical than purchasing. When looking to rent winter gear, there are several excellent local businesses to consider.

Play It Again Sports (playitagainsports.com) is a popular choice for a variety of winter sports equipment, including skis, snowshoes, and snowboards. They offer affordable rental options and knowledgeable staff to help you select the right gear. Another excellent option for winter specialized winter gear rental is **Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking (AMH)** (alaskamountaineering.com/rentals). They offer a wide range of rental equipment, including skis and winter hiking gear. **REI Anchorage** (rei.com/stores/rentals) offers a robust selection of rental gear for both adults and kids, including skis, snowshoes, and winter clothing.

Hilltop Ski Area (hilltopskiarea.org/equipment-rentals) and **Arctic Valley** (arcticvalley.org) are non-profit ski areas located within Anchorage and offers affordable rates on ski and snowboard rentals and other gear to get you out on their slopes. You can also take advantage of the classes and lessons they offer.

Challenge Alaska (challengealaska.org/skilessons) offers adaptive ski and snowboard lessons that include all the gear at their Girdwood location. They also offer nordic skiing, sled/special hockey, and cross country biathlon. bhgv

Kicksleds are a fantastic way to get out in winter for those with and without athletic ability. Use the seat for a child, friend, or gear across ice or packed snow. Check out rentals from **Kicksled Alaska**, (kicksledalaska.com/blogs/rentals).

If you've been meaning to try winter biking, there are several options for renting fat tire bikes: **Pablo's Bikes** (pablobicyclerentals.com), **Trek Bicycle Store** (trekstorealaska.com), and **Downtown Bicycle Rental** (alaska-bike-rentals.com). They offer a variety of fat tire bikes for rent, perfect for exploring Anchorage's snowy trails. Renting a Fat Tire Bike offers a cost-effective way to enjoy winter biking without the expense of purchasing a bike you might only use occasionally.

If you'd like to try your luck at ice fishing, the **Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)** has fishing rods to lend. The type of fishing rods and the extent of gear in the Rod Loaner Program depends on the local fishing opportunities and fishing conditions. Some paid options for renting fishing gear include:

B&J Sporting Goods, (bnjsg.com), **The Bait Shop** (thebaitshackak.com), or **Alaska Outdoor Gear Rental** (alaskaoutdoorgearrental.com). They provide a range of rental equipment, including ice augers, fishing rods, and tackle.

Renting winter gear from businesses provides both flexibility and cost savings. For adults who may not use winter gear year-round, renting avoids the costs and storage issues associated with ownership. For growing kids, it ensures that they always have gear that fits properly, making winter sports more enjoyable and accessible.

Bus

Consider riding **People Mover** (muni.org/Departments/transit/PeopleMover) buses for convenient, eco-friendly, and cost-effective transportation to explore our parks and trails such as **Russian Jack Springs Park** with over 8 miles of groomed ski trails.

Ridesharing Services

Popular ride-share services offer transportation to **Hilltop Ski Area**, the non-profit ski resort located within Anchorage. Hilltop has multiple lifts, 30 acres of groomed and lighted terrain ranging in difficulty level from easy to most difficult. Facilities include the Karl Eid Ski Jump Complex, with lighted 15 meter, 40 meter, and 60 meter jumps; Hillside Park with 7.5 miles of trails for Nordic skiing; and **Bicentennial Park** with 20 miles of trails for Nordic skiing. Other parks to catch a ride share to include **Kincaid Park** with miles of nordic ski trails and a sledding hill with an amazing view.

Shuttle

Taking a shuttle from Anchorage to Alyeska offers a convenient and stress-free way to reach the slopes, particularly for those new to winter travel in Alaska. One option is the **Girdwood Express Shuttle** (akfinest.com/girdwood-express), which provides reliable service between Anchorage and Alyeska Resort. Girdwood Express Shuttle ensures a comfortable ride with options for luggage and ski equipment.

Train (March 15, 2025)

The **Ski Train** takes you to Alaska's roadless backcountry for a day of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. The Ski Train is a once-a-year chance to get out and explore by rail. The Ski Train is a fundraiser for the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage, and all tickets are sold through the NSAA website: anchoragenordicski.com/events/ski-train

WALK WITH US
DATES POSTED ON OUR EVENT CALENDAR




ANCHORAGE
PARK FOUNDATION

- Improve local parks and trails
- Paid education recreation days
- Learn natural resource management
- Gain job experience & mentorship
- Link skills to future careers

Application opens mid January 2025

YOUTH
EMPLOYMENT
IN PARKS




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THE ANIMALS!
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YEAR
ROUND



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Mile 79, Seward Highway | Portage, AK | AlaskaWildlife.org

Ski What?



Cross-Country Skiing

Anchorage has hundreds of miles of groomed and lit trails, perfect for cross-country skiers of all ages and abilities. Beginners will find plenty of flat areas along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Lanie Fleischer Chester Creek Trail and Campbell Creek Trail, with several access points from parks across the city. Check trail conditions and grooming status in the Winter Ice & Trail Conditions report updated weekly by Anchorage Parks & Rec. Kincaid Park is the crown jewel of cross country skiing in Anchorage with 60 kilometers of trails winding through 1,400 acres of parkland. Visit the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage for trail conditions, maps, learn to ski programs, races and more. Download the Nordic Pulse Skier Apps for grooming status, trail conditions, and use geolocation to navigate trails.

Skate Skiing

Skate skiing is a cross-country skiing technique that combines the principles of ice skating with traditional skiing, offering an efficient and dynamic way to cover snow-covered terrain. Unlike classic cross-country skiing, where skis move in parallel tracks, skate skiing utilizes a V-shaped stance with skis angled outward. Skiers push off from the edges of their skis, creating a gliding motion similar to skating on ice, which allows for faster speeds and a fluid, rhythmic movement. This technique involves a combination of powerful leg pushes and coordinated arm swings with poles, making it both a full-body workout and an effective way to navigate groomed trails. Skate skiing is popular for its speed and the smooth, enjoyable experience it provides on snowy landscapes.

Skijor

Skijoring is an exhilarating winter sport that combines cross-country skiing with dog-powered harnessing. In skijoring, a skier is pulled along by a dog (or dogs) wearing a specially designed harness, making it a dynamic and enjoyable way to navigate snowy terrain. This sport offers an exciting partnership between skier and dog, requiring teamwork and coordination as the dog helps to tow the skier across various landscapes.

For further ski information visit the Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage (NSAA) website

anchoragenordicski.com



Photo by Peter Metcalfe



Listen to *The Ski History of Kincaid Park* on Alaska Public Media: Outdoor Explorer

HOST: Adam Verrier, GUESTS: Jim Burkholder

BROADCAST: Thursday, February 9th, 2022. 10:00 am – 11:00 a.m. AKT



Downhill Skiing & Snowboarding

Alpine skiers and snowboarders have several choices for alpine skiing all within 45 minutes of Anchorage. Hilltop Ski Area (hilltopskiarea.org) in Anchorage is run by a nonprofit. Learn to ski/snowboard programs, camps and clinics, equipment rental, and a terrain park make Hilltop a winter recreation destination and local hangout.

Alyeska Ski Resort (alyeskaresort.com), in Girdwood, offers 76 trails, 7 lifts, and a vertical rise of 2,500 ft. The resort offers rentals, a spa, and dining options.

Arctic Valley (arcticvalley.org) and the Alpenglow Lodge are run by the non-profit Anchorage Ski Club. Arctic Valley is very affordable, making it realistic to run up the mountain and ski for just a few hours. They offer two chair lifts, a T-bar, and backcountry ski opportunities. Rentals and lessons area also available.

Skeetawk Ski Area (skeetawk.com), in Hatcher Pass offers a chair lift, multiple trails, and easy access into the backcountry.



Ski jump photos courtesy of Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage

Ski Jumping for Beginners and Olympians

Skiing down a 65-meter ramp and launching into the air must be one of the most dramatic sensations in sport. Since 1983, the Karl Eid Ski Jumping Complex at Hilltop Ski Area has been offering versions of flying to kids and adults.

Just getting started? Sign up for classes through the Ski Jumping program at the Nordic Skiing Association (NSAA- anchoragenordicski.com). NSAA offers programs for skiers ages 5 and up to learn the basics of technique, safety and proper gear, such as downhill skis, boots and helmet.

Thanks to hardworking volunteers and team members involved in the program, two new structures and a viewing deck offer athletes,

coaches, families, fans, and volunteers a warm and welcoming community/coaching space with expansive views of the jumps. The program also has more storage space and dedicated changing areas with space for suits, helmets, and boots. The deck connecting buildings provides a sunny, level surface for spectating.

The larger of the new buildings is made of mass timber- sustainably created cross-laminated and glue-laminated panels and beams. This method of construction, originating in Austria but still new to Alaska, is lightweight, strong, and has excellent fire, seismic, and thermal performance - similar to Alaska athletes!

Listen to *Ski Jumping in Anchorage on Alaska Public Media: Outdoor Explorer*

HOST: Adam Verrier, GUESTS: Karen Compton and Zak Hamill
BROADCAST: Thursday, October 22nd, 2020. 2:00 pm - 3:00 p.m. AKT



Winter Walks

Getting out and walking on local trails is a fantastic way to immerse oneself in nature while reaping the health benefits of physical activity. Walking on local trails provides an opportunity to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of daily life and reconnect with your neighborhood and the natural world. It's a great way to destress, clear one's mind, and enjoy the beauty of the outdoors. Get out and about with friends and family, as a simple and accessible way to stay active.



Walk with us! We host group walks throughout the winter. Find the listings on our event calendar. anchorageparkfoundation.org/events



More than a dozen walking route maps are available on the Anchorage Park Foundation website: AnchorageParkFoundation.org



Snowshoe

Snowshoeing is a fun winter activity that allows you to wander and explore areas that are inaccessible in summer. It's a low-impact workout suitable for all ages and fitness levels, making it a great way to enjoy the outdoors with friends and family. With snowshoes strapped to your feet, you can trek through picturesque landscapes and enjoy the tranquility of the snow-covered woods without sinking into deep snow. It's an excellent way to head off-trail and experience the beauty of nature in a whole new way. So, grab a pair of snowshoes and discover the joy of winter exploration!



Get Your Park-of-the-Year Merch
Proceeds go toward park+trail projects



2024 PARK OF THE YEAR
Kincaid Park
featured art by **Ted Kincaid**

2025
Park of the Year
Nominations (Oct)
Voting (Nov/Dec)
Announcement (Jan)
Artwork (Feb)



Walk the Coastal Trail to Find the New Markers

Ułchena Bada Huch'ilyut

"Where we pulled up the Alutiiqs' Umiak (open skin boat)"

The Dena'ina name for Point Campbell, *Ułchena Bada Huch'ilyut*, meaning "where we pulled up the Alutiiqs' *umiak*," commemorates the last battle between the Dena'ina and the Alutiiq of Prince William Sound. The battle likely took place in the mid-18th century, just before the arrival of European explorers.

There was a long history of conflict between the Alutiiq and the Dena'ina. The Alutiiq would raid Dena'ina villages, capturing women, caribou hides, furs, and other wealth. The Dena'ina would retaliate, led by specially trained men, called *edzege'en*, which Dena'ina elder Billy Pete translated as "champion" or "hero." The Dena'ina's best weapon for close combat was the *k'duhet*, a caribou antler club tipped with a stone blade and soaked in oil to add weight. Dena'ina warriors also wore birch rod armor called *ken dghak*.

Dena'ina elders Shem Pete, Mike Alex, and Bailey Theodore have narrated accounts of this last battle. An Alutiiq raiding party crossed *Ułchena Hch'aqedet* ("Where the Alutiiqs came out," present-day Portage Pass) and traveled up *Nuti* (Knik Arm), kidnapping a young man's wife. The Alutiiq tried to hide their escape by disguising their *umiaks* (watercraft) to look like, in Bailey Theodore's phrase, "floating chunks of ground." But the Dena'ina were not deceived. The Alutiiq then camped at *Ułchena Bada Huch'ilyut*. In a surprise attack, the Dena'ina killed all but two of the raiders. These survivors were sent back up *Tutl'uh* ("backwater," present-day Turnagain Arm) to report what had happened.

The Upper Inlet Dena'ina's experience with armed combat proved effective in their successful resistance to Russian invasion into their territory during the 18th and 19th centuries.



The Indigenous Place Names Project installed two new markers in Kincaid Park to share the Dena'ina history of each site.



LOCAL WRITER

Randy's Loop

By Christy Roe

Having grown up on an island in the gulf, there was never enough snow to have learned to ski. A consequence of the Covid pandemic and searching for an energy outlet, I went out and bought a pair of skate skis, boots, and poles. I had no clue what I was doing. I drove to the Service stadium anyways, walked over the potholed, icy parking lot, and slipped my feet into skis. Trying new things is a humbling experience, but one I have learned to enjoy— it is a great reminder that time and effort are prerequisites to mastery. That first day, I hobbled my way around the stadium six or seven times on shaky foal legs. I didn't dare approach the hill that takes one from the stadium and onto the park trails; I felt it was somehow the biggest hill I'd ever seen (but only when there were skis on my feet.)

The second ski went much like the first, and it wasn't until my third ski that I decided it was time to try and be brave. I got down the hill without falling, and looking back, suddenly it seemed smaller. I confidently set out onto Randy's Loop, which I had run before and was marked on the ski maps as a beginners trail. The first flicker of doubt came upon the top of an actually very steep hill, but I was too far in to turn back. I talked, actually speaking out loud, "You can do this", braced myself, and then let gravity take me. The journey down was exhilarating and rationalizes all of the work put into skiing up said hills—I was in heaven. Halfway down, though, I realized I didn't know how to turn as sharply as the hairpin at the bottom and, upon reaching the terminus of the hill, plowed

headlong into the snow bank, laughing. Though I have since learned how to ski without falling and have enjoyed several winters on our beautifully maintained trails, my time skiing Randy's Loop is, to this day, one of my fondest memories in Anchorage parks.

Painting in the Woods

On a sad day in the middle of winter, my withering hope begging for light, I peeled myself out of my day-worn pajamas and decided to go on a run. I drove myself to Smokejumper trailhead for a four mile loop along the main trails. A few inches of snow coated the ground and my pace was slow, but my soul didn't care— nature is nature and it is what my hope needed. Running has had many impacts on my life, the most obvious being to slow myself down and be present. This particular day, I was slowing down enough to really take in the winter, the cold light playing through the trees, the occasional rabbit tracks, and the sparkle of cold in the air. And two miles into my run, I saw it. Hanging on a broken birch tree, frosted with new snow: winter painted onto winter. A small note on the back of the painting said "Take this or leave it, whichever you wish. It has been left to share my enjoyment of this wonderful place". And so I took it. Running two miles back to my car, the dear canvas tucked under my arms, I couldn't stop grinning. That section of woods has always been my favorite part of that trail, and now it hangs on a wall next to my desk, a forever reminder to get out, explore, and savor the offerings of the darker winter months.

Fat Tire Bike

Fat tire biking in winter offers a thrilling way to explore snowy trails while providing several benefits, including enhanced stability and traction on icy or uneven terrain. The wide, oversized tires are designed to distribute weight more evenly, reducing the risk of sinking into the snow and allowing for a smoother ride. However, fat tire biking comes with its own set of challenges, such as maintaining balance in slippery conditions and managing the increased rolling resistance of the wider tires. For those just starting out, it's crucial to choose a bike with a reliable braking system to handle variable winter conditions. When picking out a good fat tire bike, look for features such as a lightweight frame, wide rims, and durable, knobby tires with studs that provide ample grip. Additionally, practice in a controlled environment to get a feel for the bike's handling before tackling more challenging trails.

Anchorage offers several fantastic locations for fat tire biking, each providing unique winter riding experiences:

Kincaid Park: (9401 Raspberry Rd)

The park features a network of trails that are well-suited for fat tire biking, with options ranging from flat, scenic routes to more challenging terrain. Some trails are ski only.

Far North Bicentennial Park: This area provides an easily accessible forested area with multiple access points. The trails are generally flat and well-used, providing a packed surface most of the time. Be cautious of staying off of the dog-mushing-only trails.

Powerline Pass Trail: Accessed from the Glen Alps Parking Lot, this trail is popular for a variety of winter sports, including fat tire biking. The trail offers relatively flat and groomed sections, which are ideal for beginners. Its extensive length also provides plenty of opportunities for longer rides, and the trail's well-maintained surface ensures a smooth biking experience.

Tony Knowles Coastal Trail: Starting downtown and extending to Kincaid Park, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is a favorite for fat tire biking. This 11-mile trail follows the coast and provides stunning views of the inlet and mountain ranges. During the winter, the trail is well-maintained for fat tire bikers, making it a great option for those looking to combine a scenic ride with the excitement of winter biking.



Bike Commuting in Winter

By Brad Coy, P.E., PTOE
Traffic Engineering Director, Municipality of Anchorage

Winter biking in Anchorage might seem daunting, but with the right preparation and mindset, it can be both fun and rewarding. I've managed to bike commute full-time through the last two winters, only missing a few days due to illness or exceptionally heavy snowfall. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- * Give yourself extra time. Winter biking can take twice as long as in summer, so plan accordingly.
- * Invest in quality lights. Bright front lights are crucial for visibility during dark winters.
- * Know your bike and tires. I use studded tires on my regular bike until deep snow requires my fat bike with 4-inch, studded tires.
- * Dress in layers. Like cross-country skiing, I use moisture-wicking base layers and an insulated jacket.
- * Keep extremities warm. Pogies and gloves for my hands, boots and heated socks for my feet, and layered buffs and glasses or goggles for my face keep me comfortable.
- * Be flexible with routes. Conditions vary, so explore alternative routes you can use when your usual path is in poor condition.

Give winter biking a try—you might just love it like I do!



Brad Coy stops by the Anchorage Park Foundation's Winter Bike to Work station



Kicksled

Kicksledding is an exhilarating winter activity that's perfect for those looking for a unique and fun way to enjoy the snowy outdoors. It offers an exciting blend of traveling across snow and/or ice, providing a great workout while gliding over snow-covered paths, roads, or frozen marsh. Kicksledding is easy to learn and suitable for all ages, making it a fantastic activity for families and friends to enjoy together. Kids can either ride in a backpack on the kicker, on the seat, or child-sized kicksleds can tuck into adult-size kicksleds offering flexibility of letting your little one kick by themselves or ride if they get tired. As you coast along the winter wonderland, you'll feel the crisp air against your face and experience the thrill of speeding down the hills. So, grab a kicksled and hit the snowy trails for an unforgettable winter adventure!

Top Spots to Kicksled:

- * Coastal Trail
- * Westchester Lagoon
- * Palmer Hayflats
- * Potter Marsh
- * Eklutna Lake Trail
- * Power Line Pass
- * Far North Bicentennial Park

Try a

Kicksled

kicksledalaska.com/blogs/rentals

Alaska Botanical Garden
4601 Campbell Airstrip Road, Anchorage

Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
43520 Seward Hwy, Girdwood

Dogsled

Riding behind a fast-moving team of powerful dogs trained to pull is exhilarating. Watching experienced mushers compete as part of the Fur Rondy festival or another sled dog race is just as exciting. In the winter, some of the trails in the Far North Bicentennial Park are groomed by the Alaska Sled Dog Racing Association and designated for use by dog mushers only. **All trail users should be aware that sled dog teams are fast and have difficulty stopping for anything in their way.**



Ice Fishing

Ice fishing in Anchorage during the winter is a popular activity, offering a unique way to enjoy Alaska's beautiful outdoors. Before heading out, it's essential to check the weather report to ensure safe conditions and dress appropriately for the cold. Layering is key, as temperatures can drop significantly. If you don't have an ice fishing rod, don't worry—Alaska Fish and Game rents them out, making it easy for beginners to get started. Sand Lake and Jewel Lake are popular spots for ice fishing, with both being well-stocked and easily accessible. Don't forget to purchase a fishing license before you go, as it's required for anyone 18 and over planning to fish in Alaska.

To start ice fishing, you will need:

- * Ice fishing rod and reel or ice fishing pole. *(can rent from Fish and Game for free)*
- * Ice auger for drilling holes in the ice
- * Hooks, sinkers, and bait *(common baits include fake lures or salmon eggs)*
- * Scoop or skimmer for removing ice chips and slush from the holes
- * Warm clothing in layers *(including insulated waterproof boots, gloves, hat, and outerwear)*
- * Portable ice shelter or tent for wind protection *(optional)*
- * Ice fishing sled to transport gear across the ice *(optional)*
- * Fishing license *(required for anyone 18 and over)*
- * Safety picks and rope for self-rescue in case of falling through the ice
- * Thermos with hot drinks and snacks

Remember to always check the ice conditions and weather before heading out for safety.



Watch the Video

Youth anglers from the Anchorage Park Foundation's Let's Go Fishing program.

Read: *Ice Fishing Stocked Lakes in Anchorage and Beyond*

By Ryan Ragan

Published in *Alaska Fish & Wildlife News*, February 2015



Curling

Curling is the ancient team sport, played on ice, where two teams take turns to sliding stones made of granite towards a target. The Anchorage Curling Club, dedicated to promoting the sport and culture of curling, offers Learn to Curl events open to the public with no prior experience needed.



AnchorageCurling.com

Ice Skating

Westchester Lagoon downtown offers the classic city ice skating experience with warming barrels and a maintained skating path. Anchorage Parks & Recreation also monitors ice thickness and maintains skating zones at Cheney Lake, Cuddy Family Midtown Skate Pond, and Goose Lake. Other other Anchorage city ice rinks include

Chanshtnu Muldoon Park, Cuddy Family Midtown Skating Oval, Delaney Park, Tikishla Park, and the Bonnie Cusack rinks. Always use extreme caution on lakes and rivers. Check out winter ice conditions last updated by Anchorage Parks & Recreation. **Check out anchorage skate club.com**



Current Ice Status



Hockey

Hockey is big in Alaska and Anchorage has many indoor rinks with organized recreational play. Outdoor rinks at Mulcahy or Delaney parks are prime for pickup games. Pucks are also dropped on ice at ponds, school rinks, and parks across the city, including Tikishla Park where NHL hero Scott Gomez honed his skills on the outdoor ice.

Speed Skating

Speed skating offers an exciting and dynamic winter sport experience. The Cuddy Family Midtown Park Skating Oval, 201 E 40th Ave, is a popular outdoor spot for speed skaters. The O'Malley Sports Center, 11111 O'Malley Centre Dr, also features an ice rink that supports speed skating activities. **Explore alaskaspeedskating.org**

Wild Ice

Skating on wild ice is a tradition that many Alaskans enjoy. Skating on wild ice requires specific weather conditions that often only present themselves in early winter when temperatures have been cold enough to freeze lakes, but snow has not yet fallen. Potter Marsh and Rabbit Lake make great wild skating destinations when conditions are right. Many skaters opt for Nordic skates on wild ice, which allows for more stability and better handling on rougher ice. Nordic skates have longer blades, a free heel, and attach to Nordic or alpine ski boots.

Wild ice skating undoubtedly makes for an exciting adventure, but it is important to understand that wild ice conditions are not maintained or assessed for safety. As with any other backcountry sport, it is important to know

how to stay safe, which means having a self-rescue kit, knowing your gear, and practicing rescue skills before you go out.

The biggest hazard while wild skating is falling through the ice. For safe skating, ice must be 4 inches thick and can be measured using an ice probe. If you fall through the ice, turn around and use ice picks to crawl out in the same direction that you came from. Your safety kit should include an ice probe, ice picks, ice screws, a throw bag, extra warm clothes, a stove and fuel, a first aid kit, a headlamp, and a skate repair kit. Optional add-ons include a helmet, life vest, and padding. Luc Mehl, an Anchorage local, teaches highly recommended wild ice skating safety courses for those looking to get into the sport. **Visit thingstolucat.com** **Also check out wildicealaska.com**

Winter Play

Explore the 86 playgrounds in Anchorage all year long. Even in winter, playgrounds are a great gathering place for getting fresh air and burning some energy. Find a new play space for your family with a detailed map of all 86 playgrounds in Anchorage! The map highlights playground features, park amenities, driving directions, and location on our trail system.

Indoor Playground

Fairview Recreation Center, 1121 E 10th Ave

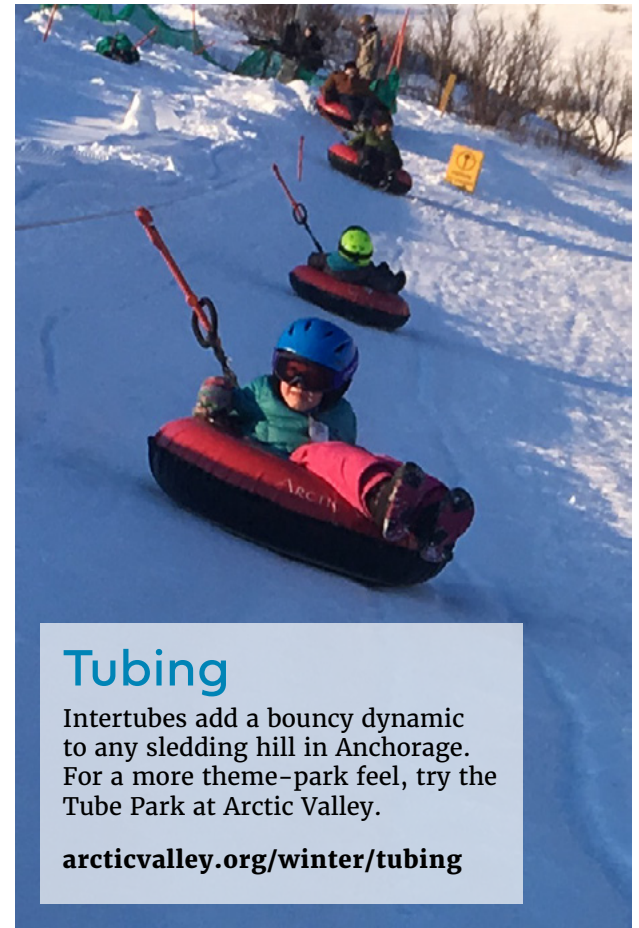
Anchorage offers plenty of outdoor fun, but sometimes rain and snow have folks retreating indoors. Luckily, the Fairview Community Recreation Center has Alaska's first-ever, inclusive, indoor playground for year-round use! Climb, play, romp, and explore while checking out this fantastic playground.



Mann Leiser Memorial Greenhouse

1321 Lidia Selkregg Lane

The Horticulture division of Anchorage Parks and Recreation operate a public tropical greenhouse with fish pond and aviary.



Tubing

Intertubes add a bouncy dynamic to any sledding hill in Anchorage. For a more theme-park feel, try the Tube Park at Arctic Valley.

arcticvalley.org/winter/tubing



Top Sledding Hills

Anchorage is full of sledding hills all across town that are the perfect places to put down a sled and build up some speed. From kid-friendly hills to longer, steeper slopes, local sledding hills come in a variety of shapes, lengths, inclines and altitudes, and there are more than enough runs to keep thrill-seekers busy all winter long. Service High School and Kincaid Park are some of the most popular spots.

Winter Outdoor Festivals+Events



Haunted & Enchanted Trails

October 18-19 at Goose Lake

Trick or treat trails with music on the beach with food truck and warming fire barrels. Shuttle bus transportation available, check website for details.

Holiday Tree Light

November 30 at Town Square Park

As darkness falls, watch the Holiday Tree light up the sky in Town Square Park. Join ADP, Santa, and live reindeer with performances, food, and more!

Zoo Lights

November 29 - December at the Alaska Zoo

The Alaska Zoo's annual festival of lights.



Brighter Winter Lights

November 30 - February 22 at the Alaska Botanical Garden

An exciting winter walk through the glowing garden featuring botanical themed light displays, ice luminaries, cozy firepits, a kicksled trail, and model train!

Winter Solstice Festival

December 21 at Cuddy Family Midtown Park

Celebrate the shortest day of the year. The Winter Solstice Festival offers activities for everyone. Bring your ice skates for skating around the oval to your favorite holiday music. Take a break by a warm fire while sipping hot chocolate and visiting with friends. Ride on a horse-drawn wagon, hop on a dog sled for a ride around the park, or visit Santa's reindeer, and you might see Santa if he's not too busy getting ready for his big day. Food truck goodies are available for purchase. All the activities are free to the public. There is nothing like bringing in the holiday season and enjoying the fresh air on a beautiful night in this lighted park!

WinterFest Outdoor Hockey Tournament

Mid-December

anchoragehockey.sportngin.com

Multiple rinks, multiple days, all hockey, all outside.

Jewel Lake Jamboree

February

A festival of ice fishing with food and fun.

Winter Bike to Work Day

February 14

Get out your studded tires for your bike to work! Treat stations will be located along popular bike commuting routes.

Sweetheart Skate

February 14 at Westchester Lagoon

Spend a lovely evening enjoying warming barrels to cozy up next to, music for skating the night away, and hot chocolate. Bring your skates and headlamp.

Ski 4 Kids

February 15 at Kincaid Park

Almost 500 children participate in the event, with more than half coming from Title 1 schools, providing many students a positive outdoor experience that would otherwise not be available to them.

Fur Rondy

February 20 - March 2

furrondy.net

Since 1935, Fur Rendezvous has proudly earned notoriety as a premier winter festival with 12 days of wacky fun.

Iditarod Ceremonial Start

March 1 in Downtown Anchorage

The dog sled race begins! Cheer for all the athletes as they depart Anchorage.



anchorageparkfoundation.org/events

Sledding Hills



TRY WINTER
Give this winter a chance to be amazing!

ANCHORAGE **PARK FOUNDATION**
anchorageparkfoundation.org

