

# Sledding Near Algonquin Park



Three Ontario Weekend Getaways the Whole Family Will Love

Everyone's so busy these days that most riders don't have enough time to go snowmobiling as often as they'd like. If you do spot a free weekend on your calendar, it's unlikely that you'll have time to do much advance planning. There are many destinations across Canada for great weekend rides and to simplify your life, Snow Goer Canada has selected three in Ontario, each bordering on the world famous Algonquin Park. Best of all, if you want to make a family or couples weekend of it, we're also highlighting snowmobiling-friendly staging hotels that boast all the amenities and are located where there's plenty to keep any non-snowmobilers occupied while you're off sledding!

## Mattawa-North Bay Area

All too often, the only exposure snowmobilers have to the Mattawa-North Bay area is passing through its southern fringe on the north leg of the RAP (Round Algonquin Park) Tour. Others pass through while trailering to points farther north on Highway 11. But if you're looking for a great weekend riding destination, the Mattawa-North Bay area ranks with the best.

Story, Photos | Craig Nicholson,  
The Intrepid Snowmobiler



New snowmobile bridge on TOP A112A.

It's located less than a three-hour trailer drive from both the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and the Ottawa area. It's bookended by the city of North Bay and Lake Nipissing on the west and the town of Mattawa and the Ottawa River to the east. The town of Bonfield is located centrally, while the whole area is tucked into the snowbelt just north of Algonquin Park. The area is also bisected by the east-west positioned Mattawa River system, including Trout, Nosbonsing and Talon Lakes, all of which freeze solid in the winter and are crossed following staked snowmobile trails.

Snowmobilers that visit the area (part of OFSC District 11) for the first



New sign boards make navigation easy.

time quickly discover what a jewel it really is, replete with exciting, varied and scenic riding. The area trails are a good mix of TOP (Trans Ontario Provincial) and club trails, differentiated by trail number, but equal in trail quality. In fact, some of the most interesting exploring can be found on their less travelled club trails.

Many of their snowmobile trails are on old logging roads or utility corri-

dors. Like those of Mattawa's well-maintained Voyageur Multi-Use Trails, these Quebec-style corridors make for easy-going cruising through the forested backcountry of the Laurentian Mountain Range. Must-see sights include Bird's Eye View lookout, the Red-bridge Bluffs, and the Mica Mine site on the Mattawa trails and the ice fishing village on Lake Nipissing off shore from North Bay.

Riding out of North Bay's Clarion Resort Pinewood Park, we found two solid days of riding in the Mattawa-North Bay area, more than enough for a remarkable snowmobiling weekend. All in all, the Mattawa-North Bay area is a worthwhile choice for snowmobilers wanting to take good advantage of their precious time on the snow!

## Fast Facts

**Key Towns:** Bonfield, Mattawa, North Bay

**Distance from GTA:** 300 km (North Bay)

**Trailer Access from GTA:** Highway 11

**Staging Lodging for GTA Riders:** Clarion Resort Pinewood Park, North Bay, 1-800-461-9592 or clarionresortpinewoodpark.com

On-site restaurant & bar, indoor/outdoor pool, hot tub, ample trailer parking, secure sled parking. Located on trail SSR 703.

**Distance from Ottawa:** 270 km (Mattawa)

**Trailer Access from Ottawa:** Highway 17

**Staging Lodging for Ottawa Riders:** Mattawa Golf & Ski Resort, 1-800-762-2339 or www.golfnski.com (on TOP A, east of Mattawa).

Housekeeping chalets, on site restaurant, ample trailer parking.

**Trailside Lodging:** Cedar Gables Lodge, Bonfield, (705) 776-2335 or www.cedargableslodge.com (on BF 201). Newly renovated inn with hearty breakfast provided.

**Other Activities:** Downhill skiing at Mattawa Golf & Ski; ice fishing on Lake Nipissing, shopping and entertainment in North Bay.



**Contacts:** Near North Trails Association - www.nnta.ca, Mattawa Voyageur Country - www.visitmattawa.travel, North Bay Tourism - www.cityofnorthbay.ca/visiting

**Maps Needed:** OFSC District 11

**Recommended Rides:**

**Ride One** (approx. 200 km + distance to staging

lodging): Ride counter clockwise starting near Astorville on TOP D south, then TOP A101D & A east. Turn north on TOP A112A to Mattawa for food & fuel. Continue on A112A to turn south on BF 201 for food (& lodging), then proceed south on TOP A to TOP A102D west at Bonfield to cross Lake Nosbonsing via stake line for fuel & food. Turn north on TOP D back to starting point.

**Ride Two** (approx. 236 km + distance to staging lodging): Ride clockwise starting on TOP D north at SSR 710 turning left on TOP A/D before heading east on TOP A102Q. Turn south on NB 308 and follow it to TOP A112A east to Mattawa for food and fuel (165 km from TOP D with no fuel, so start with full tanks!) Take TOP A west then turn north on BF 203 and north again on TOP A to TOP A1 west following Trout Lake stake line to TOP D and back to starting point.



## Ottawa Valley

Some of Eastern Ontario's most reliable snow can be found southeast of Algonquin Park, in what's generally known as "The Ottawa Valley". Bounded on the east by the Ottawa River, the region includes snowmobile-friendly communities like Barry's Bay, Calabogie, Pembroke, Petawawa, Renfrew – and over 1,700 kilometres of groomed trails.

For our weekend ride, we staged from the Best Western Renfrew. The Town of Renfrew is ideally located for long weekend getaway rides for several reasons. One, riders living anywhere

Riding the rail-trail on TOP B west of Pembroke.

east of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) can trailer there easily after work on Thursday night. Renfrew's also within an hour of Ottawa, just a two-hour drive north of the 401-corridor, and the drive from Toronto proper is about four hours.

A second reason is that Renfrew is located close to where OFSC (Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs) Districts 1 & 6 meet in the Calabogie-Arnprior area, you can ride at least two totally different day loops from

## Fast Facts

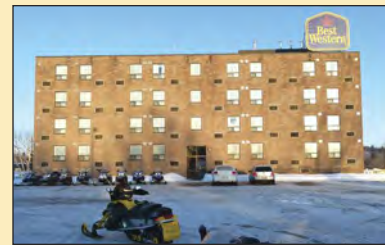
**Key Towns:** Barry's Bay, Pembroke, Petawawa, Renfrew

**Distance from GTA:** 373 km (Renfrew)

Trailer Access from GTA: 401 east to 41 north to 132 east

**Distance from Ottawa:** 84 km (Renfrew)

Trailer Access from Ottawa: Highway 17



**Staging Lodging:** Best Western Renfrew Inn & Conference Centre, [bestwesternontario.com/renfrew-hotels](http://bestwesternontario.com/renfrew-hotels) or 613/432-8109. Located at the Intersection of Highways 17 & 60 and accessible by marked local trail from TOP A, this hotel offers an on-site restaurant, indoor pool, fitness centre, plenty of parking and a secure sled compound. Gas next door at Canadian Tire. Recommended Restaurant: Rocky Mountain House, Renfrew

**Other Activities:** Sightseeing or shopping in Ottawa (less than hour's drive), skiing at Calabogie Peaks (40 min. drive).

**Contacts:** Ottawa Valley Tourism - [www.ottawavalley.travel](http://www.ottawavalley.travel), Snow Country District 6 - [www.snowcountryscsa.ca](http://www.snowcountryscsa.ca), District 1 - [www.district1ofsc.ca](http://www.district1ofsc.ca)

**Maps Needed:** OFSC Districts 1 & 6

### Recommended Rides:

**Ride One** (270 km in District 6): Ride counter clockwise starting on TOP A west to Petawawa (fuel). Take Club Trail 127 west (turn off TOP A at sign for Keetna Club House) to TOP B west. Go south on TOP B102 to Sands on Golden Lake Motel for lunch (fuel). Follow stake line across lake to TOP B101A east through Eganville (fuel) to TOP A east and back to hotel.

**Ride Two** (240 km in Districts 1 & 6): TOP A east through Arnprior (fuel) to Club Trail W12 west and 306 to Clayton (fuel). Follow Club Trails W15, W12 and 3 across staked lake and to TOP E104 A west to Snow Road Club House for lunch. Continue on trail to TOP E north to Calabogie (fuel) and then TOP E105A north back to TOP A and turn right back to hotel.

Renfrew in a huge area without repeating a trail (see suggested rides above). If these aren't reasons enough, there are also many ways to add shorter loops, more distance or



Construction had just finished on this great new snowmobile bridge on TOP A/B.

even another day to your riding by expanding the size of your loops or exploring the area's many club trails. One favourite is exploring the trails in the Cobden-Beachburg-Westmeath area near the Ottawa River.

Ottawa Valley trails are an interesting variety of open fields, utility corridors and woodlands; they are generally well marked, mapped and groomed. Typically, the terrain along the Ottawa River tends to be flatter farm country, while riders travelling west will encounter highlands and forests. Although the region is dotted with lakes and rivers, most area trails are land-based to avoid- ing ice crossings. Visit the Ottawa Valley once and I guarantee you'll want to go back for more!



Back at Pinestone after a long day's ride.

## Haliburton Highlands

As part of Ontario's popular "cottage country", the Haliburton Highlands are located due south of Algonquin Park and sandwiched between Muskoka and the Ottawa Valley at the edge of the Canadian Shield. Centred on the towns of Haliburton and Minden, these forested lake lands make for memorable and sce-



nic riding on some of Ontario's longest established snowmobile trails.

Located on a club trail about halfway between these two towns, Pinestone Resort fits the bill for a reliable snow destination not far from

home that offers a choice of winter fun options to please everyone. This premier establishment is just three hours north of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

From Pinestone, you can access as

Haliburton Highlands offers many trails as smooth as these.

much of the region's 3,200 kilometres of Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' snowmobile trails as you wish, riding short and scenic family-style loops or day trips even longer than we

## Fast Facts

**Key Towns:** Haliburton, Minden

**Distance from GTA:** 182 km (Minden)

Trailer Access from GTA: 401 east to 35 north

**Staging Lodging:** Pinestone Resort, [www.pinestone-resort.com](http://www.pinestone-resort.com) or (705) 457-1800.

Located on Trail 7 at County Road 121, this premier facility offers a choice of motel units of villas, plus on-site restaurant and lounge, indoor pool, ample parking for trucks & trailers and a secure sled compound. Fuel and sled rentals also available on-site.

**Other Activities:** Explore Village of Haliburton, skiing at Sir Sam's (30 min. drive), skating at Pinestone, Winterdance dogsled rides, Haliburton Forest Reserve Wolf Centre.

**Contact Info:** Haliburton Highlands Tourism - [www.haliburtonholidays.ca](http://www.haliburtonholidays.ca), Haliburton County Snowmobile Association - [www.hcsa.on.ca](http://www.hcsa.on.ca), Snow Country District 6 - [www.snowcountryscsa.ca](http://www.snowcountryscsa.ca)

**Maps Needed:** OFSC Districts 2, 6, 7 and Haliburton County Snowmobile Association



### Recommended Rides:

**Ride One** (270 km in Districts 6 & 7): Club trail 7 north from Pinestone to TOP B103 north to TOP B west to Club trail 16 north to Club Trail 64 west to TOP D101B north to Club Trail 77 west to Dwight (lunch & fuel). Then Club Trail 77 west to Club Trail 78 north to TOP D101B south to Club Trail 61 to Raven Lake stake line to Club Trail 64 east

to 16 south to TOP B east (fuel & food) to TOP B103 south to Club Trail 7 south back to Pinestone.

**Ride Two** (333 km in Districts 2 & 6): Club Trail 7 north from Pinestone to TOP B103 north to TOP B east to Whitney (fuel & food). TOP B106E south to TOP E109 south to TOP E south to Harcourt (lunch & fuel). TOP E south to TOP E108 west to TOP B103 north to Club Trail 7 west back to Pinestone.

**Other Shorter Ride Options:** 1. Around Haliburton loop - TOP B103/TOP B112/4/TOP B (77 km).

2. TOP B103 south to Fenelon Falls for lunch and back (132 km).

3. Haliburton Forest & Wildlife Reserve (300 km of private trails).

did. Thanks to lots of trail choices, you can modify your ride on the fly. Trails primarily wind through woodlands, but also include some utility corridors, unopened road allowances and old logging routes. There's a fair amount of roadside running, both on groomed shoulders and ditches, which is no problem in peak season when there's plenty of snow coverage.

The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association's trails connect with those of Muskoka (west and north) and of the Ottawa Valley (east and north). For riders looking to rack up

some serious clicks, this connectivity enables the two long day rides I recommend on the previous page. For those wanting a more leisurely ride, there are also several other good lower distance options using a combination of the TOP and club trails that connect and circle Minden and Haliburton. Whatever your pleasure, the Haliburton Highlands are an outstanding choice for your weekend of snowmobiling!

Special thanks to Ann Lavery, Melissa Marquardt and Jeff McGirr for assistance with these rides. Craig's tours

are made possible by BRP (Ski-Doo), Gateway Powersports, FXR Racing, Triton Trailers and Woody's.

Craig Nicholson is the author of "Canada's Best 5 snowmobiling — Your Ultimate Ride Guide". His snowmobile writing also appears in many newspapers, magazines and websites. He also hosts "The Intrepid Snowmobiler on Radio" and appears on Snowmobile Television. For more info, visit [www.intrepidsnowmobiler.com](http://www.intrepidsnowmobiler.com)



## 2013 Ski-Doo Renegade E-TEC 600 H.O.

Story | Craig Nicholson, *The Intrepid Snowmobiler*

**Some readers** accuse me of always riding Ski-Doo snowmobiles, and they're right. That's my preference because my job isn't to compare sleds, it's to report on great tours you can do riding whatever sled you choose.

I put on upwards of 10,000 kilometres each winter to help you discover new destinations and if there's one thing I've learned, it's that I can't be distracted from getting the story by riding a sled that I'm not familiar and comfortable with. This isn't to say that BRP makes the best snowmobiles for everyone, only that they make the snowmobiles I prefer to ride on tour. Last winter's Renegade X is a good case in point...

In recent years, I've been riding long tracks. Overall, I find their extra length provides me with a better ride loaded with luggage over long distances and through varying trail and snow conditions. Wind protection is very important for those long cold days on the trail, so I wanted to try Ski-Doo's new REV-XS platform, touted to provide excellent deflection and warmth. I'd tried their new rMotion rear suspension on a short track sled, and heard from many of my performance-expert colleagues that it really shines in a long track application in the XS platform. Most of all, having been from a E-TEC 600 to a 4-TEC 1200 to an E-TEC 800 during recent winters, I was ready to go back to the engine that works best for my kind of touring. That E-TEC 600 delivers all the power and snap I need along with the best fuel economy of these three Rotax engines.

When I put these factors into the mix, my only sled choice for last season was a 2013 Ski-Doo Renegade X E-TEC 600 H.O. It came with my must-have electric start and reverse. I added mirrors and the highest possible windshield. And as you can see from the photo, I jazzed it up a bit from basic black to make it pop better in trail photos. So what's my verdict?

The 2013 Renegade X is a remarkable touring sled. With the combination of rMotion, XS and long track, I hardly felt a bump all winter, even fully loaded. Wind-wise, the XS platform delivered as promised. I don't know where those arctic breezes went, but they were never on me. Even in a bigger sled, that E-TEC 600 powered me through the miles just as fast as I ever wanted to go. I never experienced any feeling of hesitation or not having what it takes when I needed to squeeze the throttle a little more.

## Tested on Tour



And as a high miler, I really appreciated how easily that Renegade handled, carving easily through the corners and sailing through fresh fallen snow during one long day of riding after another. I was also pleasantly surprised at the comfort provided by the new REV-XP seat (with new storage trunk). Unlike many "performance" oriented saddles, it was just the right combination of density, length and width to keep my touring butt from going numb, even on the longest rides. For me, a sled as effortless as this is the difference between ending each day feeling fine or feeling totally pooped.

I'm really pleased to see that all the features I liked last winter are back in the 2014 Renegade along with the new ACE 900 with Intelligent Throttle Control (ITC). If ITC works on the snow as well as it does on my Sea-Doo watercraft, this combo could be a game-changer for many touring riders. So with apologies to other brand loyalists, my advice to serious touring riders is to check out the new Ski-Doo Renegade models and accessories.