

The Adirondack Almanack

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St. Regis Mountain: Bring Your Skis And Snowshoes

by Phil Brown

<http://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2014/11/st-regis-mountain-bring-your-skis-and-snowshoes.html>



Last winter, my daughter Becky and her fiancé, Joe, wanted to climb one of the Saranac Lake 6, so we snowshoed up St. Regis Mountain.

Although I like St. Regis – with its marvelous views of ponds and lakes—I am not an enthusiastic snowshoer. I mean, snowshoeing is OK, but I like cross-country skiing a whole lot more.

As we walked through the woods, I kept thinking, “This would be a great ski trail.” The terrain is gentle enough that on our way off the mountain we encountered a guy in MicroSpikes running up the mountain.

Becky and Joe, though, thoroughly liked the snowshoe trip.



“It was a foggy day, but I still enjoyed the view,” Becky emailed me afterward. “I thought the fire tower on top of the mountain was cool, and I liked how the summit was a big open area that provided for panoramic views.”

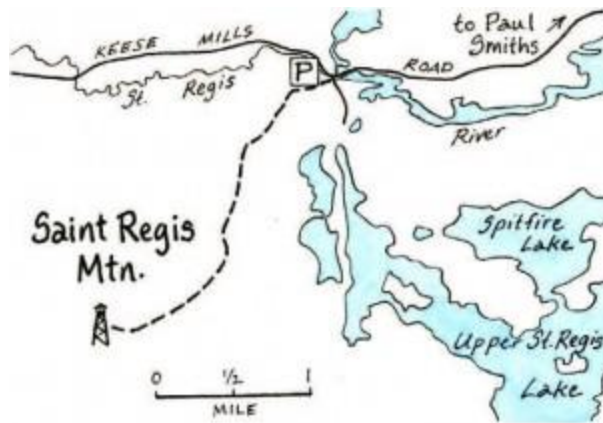
The next week, I returned with my skis. Although the snow was a bit sticky after a recent rain, most of the trail proved to be eminently suitable for intermediate skiers and even novices with some experience and good judgment. My advice is to ski as far as you feel comfortable and switch to snowshoes for the final ascent.

The journey begins at a parking area on Keese Mills Road west of Paul Smiths. Ski down a private road for a tenth of a mile, then turn right onto the trail. In another quarter-mile, just past a kettle pond, the trail bends right and starts the first of several easy climbs.

At 1.3 miles from the parking area, the trail descends briefly and then levels. After another gradual climb, you glide down to a bridge at 2.3 miles.

Beyond the bridge, the climbing becomes harder, so novices may choose to put on their snowshoes here. Experienced skiers, however, can keep their boards on for a while longer.

The trail ascends steadily but not overly steeply for three tenths of a mile, then makes a short dip. You then face a steeper hill. Although skiing down this trail on the return might seem daunting, you don’t have to jettison the skis just yet: the woods are open enough that on the descent you can control your speed by traversing back and forth.



When you reach the top of the hill, assuming you've kept your boards on, you'll have another quarter-mile or so of easy skiing. Thereafter, the trail steepens considerably, and all but ace skiers should switch to snowshoes. But if you've made it this far—roughly three miles—you have less than a half-mile to the summit.

At 2,874 feet, St. Regis is one of the smaller of the Saranac Lake 6 peaks. If you climb all six, the village of Saranac Lake will issue you a commemorative patch. All of the peaks are located a short drive from the village.

The views from St. Regis are superb. You see ponds in the St. Regis Canoe Area, the St. Regis Lakes, and in the distance the High Peaks and other mountains. There is a fire tower, but until it's rehabilitated, it remains closed to the public.

The vista is worth the trip whether you ski, snowshoe, or do some of both. If you like snowshoeing, by all means leave the skis at home.

Photos: A solitary snowshoer reaches the 2,874-foot summit of St. Regis Mountain (Nancie Battaglia); the author poses on the trail with Becky and Joe (Nancie Battaglia); and map by Nancy Bernstein.