

Fernan Lake: A Ski for Beginners & Skate Skiers Alike

The easiest, cheapest, and most readily accessible place, I know to ski in the Coeur d'Alene Area is Fernan Lake. Once it freezes up, it is ideal for beginners, because it is flat. However, the 8.8 kilometers circuit of its shoreline can be a good workout for skate skiers, conditions permitting.

The lake typically freezes over in December. Snow soon follows to cover the ice. The lake is a productive and popular year around fishery that does not slack off with the winter ice up. You can tell if the ice is safe by checking with the ice fisherman, or in the event of their absence, the depth of ice in their abandoned holes. While skiing, it is advisable to stay a little off the shore, because springs entering from the steep shores can weaken the ice next to them. The lake can be accessed from the west at the county boat launch at the end of Theis Street (take a right just to the east of the Ranger Station) and from the east end from the boat ramp at the Lilly Pad Pond.

The nearly two mile long lake allows about any distance ski for the beginner without getting much out of sight of your starting point. Just slide along on your skis and gradually work up to the diagonal rhythm and extension of the traditional Nordic skier. There are typically ample opportunities to talk along the way with ice fisherman. Some of the bays along the south shore have beaver huts breaking the surface, while many fancy human abodes can be found along the Fernan Village Shore. A circuit of the lake's shore, hitting all the bays, is 8.8 kilometers of skiing. A circuit or two is a great workout for the skate skier without a long drive or a fee.

