

Wasatch Backcountry Classics

The Meadow Chutes ■

The “chutes” part of the Meadow Chutes is a joke. The name stuck perhaps as a way of intimidating inexperienced newbies from visiting this ideal skiing terrain or as a misnomer to pump up the experience – like referring to McDonald’s as The Big M Steak House. In any case, there are no real chutes, but plenty of good skiing to be had.



Why they are good:

The Meadow Chutes are easy to find, have a mellow & safe approach, lots of skiing options, are safe in most conditions and deliver a good bang for your backcountry hiking buck. If there is classic Utah powder to be skied, it will be here as much as anywhere else.

Why they can be dangerous:

The steepest section on many of the runs is about 1/3 of the way down the slope, meaning that you can get lulled into a sense of safety at the top, then get into trouble as the hill steepens into the mid 30 degree prime avalanche angle further down lower. The terrain is a series of ridges and gullies with the later being potential terrain traps if you get caught in an avalanche.

Why they are considered “moderate”:

The Meadow Chutes are easy to find and even if you get lost, you are still in classic, moderate terrain. They are popular for couples and you will most likely find an existing skin track with a moderate ascent angle. The approach entails 1,600’ of gain over 2.5 miles with a peak elevation of 9,600’.

Pre & Apre Tour:

Coffee – The 7-11 at the base of Big Cottonwood is your last chance before driving up the canyon. Once at the Solitude parking lot, you can get Joe at the lodge if you are financially secure and desperate.

Beer – Big Cottonwood doesn’t have any BC skier friendly bars. Drive all the way down canyon, then just past the 7-11 there is the Porcupine Bar & Grill, which has pretty good beer and OK food. Or...

Kibble – The Lone Star Taqueria is a bit further (2265 Fort Union Blvd) which has great food, cheap prices, OK beer (bottled) and snowsliders of all sorts. To get there, continue straight past the landmark 7-11 on Fort Union Blvd by 2.0 miles and look on your right. Easy to miss if you are going too fast.

Avalanche Information:

Utah Avalanche Forecast Center recorded daily info @ **1-888-999-4019**

You can get cell phone reception at the base and top of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Listen for warnings on cross loaded, mid elevation, east facing slopes and stay away in “high danger” conditions.

Getting there:

From anywhere in the universe, find your way to the base of Big Cottonwood Canyon outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. If in doubt, follow signs to Solitude/Brighton or look for E. Big Cottonwood Canyon Road on the map. You can usually get to the start of the skinning in a rental car. If in doubt, you can catch a bus at the parking lot at the base of Big Cottonwood Canyon (costs a few bucks and can be taken down as well).

Park at the LOWER entrance to Solitude, as far downhill as possible. From there ski or skin a bit on a road that dips below a high speed quad chairlift and goes into a wooded area with cabins. Stay to the left on the road until it stops at a house. DO NOT DISTURB the hermit who lives here! He is armed, dangerous and has a mean dog. Sometimes this road can be driven, but it is a gamble as there may not be parking to be had.

The skin track starts in an open meadow and follows an old mining road into Silver Fork Canyon. When you start to break out of the trees, the ascent track and skiing terrain will be on your right. This is the lower end of the Meadow Chutes and they continue quite a ways up canyon. Spin powder laps until your head explodes!

