

THE EAST SIDE OF THE GATINEAU

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THE Capital City of Canada, like Mount Zion, is "beautiful for situation." Located as it is at the mouth of the bewitching Vallée de la Gatineau, every time of the year seems the best time of the year to the enthusiastic and rapidly growing army of outdoor lovers in Ottawa.

"When the robins come again, and the birds begin tossing," there is the potent lure of "the Priest's Farm," where the kindly Brothers make merry with their guests and patrons in the maple sugar season of mellifluous memories and sweeter promises! Then comes apace the good old summer time with its wholly delightful canoe trips through the inviting maze of upper Gatineau lakes and streams, and the added delight of swimming in those clean, refreshing waters. Then there is autumn, the mellow romance of the nutting season—dreamy, jocund, brown October—the gladsome hiking time through that gorgeous, ever-changing and charming panorama of green and gold and brown and scarlet!



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After these rich feasts it seems sheer sacrilege to even hint of a season finer still—and yet there is, there actually is—the wholesome, tingling, exhilarating, adventurous life on the ski trails! The Gatineau country in winter with its deep, uniform blanket of snow, its bright, clear, joyous days, its weeks of crisp, even climate, its health-giving ozone airs, its delightful, ever-varying rough rolling country of hill and dale, of forest and clearing, is the cross-country ski-er's fairyland and paradise par excellence. The most charming ski trails, through protecting woods for the most part, lie ready-made, just waiting to be discovered, trimmed-out and connected up. For what could exceed the beauty and fitness of those old, long-abandoned logging trails and tote roads so cunningly located and cut out by the lumbermen of by-gone days, when the whole lower Gatineau was as yet a vast, virgin, white pine forest—"boundless and beautiful."

Down through those beckoning hills that border the east side of the Gatineau, there is a charming ski-run. Not so spectacular or thrilling, it is true, as the sky-line, King's Mountain Ridge path away west of the Gatineau river, where after "running the rapids" on "George's Trail" some live to enjoy the famous "Mica Mine" course back in Ottawa.

But—well, why not enjoy a little hike with us down that east side while you're waiting? The morning train stops at Cascades to disgorge 200 eager ski-ers, and then we're off over the snow clad river and rounding the foot of Sugar-loaf mountain, on our merry way—two savoury lunches in each old kit bag and nothing on our minds but our hair. Soon, it is true, we must meet an arduous climb up the long side valley to "Spring Farm," but, on looking back from the summit, are abundantly repaid by an entrancing view far across the Gatineau Valley to the background of rugged hills round Meach and Mousseau Lakes, their outline softened by the blue distance.

Now turning sharply to the right, we dip through the picturesque Amphitheatre Valley and enter the woods again, but only to emerge in a few minutes to achieve another beautiful glimpse of the river above La Charité. Thus, up and down and on we go to the luncheon rendezvous above Tenaga. And Oh Boy, don't things taste good after our morning in that cold, sparkling air! But first thing you know, it's after 2 p.m., and Dome Chalet, far down "de reever," must be reached ere supper time.

This seven-mile run is simply delightful. First, up over the saddle to Foley's farm and anon we hear the roar of Chelsea Falls, and peering down through the fringing pines and hemlocks, catch fleeting views of the tumultuous "white water" far below. Now comes a thrilling run, rushing down the rapid reaches of an old ski road to the very water's edge below the falls! And then the long swing round behind Wright's bridge, through the sugar bush and a charming high park country of towering pines and open glades, to sweep at last down the long terraces of "Ladylike Hill and re-cross the good old Gatineau.

Once more we foregather with many a jolly, jesting comrade in that spacious hostel of the Ottawa Ski Club which nestles so invitingly under the frowning Dome Hill slopes. Here from every lunch bag come forth the goodies for the final feast. How ruddy and happy the boys all appear. How pretty the girls look with the dancing light from the great fire playing over their lithe, trim figures and rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes!

And as the gloaming falls we reach the city and home sweet home, utterly content and happy with our wholesome, glorious day of matchless winter sport. Nay more, with a tingling vitality in our blood and a sweetness and sanity of mind that makes us able and anxious to serve our fellows in a richer, finer, fuller way through all the coming week. *N'est c'pas vrai?*