

Columbia River Orienteering Club Holds Ski Orienteering Event at Teacup



The Columbia River Orienteering Club (CROC) held its annual ski orienteering event at Teacup on January 27th. Although you may have heard of orienteering, you may not know exactly what it is. If you are an outdoors enthusiast you probably know a bit about maps, hiking and/or trail running. Orienteering is a merging of these, and more. It's different, sort of Euro, maybe a little geeky, and unlike anything you've ever done before. We like to call it "hiking with your brain turned on." You can do it if you're old or young, marathon runner or Sunday stroller. Most people who try it are hooked. Using a highly detailed map, you choose a route between points marked on the map, and return to the finish line. The route between each point is not specified. You complete the course at your own pace, and everyone gets the satisfaction of finding their own unique route. The three most common types of orienteering are foot, ski, and mountain bike.

While ski orienteering has a similar objective to other types of orienteering, there are some differences. Ski orienteering is a winter sport combining navigation and cross-country skiing across terrain using prepared cross-country ski tracks. Because snow may cover identifying

points i.e. boulders, ski orienteering is more about route-finding on a map and choosing the optimal route between points as opposed to the fine navigational detail necessary to find specific objects.

Now that you have an idea about what orienteering is, you may want to learn more about orienteering events or competition. Using a highly detailed map, you choose a route between points marked on the map, and return to the finish line in the shortest amount of time. The route between each point is not specified, and the crafty and quick navigation decisions required are the essence of the sport. More advanced competitors usually run the course solo, while beginners often go out with a group.

Most meets offer at least three courses of varying difficulties. Call them beginner, intermediate and advanced. A beginner course is typically between 1 and 2 kilometers, is mostly flat, and has controls that are at easy to find locations such as trail junctions. As a beginner, you probably won't break much of a sweat, but you will get the general idea of how orienteering works. An advanced course will increase in length with more difficult route choices. The level of competitiveness can range from those out for an interesting hike to high level athletes who may go on to national or international events.

Teacup is a great location for ski orienteering because the area is well groomed and has a variety of terrain. This allows for varying distances and skill levels. The event at Teacup had 5 courses ranging from 3.5KM to 12.1KM and different orienteering skill levels for beginning, intermediate, and advanced competitors. In addition, the comfortable warming hut, access to restrooms, and parking make for a pleasant experience and easy logistics. The Teacup Nordic Club is very welcoming and does an excellent job maintaining the trails. It is a great place to experience the Mt. Hood area in the winter.

The Columbia River Orienteering Club (CROC) ski orienteering event at Teacup event went very well. There were 15 competitors. The groomed trails made for a smooth event and everyone came back with a smile on their face. Many of the CROC ski orienteers are also Teacup members. Teacup is one of the few places in the region where ski orienteering events can be held.



If this article has piqued your interest in orienteering, ski or otherwise, the easiest way is to go to a Columbia River Orienteering Club (CROC) event. They love having new participants. CROC always teaches free beginner clinics at their meets (about 10 minutes) so you can learn everything you need. CROC is now offering training about once a month to members on a wide variety of orienteering skills. You do not have to be a CROC member to participate in a CROC event. If you want to learn a little more before the event, check out the CROC website at: www.croc.org

The Columbia River Orienteering Club (CROC), founded in 1990, is a Portland, Oregon based club dedicated to enjoying and promoting the international sport of orienteering. Both members and nonmembers are welcome at our events, and we almost always have beginner clinics and courses suitable for beginners. Although the club was founded in Portland, CROC has orienteering maps for Katherine Creek in the Gorge, near Bend, Oregon, and a ski orienteering map near Mount Bachelor.