

5th Thursday Tour – 9th February 2012

Rendezvous: Initially, we 13 tourers met at the Canadian Tire in Ste-Agathe-des-Monts with subsequent 6-vehicle convey, led by Gordon, to the remote Chateau Bleu cul-de-sac parking area for trail access. We welcome brave first time Thursday tourers Brian (Webber) and Elise (Rabinowicz)...who turned out to be no stranger to Jarmila, since they have worked and known each other in the CEGEP academic community for many years previously!

This marks our second venture - the first was in 2010 - into this intriguing territory of the Club de Plein Air de Ste-Agathe-des-Monts. Ref. www.clubpleinairsainteagathe.com

Trails sections skied: Catherine, Gillespie, Train du Nord (no, not the P'tit train du Nord!) and the Castor.....with round trip of some 7 km.

Thanks here to Gordon who took the initiative and joined this non-profit citizens club so that we could obtain the latest sacred trail map (not publicly available) and permit us to be his invited “tour guests”! This club was founded some 19 years ago by a group of local residents with the aim of preserving, marking and maintaining a set of ski, snowshoe and hiking trails. There are some 43 km of x-c trails, non-machine grooming being in keeping with the club’s environmental policy. Much like Viking, these trails are all thanks to the:
.....”*grâce à la collaboration des propriétaires terriens*”

However, also like Viking, they are confronted with road and residential development, which seems to always be nibbling away at x-c ski networks!



It seems we have the Chateau Bleu cul-de-sac parking area to ourselves.

Three key trails converge here: Catherine, Gillespie & Castor.



Setting off from the car park on the Catherine trail, designated by elegant swan signage.



The junction of decision!

**To venture up to the summit of Mt. Catherine
for the view of
Ste-Agathe
or not?**

Reflecting that on our previous 2010 venture here,
the return lookout run-downs were pretty fast, so
we give this lookout as miss.....given that trail
conditions were already "firm and fast" !

**And besides, enough roller-coaster rides were in
store for our first time guests Brian and Elise!**

**Not exactly the most
encouraging of signs to
greet you on the trail!!**





The Catherine trail leads us to the intersection with the famously historic Gillespie trail.



We sneak around the steep section of the Gillespie trail on the Catherine trail where, appropriately at lunch time, we arrive at the backwoods sleeper log cabin.

Elevation: 559 m



Vikings make themselves at home for lunch in this odd little Hansel & Gretel cabin. Strangely, this establishment - Refuge de L'Alpage - is not listed in the Michelin Guide!



Following lunch, and pondering over return trail options, we decide to take “the train” back; specifically the Train du Nord trail, and thence finally to the car park via the Castor trail.

**Those with a superstitious nature might justifiably be uncomfortable with our skier number i.e. 13!
And so it was that fate struck Brian when his ski pole snapped in two!**

Fortunately, Gordon 911 Red Duct Tape Inc. was on hand to salvage the situation and managed to fashion a “replacement” serviceable pole out of a sapling...one advantage of skiing through wooded areas!



The return on this roller-coaster Castor trail produced more tumbling “Damns!” than beavers!

**Upon tour conclusion, our first-timers Elise and Brian were reported to have exclaimed:
“Phew! Not quite what we had expected!”**

Returning back into Ste-Agathe, we invaded Sports Swisski where a new pole was purchased, followed by hot refreshments and socializing at a cozy café next door.

