

Persis Peak (5464') – skiing

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Weather – Sun & spring warm, no wind, temps 30's. Clear sun skies change after lunch to clouds.

Celestral - Sunrise 6:09a, sunset 20:01, moonrise 11:56a, moonset 7:32a 2 days from full moon

Short of it

One day weather window and low snow level. Drove FSRD6200 to FSRD6220 and park at c1880'.

Skinned up the west side of Persis. Lunch on top with fantastic views. Warming snow dictated turning back. Skied laps on West Persis (Peak 5017'). And back down west ridge trail.

You know the routine, for details you have to suffer through my rambling...

The plan...

Not much a plan, but a background story. After five days on trips, Tom called about heading into the Enchantments. I was tired and needed a rest day. Bummer since I was already at Eightmile CG. I figured take a day to rest then catch up with them. Looking at the weather forecast I was spooked by the temps with night windchill down to -5F. Ah, Wednesday eve would warmer. Then the forecast changed again, and again. More windchills below 0F. Forecast for the weekend looked promising and a big trip planned. Wednesday forecast changed to the best day of the week with sunshine. Why so much writing on forecasts? Well, the forecasting (avy/weather) play a key roll in trip planning. Okay, back to the story. Carla sent a TM, "...I could be talked into skiing something like Persis on Wed". Well, doesn't take much for me to go skiing, so plan was on. Besides that, how many years have I driven by Index and Persis and wanted to check it out.

Getting going

On the way to work mid February I got a call that training was cancelled due to rain. Was passing through Zeek's Int'l Raceway and made a quick decision to take the old Westie for a cruise to check out the roads to Index and Persis. Turned off in the dark onto FSRD6200 (just past "Split Rock", where the road goes back to one lane). Much wandering around on every road open in the rain and mud. Was more interesting when the cloud fogged out and driving down those roads seeing only 50-100'.

Back to April. Morning sunshine and cold as we turned right onto FSRD6200. 3.5m and past the new cuts. Winding up steeply then left on FSRD6220. We hit snow at c1750 and stopped at c1880' in the shade and about 4" firm snow.

Where's the TH

Leaving the car at 7:40a the road became bare then deeper snow at a right switchback. From here we donned skis having a mellow peaceful skin up the gentle sloping road .6m to a left turn on the next road (c2390). In the shade another .2m and at c2500 the open flat area with logging debris piled both sides. I'd been up here in the dark wet February. A slight down and direct ahead a gulley with the road veering right (.9m, c2500). The map showed the road taking about .8m to go around to the same point the gulley started at. A few inches of snow so we did a creative skinning up the firm snow through tight alder, over water and rocks and a little steep pitch to regain the road. The "shortcut" took less than 25min landing us on the road at c2870 (8:37a).

So the question... Where's the TH? It'd been a while for Carla. Long enough for her to forget the steepness (LOL). To the left (northish and downhill) covered in snow looked like it. Steep up and a tunnel in the short new growth trees.

Duck, grab, twist, kick, repeat

We carried skis up about 50' then donned them again. Crazy... very steep and firm snow. Amazing the skins gripped. And the foot or so of snow allowed for some "creative" ascending. Soon enough the trees opened, or should I say overhead height trees changed to waist high. We could follow the trail, at the buttress (1.3m, c3410, 9:38) we carried the skis up 20' of steep then again skinned up into tall large widely spaced trees. Scratch, duck and twist we were into an open snow covered boulder field at c3980. Sun brightly illuminating great views. Logged nature below and north snow covered peaks –The loop area with Pilchuck Ridge left all the way to Hwy 2 peaks of Baring and Grotto to the far right. And that noise. A ring, whine... must be the logging. It kept repeating...

A deep breath, all easy now

Now wide open skinning, large trees, views, another open area, north ridge of the west summit views and started a traverse under the west peak at c4650 (1.9m, 11:10a). We passed a wide gulley ever so inviting to ski direct from the summit of the west summit (5017'). And hit a point above the saddle between the west and main summit, stopping to take in the stunning views of the north face of Index and Persis. Mellow on the south and breathtaking stunning on the north. A little more large tree action and we crossed the flat of tarns. A gentle up slightly right then left to upper tarns (2.6m, c5215', 12:15p).

Taking it easy, stopping often to take in the views and suffering considerable shutter delay. In the summer it is dodge the trees up. Now the deep snow allowed a wide open gentle pitch to the right or trees on the left. Liking the more adventurous route we wove up amongst the left trees. I couldn't get myself to mar the beauty of the unscathed snow field.

Summit or summits

The gentle pitch flattened to the broad summit with the instant drop on the north (2.8m, 5464', 12:35p). We didn't even get close to the edge. Great enough view looking east to Index. A good lunch spot among the rime covered tree tops slightly east. We ate while the sun baked us. Looking around I could see the attraction to this area. So close to home, short hike up and absolutely stunning scenery. And the views! Can't be expressed. While we ate clouds began building. Feathery changing to puffy and skies all around turning from blue to grays. The warm sun heating the snow. Looking east to Pers-index and the amount of snow, temptation pulled. It'd taken longer than expected to ascend. Compiled with the warming snow and potential avy issues we decided this was as far as we'd go. Hmm, would be a short day. Oh, remember that gulley? We could take laps...

Payoff - Skinless in the sun

Taking our time we peeled skins, last looks around and skied off back the way we came taking turns videoing. The clouds dulled the visibility and at the tarn I found a tall berm at a good clip. LOL... splat. Past both levels of tarns and at the west saddle we skinned 160' up to the summit of Peak 5017' (3.6m, 2:15p) Yeah, more views... peeled skins then the payoff of sweet skiing down a field, through a choke gap in the trees and another field (previous gulley). Veered right and through a thin short tree section to another open field of sweetness. Finally stopping at c4470 all smiles. It was only 2:30, so early and the sun was back. Didn't take more than a look to slap the skins on and B-line to the 5017' summit

again. Amazing the energy when the payoff is so sweet. Again down the fields of spring corn. Dipping into the woods for powder and forgetting to stop higher up landing again at the bottom of the openings (c4500').

Back to the Ridge

The snow was changing from the first run, so we traversed back to the ridge. Too low was a pain across the top of steep avy prone gulleys. We should have taken the effort to ascend 100' or so for an easy traverse. At 4.6m, c4400, 3:41p) we were at the top of the open ridge and skiing diagonaling right, then trees then open again stopping in the trees above the buttress pulling the skis off at c3560', 4:15.

Skis on back we descended, saving postholes for each other. In my mind the whole way was, "we came up this? Are we crazy"? Out the tunnels, down the steep and we were on the road looking down the gully (5.3m, 4:40p, c2990').

Roads and sunshine

The gully was not so inviting with so little snow and it being wet now. We slogged uphill on the road forever, then a slow slog down the soft wet and thick covered road. Not sure if we saved time on the road getting to the bottom of the gully in .7m at 5:05p (6m, c2475). The wet thick snow down low was making the going slow. A little uphill to the log debris clearing and then a gentle glide in the ever thinning snow down road 6220. Some places in the sun now melted bare. Our up tracks straight on both sides. An easy left to not push through the thinning snow and stopping only 20' from the car (6.9m, c1880, 5:25p).

A Fitting ending

A warm and rewarding trip. Views ,skiing and two Hop Czars waiting. An easy drive to the highway compared to my February outing. Now each time I drive by I'll have a picture of what is up behind those dramatic cliffs... amazing beauty

An interesting ski tour, good skiing, perfect weather window, gorgeous scenery and good times in the mountains with a great partner.

Happy Trails!
fwb

Stats:

In: 2.9m, 4h58m, 3570' ascent

Out: 4.0m, 3h57min, 667' ascent

TT: 6.9m, 10h29min, 4237' ascent