

Turn, Again

A Backcountry Ski Guide to Turnagain Pass, Alaska

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1 Home

1.1 Map

1.2 Current Conditions

1.2.1 Avalanche

1.2.2 Weather

2 How to use this guide

3 Current Conditions

Part I

General Information

4 General Information

5 Terrain

6 Weather

7 Snowpack and Avalanches

Turnagain Pass has a maritime snowpack, receiving hundreds of inches of snow (and often, rain) a year.

The local avalanche center is [CNFAIC](#) (Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center).

Part II

Areas

8 Areas Overview

Explore the map above to find an area to study.

9 Eddie's

10 Tincan

Tincan is the most popular area in Turnagain Pass, and one of the most popular areas in all of Alaska.

There is a wide selection of terrain available.

10.1 Parking

There is a pulloff on the East side of the highway, on the outside of a curve. It is one of the better-plowed parking lots in Turnagain pass, usually plowed either during or the day after a storm.

This is a dangerous parking lot. In 2021 (???), a semi truck slid off the road and pancaked three cars that were parked in the lot, as Mark Jonas and Bob Dugan were putting on their skins. I try to not linger in the parking lot for very long after I park, and put on my gear near the guardrail where I am at least marginally protected by the parked cars.

Once you park, it's a chaotic scramble/slide down the embankment and across the meadow. On the far side of a meadow, CNFAIC usually has a beacon checker machine. Slide past it one at a time to verify that your beacon is working.

If you want a break from downhill skiing, on a clear day it is fun to nordic ski North through these meadows. You go gradually uphill until you reach a crest where you are treated to a beautiful view down the length of the whole of Turnagain Pass, all the way down to Turnagain Arm 1000 feet below. You better watch out though, or you might run into a roving band of retired ladies from Girdwood drinking gin and tonics and eating cake for someone's birthday.

Very very rarely is the parking lot so full that there is no room. When this happens, choose a different zone, or continue South up the highway to the Center Ridge parking lot, and you can access the Tincan ridge from the slightly longer and lower quality "Blue Diamond" approach trail.

10.2 Approach

Cross the parking lot meadow and then head basically up the fall line to the ridge, and then continue following that. See the GPS track. You will almost always have some track to follow.

10.3 Deproach

10.4 Tincan Trees

The meadows on the north side of the ridge are known as “Tincan Trees”. The terrain is composed of many small lumps and rollovers, with a mix of open meadows and dense stands of trees, with tight passages connecting the meadows. There are many complex mini drainages and ridges, so if you are adventurous you can often find less-touched snow if you venture out of the obvious runs. The laps are fairly short, maybe 800 vertical feet, but the uptrack is easy so it doesn’t feel totally stupid.

If the weather is stormy, Tincan is one of the better options in Turnagain pass. This area has enough trees to provide visual contrast, where many other areas would be whiteout conditions.

It is fairly easy to stay in low angle terrain, out of avalanche terrain, but if you are careless it also is very possible to ski over a small but steep and abrupt rollover and trigger a slide in high avalanche conditions, eg if you are skiing in the middle of a storm. These would be small, but with terrain traps, or if your partners aren’t watching you, it could be serious. On many storm days I have seen small slides triggered in this zone.

10.5 Tincan Common

10.6 CFR (Cornice F#%\$ing Run)

This goes from the summit of Tincan Common down the NW ridge. You are skiing down the

11 Sunburst

12 Magnum

13 Lipps

14 Pete's North and South