

Winter Getaways...

Lane County & Beyond

by Myrna L. Oakley

Winter in the southern Cascades is sun sparkling on frozen lakes, skiers schussing downhill at breakneck speeds, cross-country buffs gliding noiselessly through snow-laden forests, snowmobilers chugging up old logging roads, youngsters on sleds and inner tubes. What better time to take a break, pack up and head for the mountains for a weekend or mid-week "time-out."

To enjoy winter's mantle of white, there are a number of weekend and mid-week options available at affordable prices. First, some group treks, then some do-it-yourself ideas.

Group Treks

For the hardest of outdoor ski tourers, "Try one of the Hut Ski Tours," says River House outdoor program supervisor Chuck Solin. Ski cross country style about six miles into the Broken Top area of Three Sisters Wilderness—your destination is a wood-heated A-frame hut (yes, hut—not mountain resort).

"For this trek skiers should have prior experience in cross country skiing," advises Solin. Transportation, leadership, and a night in the wilderness hut runs about \$36 per person. There's an evening planning session prior to the trip.

For a more civilized ski weekend, complete with hot tub and sauna, check into the Bend Lodge Trip for cross country and downhill skiers. Two days of powder snow and lodging in a four-bedroom vacation cabin for about \$40 per person.

The Old McKenzie Pass Tour may interest those who want to combine skiing with snow camping. Retracing the ski tracks of pioneer mailman, John Craig, this 3-day and 2-night ski and snow camping tour begins on the east side and traverses back across McKenzie Pass with the snowy Three Sisters at your elbow. "The scenery is spectacular," says Chuck Solin, who usually leads this trip. "Lots of folks bring their cameras and we include instruction in snow camping and route-finding."

Although this trek is fairly non-rigorous, you will carry your own food and backpack—you'll want to be in good shape. There is an evening pre-planning session at River House and transportation is provided.

Two more winter weekend getaways are co-sponsored by Willamalane Park & Recreation and River House (part of Eugene Parks & Recreation). One is the Elk Lake Ski Tour which will take cross country buffs eleven miles into Elk Lake for three days. "Not for a beginning skier," advise Chuck Solin and Colleen Heaton, who is the outdoor recreation coordinator at Willamalane.

Accommodations are in a rustic lodge dorm at Elk Lake. A pre-trip meeting at River House allows the group to work out food distribution and costs, clothing and equipment. "Often the group will decide to have at least one meal at the Elk Lake Lodge restaurant—all home style and fresh baked goodies which is a treat," says Heaton.

For three days of cross country skiing in the Crater Lake area, ask about the Crater Lake Ski Adventure. Spend sunshine days skitouring in sparkling snow around Crater Lake's rim—breathe in the quiet beauty of ancient volcanoes, hear the songs of winter birds, and spy an animal or two.

"On this trek," explain Solin and Heaton, "we'll divide into small touring groups according to

level of interest and difficulty for day outings around the rim. Evenings will be at Union Creek Resort, about 16 miles south of the Lake."

A pre-planning session will give the group (there is room for about 20 adults on this trip) an opportunity to work out food arrangements and meal plans. "Most of our winter weekends are adventures in working and playing together with a small group of adults," explain Heaton and Solin. "It's a great opportunity to meet people who like the out-of-doors and to make new friends."

Several day trips and weekend outings are available to teens, families, and women. Ask about Wilderness Women Gathering, Family Ski Days, Spring Ski Camp, and the Tipi Experience. Generally, the weekend trips described include transportation and leadership and range from \$36 to \$53 per person. For further information, call Chuck Solin at River House, 687-5329, or Colleen Heaton at Willamalane, 746-1669. Ask too about the many ski and winter sport classes, including snow camping, cross country and downhill ski lessons, and weekend trips for senior citizens.

Do-It-Yourself

For those who want to plan their own winter weekend treks, going solo or in couple or family grouping of their own choosing, the following ideas and information may be combined to suit varying schedules and inclinations.

Odell Lake Lodge, lying high on the crest of the southern Cascades, 75 miles east of Eugene on Hwy. 58, sits on the east end of Odell Lake and looks across to snowy Maiden Peak. First opening in 1915 as a summer lodge for fishing enthusiasts, Odell Lake Lodge began remaining open for the winter season in the early 70s.

It was the first Willamette Pass fishing lodge to test the wintry appeal of the snow-ringed mountain lakes, the emerging sport of cross country skiing, and the interest in snowmobiling. Now, its cabins usually are booked a year in advance for winter holiday vacations.

In the central lodge, which has a number of guest rooms, a stone fireplace spreads cheer in the well-used knotty pine common room. A wall full of National Geographic, some dating back to 1930, promises hours of fireside reading. You may be joined by Tigger, resident tiger-stripe cat, or Miko, the friendly resident Alaskan Malamute.

"Midweek is a good time to come up to Odell Lake Lodge," says owner Jim Venner. "It's less crowded on the cross country ski trails and you'll have a better selection of cabins and rooms." All cabins include bedding, towels, kitchens, heat, and firewood for those with Franklin stoves. The lodge restaurant

serves three meals a day. "We have cross country ski equipment for rent and can also provide instruction and ski tours."

For further information and reservations, contact Odell Lake Lodge, P.O. Box 72, Crescent Lake, OR 97425. Telephone (503) 433-2540. Rates are moderate.

Willamette Pass Ski Area, at the summit on Hwy. 58, offers a variety of downhill ski runs ranging in difficulty from easy to expert. Facilities include the new 40,000 square-foot Cascade Summit Lodge with restaurant, lounge, and ski rental. For information on the Learn to Ski Package, available at Willamette Pass through March, contact River House at 687-5329 or Willamalane, 746-1669. In nearby Oakridge, 25 miles west on Hwy. 58, are several motels, RV parks, restaurants and grocery stores.

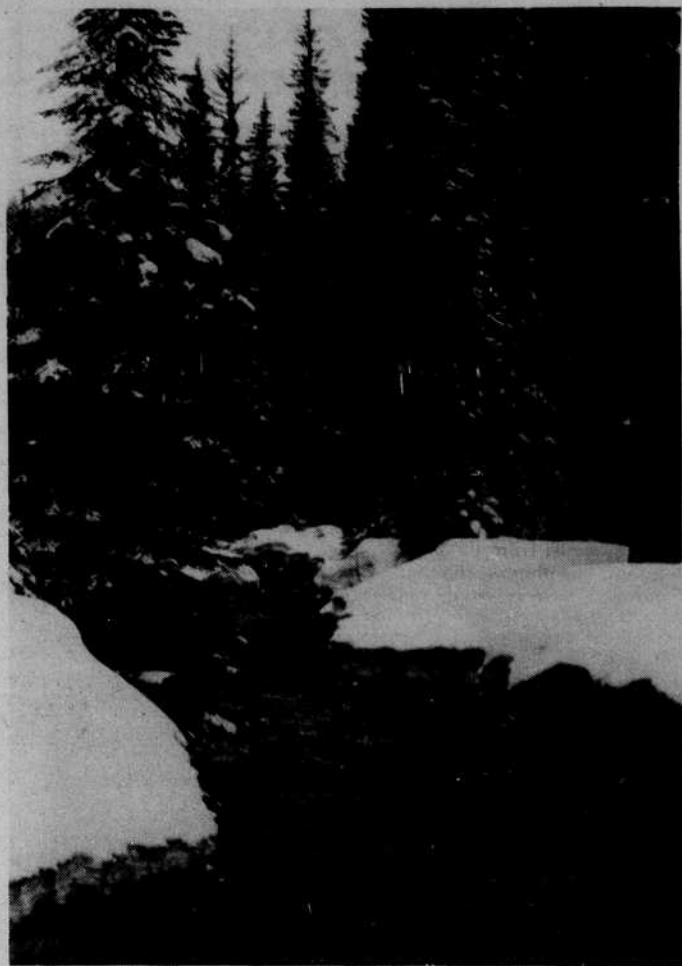
Crescent Lake Lodge, operated by Peter and Coleen Asmuth, is located nine miles east of Willamette Pass Ski Area and two miles from Hwy. 58, near Crescent. The Asmuths maintain comfortable cabins, a ski rental shop, and a small restaurant and fountain in the main lodge. "We offer breakfast and lunch on Saturdays and Sundays," explains Peter Asmuth. "And milkshakes, sundaes, and hot chocolate at the old-fashioned soda fountain."

Most of the cabins have kitchens and fireplaces. Wine, beer, groceries and a roaring fire are provided next to the dining area in the main lodge. For snowmobilers, a network of snowmobile trails is maintained between Crescent Lake and Diamond Lake, 31 miles to the south. The trail to Fawn Lake is reserved for cross country skiers. For information and reservations, contact the Asmuths at Crescent Lake Lodge, Box 73, Crescent Lake, OR 97425. Telephone (503) 433-2505. Note: two night minimum on weekends and 10% off during the week. Rates are moderate.

Maps, Permit Information

To help plan your weekend excursions into the southern Cascades, a stop at the Oakridge Ranger Station on Hwy. 58 near Westfir will provide essential maps and information. Ask about the Willamette Pass Odell Lake Ski Tours map, containing descriptions of 16 cross country trails, trail etiquette, and notes of caution concerning lake ice, storms, avalanches, litter, and essentials of winter outdoor trekking.

Snowmobilers, ask for the Waldo Lake Snowmobile Trail map. Note: Sno-Park permits are not sold at Ranger Stations, but can be purchased at Department of Motor Vehicles offices, area ski shops, Sportsman's Cafe in Oakridge, and Willamette Pass Ski Area. The telephone number for Oakridge Ranger Station is (503) 782-2291. For information about winter activity in the Diamond



Photograph by Myrna Oakley

Peak Wilderness, stop at the Rigdon Ranger Station just east of Oakridge. Telephone (503) 782-2283. For specific information, ask for one of the Recreation Specialists at either of the ranger stations.

At Hoodoo Ski Bowl, on the Santiam Pass east of McKenzie Bridge, a Wednesday Ladies Getaway offers group lessons, lift tickets, transportation, and a buffet lunch featuring soups, salad bar, special entree and complimentary beverage—begins January 9. Call Hoodoo Toll Station No. 1 or No. 2 for reservations.

For a weekend treat, check with Jim Nation at Belknap Springs Lodge for overnight accommodations on the way back from Hoodoo. Jim's 96-degree hot springs swimming pool will ease those muscles tired from a day on the slopes. For information and reservations, call Belknap Springs Lodge, (503) 822-3512. Note: There are no food facilities at the Lodge; restaurants are located west of McKenzie Bridge and at Blue River.

Phone numbers for ski condition reports are 345-SNOW for Willamette Pass and 345-7416 for Hoodoo Ski Bowl.

Finally, for a weekend cross country excursion to the rim of

Crater Lake, combined with plush accommodations at one of southern Oregon's friendly bed & breakfast inns, contact Jim and Nancy Beaver at Chanticleer Bed & Breakfast Inn, 120 Gresham St., Ashland, OR 97520. Telephone (503) 482-1919.

"The cross country trek includes round trip transportation from the inn to Crater Lake, cross country ski equipment, lessons and guided tour," explain the Beavers. "Plus two nights lodging and Nancy's gourmet breakfasts." The price for two is \$146. The Beavers can also arrange for downhill skiing at nearby Mt. Ashland (including night skiing under the stars).

From primitive wilderness hut to rustic mountain lodges and resorts to plush bed & breakfast inn... ski in the tracks of pioneer mountain men, gaze at frozen lakes sparkling in the winter sun... come face to face with snowy peaks, glide through snow-laden Douglas fir forests... the southern Cascades offer winter treks and retreats for those who would venture into the winter wonderland right in our own backyard.

(Myrna Oakley is a Eugene writer and author of Bed & Breakfast Northwest, published by Chronicle Books, released in November.)

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