



View from Mt. Bachelor.

Photograph by David Stein.

# SKIING

## Cross-Country Trails

by Jack Craig

Eugene-Springfield area cross-country skiers have some of the best ski tour areas in the West (or in the USA). All of these areas are pinpointed in two books, *Oregon Ski Tours* and *Cross Country Ski Routes of Oregon's Cascades*.

*Oregon Ski Tours*, a Touchstone Press book published in 1973, is unfortunately no longer in print; it is the best guide to date. It details cross country ski tours for Lane County skiers in three major areas—the Santiam Pass, McKenzie Pass, and Central Oregon, plus some bonus tours as well.

The newer book, *Cross Country Ski Routes of Oregon's Cascades*, published in 1984 by Mountaineers Press of Seattle, is available at Marketplace Books, the Book Mark, and the U of O Bookstore for \$8.95. The author is Klint Vielbig, mountaineer and organizer of Oregon's first Nordic ski school.

Though not well illustrated with maps or photos, this book includes information on the four ski areas around Bend—Emil Norden Shelter Loop, Vista Butte, Todd Lake, and Broken Top Crater; the Mt. Hood area; and the Mt. Bachelor area, which offers over 12.6 miles of groomed trails.

Also included in the Vielbig book is the McKenzie Pass Lava Fields tour. This trail is a 12.4 mile round trip which starts from the old McKenzie Pass (#242) snow gate, which is about 8.4 miles from Sisters. It is about 3.2 miles from the Sisters side snow gate to the Lava beds viewpoint. Further towards Eugene is the John Craig Memorial, a memorial to the veteran pioneer mailman who died near the McKenzie Pass summit in the 1800's.

The out-of-print *Oregon Ski Tours* lists ten cross-country ski tour areas off the Willamette Pass, Hwy. 58. These include Sardine Butte, Huckleberry Mountain, Dead Mountain, Gold Lake, Pengra Pass Loop, Rosary Lake, Fawn Lake, Odell Butte, and Walker Mountain. Most of the Willamette Pass tours are easily reachable from the Willamette Pass Ski Area. The Crescent rail crossing is at the head of the trail to Fawn Lake, one of the most spectacular of the cross-country trails in the Cascade Range. When the snow is powder, you can easily ski several miles downhill with almost no stops. The five percent grade is a dream. Few spots in the Oregon Cascades can provide such cross-country pleasure.



Skiing down Bachelor.

Photograph by David Stein.

Not far from the Crescent rail crossing is the Pengra Pass Loop area. This area includes more than one dozen miles of delightful cross-country ski touring, with a mixture of up and downhill from the Odell Lake cottages and/or the Willamette Pass Ski area. The Crescent Lake shoreline cottages are also not far away, and the general Crescent Lake area provides a spectacular area for cross-country as well as snow shoe trekking.

Just opposite the Pengra Pass area, on the other side of Hwy. 58, is the entrance to the Gold Lake Trail. Ski tourists can take a four-mile round trip from Hwy. 58 to Gold Lake. *Oregon Ski Tours* authors called the Gold Lake Ski Trail one of the best first-time cross country ski routes in the area.

Just below the improved Willamette Pass Ski Area is the entrance to the Rosary Lake Trail. This trail can be approached from the Willamette Pass downhill area on the west side of the highway or from a state highway gravel storage area slightly to the east of Hwy. 58. Another approach is possible from the newly improved Willamette Ski area. The Rosary Lake Trail is about a six-mile round trip. The route is quite good when the snow is powdered, but more difficult when the snow is crusty because of moderate uphill slopes.

Another trail in the same area is the Yoran Lake Trail. It is an eight-mile round trip but de-

scribed by the *Oregon Ski Tours* authors as arduous but worth the effort. It would appear that "good snow" would be a key to using this trail. Forest Service maps show this trail in the Waldo Lake Quadrangle.

Another "thriller" ski tour is easily available on Odell Butte—"thrilling" if the snow is right, that is. The route of the Odell Butte road, from Hwy. 58, is a gradual climb going up but takes good control going down. The butte is over 7,000 feet high, and the forest service road goes, for all practical purposes, to the top.

Bonus tours out of Eugene-Springfield include Mary's Peak off Hwy. 20, west of Corvallis (about a 4-10 mile round trip) and Indian Ridge at the upper end of Cougar Reservoir on the South Fork of the McKenzie in the French Pete Creek area. Tour distance is 7-20 miles. Also in the general area is Quaking Aspen Swamp, located east of the Cougar Reservoir on the South Fork of the McKenzie. The road and trail tour is between two and 18 miles.

As *Oregon Ski Tours* is out of print and not available, I have prepared a summary of *Central Oregon Ski Tours* for relatively easy access out of the Eugene-Springfield area. This summary is available for \$2. Send check or money order to *Central Oregon Ski Tours*, P.O. Box 1211, Eugene, OR 97402.

Jack Craig is an amateur runner and cross country skier, and author of *What's Happening's "Pre's Trail & Beyond."*

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