

Waldo Country

Continued from cover

To prove that his fish stories are true, Sonny Rychard has plastered the wall of his Oakridge sporting goods store with photos of happy and sometimes astonished anglers who hoist strings full of fat pan-sized trout reeled-in from bubbling mountain streams or 20-pound monster Mackinaws taken from the cold depths of Odell Lake.

"Look at this one," he says, tapping a photo of a man struggling to lift a gigantic trout. "That's the world record, 47½ pounds, and he caught that right up the road. We're in the books. This is trophy country."

Most activities seem to revolve around the water. More than a thousand miles of hiking trails skirt hidden water falls and a hundred high mountain lakes including Waldo, the state's second largest natural lake and proven scientifically to be the purest lake on earth. Watersports include sail boating, windsurfing, skiing and scuba at the bigger lakes of Crescent and Odell. Or purists can angle in the fly-fishing-only North Fork, where the riffles and eddies produce limits quickly for a mid-morning fish fry.

CAMPING & PICNICKING

The spirit of conservation fostered by Judge John Breckenridge Waldo has given Lane County residents a recreation paradise at their own back door. Old growth timber remains, forests have been replanted (Oakridge holds an annual Tree Planting Festival each year), and dozens of scenic campgrounds and three wilderness areas here remain quiet, clean and largely undiscovered.

The Oakridge and Rigdon Ranger Districts maintain 27 campgrounds and picnic areas in the Willamette National Forest. Many are isolated and free and have only a handful of spaces, like the three-site Rhododendron Campground on an island in Waldo Lake, or the single-space Opal Lake Campground found at the end of a quarter-mile hike to 5,700 feet. Others, like Shadow Bay, have piped water, barbeque pits, 90 spaces and an overnight fee of \$6.

Dispersed camping throughout the National Forest and Three Sisters, Waldo Lake and Diamond Peak wilderness areas offers about 1.6 million acres of camping opportunity.

HIKING

Hiking trails are a main attraction here, with Waldo Lake a popular centerpiece. The loop trail of 21 miles around the lake is a two-day adventure, while day hikers can take their time and pick huckleberries along the easy one mile Blue Lake Trail into the Diamond Peak Wilderness. About 800 miles of clear trails from easy to hard seem seldom-traveled and rich in wildlife.

HOT SPRINGS

A popular diversion is McCredie Hot Springs, located 10 miles east of Oakridge on Highway 58. Undeveloped, it's up to bathers here to decide what to wear—if anything—and to prepare their own on-site mix of bubbling-hot mineral water and the icy flow of Salt Creek.

SCENIC DRIVES

Some are a mix of gravel and paved road, like the 30 miles of Aufderheide Drive (Highway 19) or the Middle-Fork-Diamond Peak-Hills Creek Drive, while others like the scenic drive on the Hwy. 58-Waldo Lake Road are well-paved and traveled lightly. All offer stunning vistas and roadside attractions, such as the gushing, ice cold Indigo Springs, 286-ft. Salt Creek Falls (Oregon's 2nd highest) and campgrounds.

LODGES

You'll be pampered and well-fed at bargain prices at any of the lodges and resorts at Willamette Pass, Crescent and Odell lakes. Fir-paneled rooms in the main inn or guest cottages are surprisingly inexpensive—from \$30. Evening meals are often barbequed over huge grates, sending the smell of grilled chicken, steaks and corn on the evening breeze. Boat rentals, fuel, outdoor supplies and cold beverages can be found at Odell Lake Lodge (433-2540), Shelter Cove Resort (433-2548) and Crescent Lake Lodge & Resort (433-2505). Open for summer dining is the Summit House Restaurant at the Willamette Pass Ski Area.

PUBLICATIONS

Old hands know that a weekend in Waldo Country begins with a survival kit of publications and maps, the key that will swing the door open to fun and adventure. Here's a basic list that should round-out any map kit or glove box:

Official USFS Willamette Forest Map, \$1.50, Oakridge and Rigdon Ranger Stations. The authoritative guide to all roads, geographical features, waters, landmarks, trails, campgrounds, cities, parks and recreation sites in 3½ square feet of cartographics.

Oakridge Outdoors, free, Ranger Stations. An informative guide to 27 local campsites and picnic areas, popular trails, scenic drives and swimming holes. Forest Service rules and helpful tips are included and useful.

Willamette Pass Fun Guide, 50¢, Avocet Books, Sonny's Sporting Goods. Seven full pages of maps and a compendium of recreation highlights that includes a guide to local trout identification and gold panning.

1987 Oregon Angling Regulations, free, local grocery and sporting goods stores.



Waldo Lake.

PHOTO BY JIM BOURDEIN

Judge Waldo Days Festival

The first week long festival to celebrate the unique beauty of the Waldo Country Wilderness will be held August 8 through 16 amid the beautiful headwaters of the Willamette River Basin, near Oakridge, Oregon.

The Judge Waldo Days Festival will be both a recreational and cultural celebration to introduce Oregonians and visitors to the history and scenic beauty of Waldo Lake and the surrounding Waldo Country.

The Festival is planned to celebrate and appreciate the value of the natural beauty and the human spirit found in and around the Waldo Country. The Waldo Country is one of the wildest remaining forested regions of Oregon. Waldo Lake is known scientifically to be the purest lake on earth. The Waldo Country boasts hundreds of miles of hiking trails; at least 10 peaks greater than 5,000 feet in elevation; more than 60 mountain lakes; and hundreds of miles of rivers and streams, including the North Fork of the Willamette River, famous for its wild trout.

The Waldo Days Festival will kick off with a full day of activities on Saturday, August 8, including: a special trip through the Oakridge Pioneer Museum; an expanded version of last year's very popular trek to the top of Fuji Mountain; and a chicken barbecue dinner with fly-fishing demonstrations and the unveiling of the Judge Waldo fly. On Sunday, August 9, the Circle Bar Golf Course in Oakridge will host a public golf tournament. Tee-off will be at 1 p.m.

Activities for the weekend of August 14-16 include a spicy Bluegrass dance with authentic Cajun band Etouffee; guided day hikes to spectacular vistas; and the revelation of some hidden surprises in the wilds of the Waldo Country by historian Bob Cox of Eugene. These events will be followed by a public dinner on Saturday evening at the Shadow Bay Campground on Waldo Lake. A fee will be charged for the guided hikes, and route maps for the free non-guided hikes will be available. The weekend's activities will culminate on

Sunday with the popular annual "Walk Around Waldo" for which pledges are collected for each mile walked, and a Cajun dinner at Odell Lake Lodge.

The Waldo Days Festival is named for Judge John Waldo (1844-1907), an Oregon pioneer and early Cascades explorer. Judge Waldo might well be called Oregon's John Muir. Waldo was instrumental in the drive to create national forests in Oregon and to secure Crater Lake as a National Park. The Festival will celebrate Judge Waldo as a pioneer, explorer, conservationist, and sportsman.

For more detailed information, call Doug Norlen at 687-8335, or Oakridge Mayor Richard Culbertson at 782-3245. Sponsors of the Festival include the Oakridge Chamber of Commerce, the Oakridge Pioneer Museum, Oregon Trail magazine, the Waldo Wilderness Council, the Oakridge Audubon Society, the Oregon Natural Resources Council, the Oakridge High School.

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