

Escape with local getaways

■ Lane County offers a variety of outdoor opportunities for Memorial Day Weekend

By Aaron K. Breniman
Oregon Daily Emerald

With the extended Memorial Day weekend coming up, and recent record-breaking temperatures and sunny weather expected to stay throughout the next several days, now is the perfect opportunity to head out and enjoy the wilderness.

Whether heading out for an afternoon of swimming and hiking, a night of camping or a more extensive trip to the Oregon coast, Lane County offers a variety of outdoor activities.

Even though most of the Oregon State Parks campground sites are reserved for the Memorial Day weekend, most campsites in national forests are first come, first serve, said Steve Coady with the Lowell Service Center of Middlefork Ranger District.

Located just off Highway 58 in Lowell, about 25 miles east of Eugene, the Lowell Service Center offers information and maps to the attractions and campsites in the Fall Creek area. Coady said campsites in the Fall Creek area range in price from \$8 to \$12.

Fall Creek, which runs from mountain-glacier run-off to the Fall Creek Lake in Lowell, provides an excellent area for hiking, swimming, camping and fishing, Coady said, adding that although water levels are below normal, the creek is still a great place for swimming.

Some of the more popular campgrounds in the Fall Creek area include Dolly Varden, Broken Bowl, Bedrock and Big Pool, he said.

All campsites in the Fall Creek area can be reached from Eugene in less than an hour.

National forests are also a good place for what is called "disperse camping," where people can just park on the side of the road, hike into the woods and camp for free in an area of their choosing, said Marcy Teal with the Oregon State Parks Information Center.

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« **Camping is allowed virtually anywhere in the national forests. You could pick out a tree to camp in if you like.**

Marcy Teal
employee,
Oregon State Parks »

anywhere in the national forests," she said. "You could pick out a tree to camp in if you like."

For those looking to venture a little farther from town, the McKenzie Ranger District is located east of Eugene in the Willamette National Forest. The McKenzie River area is popular for rafting, fishing, hiking and sightseeing, said Michele Hiddleston of the McKenzie Ranger District.

The McKenzie Ranger District office, located just off Highway 126 East about 50 miles east of Eugene, is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily and can provide interested persons with maps of the area and the locations for unique attractions, such as waterfalls.

Hiddleston said the McKenzie River offers catch-and-release fishing, while many of the area lakes are

regularly stocked with fish for the taking.

For those with an itching to visit the Oregon coast, Florence, located just 60 miles west of Eugene, offers a variety of activities and accommodations.

"We have just about something for everyone," Florence Area Chamber of Commerce employee Jeanne Turvey said.

From group dune buggy tours and dune buggy rentals to fishing, sandcastle building to sand-boarding — a relatively new sport where the rider is pulled by a kite while riding a board similar to a surfboard — outdoor activities abound in Florence.

Whether looking for activities for a day or the entire weekend, visitors to the area can obtain information on many different activities and lodging options at the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce, 270 Highway 101. The toll-free phone number for the Chamber of Commerce is 1-800-524-4864.

Turvey said many of the lakes in the area are excellent for swimming, fishing, jet-skiing and water-skiing, and certain campgrounds are somewhat hidden getaways.

"They're kind of like hidden secrets," Turvey said. "People just don't know that they are there."

Oregon law requires anyone fishing over the age of 14 to have a fishing license. Licenses cost \$19.75 and can be purchased at G.I. Joe's, Fred Meyer and BI-mart, as well as at many smaller bait shops throughout Oregon.

The toll-free number for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Information Center is 1-800-551-6949, and it can also be a valuable source of information on many of the state and federal parks and forests throughout Oregon.



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