

10 adventures at expanded Cascade-Siskiyou monument

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STATESMAN JOURNAL

If you live in the Willamette Valley, there's a good chance you've only experienced the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument through news stories.

When President Barack Obama expanded the Southern Oregon monument last Thursday, most of the reporting focused on the pro and con arguments, referencing the landscape only as an abstract land of rich biodiversity where mountain ranges collide.

And while Cascade-Siskiyou is unique — and the only monument in the country established specifically to protect biodiversity — there's plenty to do there as well.

If the news coverage has piqued your interest — or you just happen to be visiting nearby Ashland — here are 10 great adventures in and near the monument. The trips here include landmarks that are part of the original and expanded monument footprint.

Climb Pilot Rock

The sentinel guarding Oregon's border against invaders from the south has long been a landmark to pioneers. Visible for miles from the south and east, it is the second Oregon landmark, after Mount McLoughlin, that people notice as they head up I-5 from California.

The immense volcanic plug offers one of the more thrilling scramble climbs in the state. Ropes aren't required, but are a comfort when pulling yourself up a steep-ish rock gully, to reach a spectacular view that looks all the way to Mount Shasta. An easier hike stops at the rock's base. The trip is 3.6 miles round-trip and of moderate difficulty until you reach the start of the scramble.

Hike Hobart Bluff

A sweet and easy hike through meadows of springtime wildflowers highlights this trek to wide-open Hobart Bluff at 5,502 feet.

The hike follows the Pacific Crest Trail and a well-marked spur to reach its destination on a 2.6-mile round-trip.

Hobart Bluff itself is a large formation of basalt cliffs rising above a small lake of the same name. Contact the Ashland Outdoor Store 541-488-1202 or see their website for more information.

Fish rare trout at Jenny Creek

One of the prettiest little streams you'll ever come across is home to rare redband trout.

"They are very colorful, with splashy red sides, as their name implies, but rarely grow over 16 inches," wrote Mark Freeman, outdoors reporter for the "Medford Mail Tribune." "Those few that stalk redbands usually fish for them with dry flies or nymphs in this strictly flies-and-lures-only creek."



Fabulous views abound across the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument.

BOB WICK / BLM

Even if you never catch a fish, just enjoying the stream's waterfalls and crystal clear swimming holes is enough.

Ski or snowshoe Buck Prairie

The Buck Prairie sno-park sits on the edge of the monument, about 25 miles east of Ashland. It's a jumping-off point for winter sports, accessing 17 miles of ungroomed trail loops.

One of the best routes climbs up to a lookout tower where excellent views of Hyatt Lake and Mount McLoughlin can be had. But good views abound.

Greensprings Inn

This popular hotel and restaurant is surrounded by the monument, and visitors often explore the forest and ridges surrounding it.

"Many road cyclists make their way uphill on weekends to dine at the Inn," said Joseph Vaile, executive director of KS Wild, an environmental group that supported monument expansion.

Horseback riding

The monument offers ideal terrain for horseback riding. In fact, Dave Willis, the biggest supporter of the monument's creation and expansion, travels the terrain exclusively by horseback.

Contact the Friends of the Cascade-

Siskiyou National Monument for information (cascadesiskiyou@gmail.com) or take a tour with Main Street Adventure Tours in Ashland, 541-482-9852.

PCT backpacking

The Pacific Crest Trail winds 19 miles through the national monument, as readers of the best-seller "Wild" know well. The area was a critical juncture in the odyssey of Cheryl Strayed.

Backpack the segment yourself, through fir forests, oak groves and canyons home to assortments of butterflies and the spotted owl.

Hike Grizzly Peak

Grizzly Peak was named in honor of a famous bear named Old Reelfoot, the last known Southern Oregon (or California) grizzly, who roamed the region for 50 years before being shot by a 17-year-old hunter in 1890 — or so the legend goes.

The hike up this scenic mountain isn't a bear, but it's not easy either, on a 5.2 mile lollypop loop with multiple scenic views of nearby Ashland and the Rogue Valley. The trail begins in forest, passes a nondescript summit and then features wonderful views for a mile and a half of Emigrant Lake, Mount Ashland, Mount Shasta and Pilot Rock.

Boccard Point

This easy 2.2-mile trail leads to a spiny outcrop with views of the Soda Mountain Wilderness, Klamath Basin, Cascade Range and the Siskiyou Mountains, said Gabe Howe, executive director of the Siskiyou Mountain Club based in Ashland.

"I've found a number of obsidian arrowheads in this area (and left them)," he said.

To reach it, drive to the terminus of Baldy Creek Road and look for a small path leading southeast.

Scotch Creek

Howe said this tributary of the Klamath River grows some of the most magnificent ponderosa pines he's seen, including some that reach 8 feet in diameter.

"The forest here feels primeval, and it has some relatively untrammelled qualities," he said. "The recesses of this drainage can be accessed on the Lone Pilot Trail."

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