

Outdoors

Facing Mt. Bachelor in summer



Mt. Bachelor's view of Sisters and Broken Top from the Pine Marten chairlift. PHOTOS BY WILLIAM L. SULLIVAN/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Warmer season brings new life to popular wintertime ski resort

William L. Sullivan

Special to Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

In winter you can ride a chairlift almost to the top of Oregon's fifteenth tallest peak, a volcano overlooking the Three Sisters. In summer the view's just as dramatic, and the climb is better exercise.

The well-graded hiking trail up Mt. Bachelor switchbacks more than a hundred times, gaining 2600 feet of elevation.

Puffing up this scenic path, my wife and I were passed by Lycra-clad athletes who do this climb every day, some with a dog, most with ear buds, knocking off the 5-mile round trip in two hours, apparently without breaking a sweat.

If you try to cheat by riding half-way up on the Pine Marten chairlift (open in summer for sightseers and mountain bikers), you'll pass a life-sized statue of Bill Healy, the man whose vision for a ski resort at Bachelor Butte changed Central Oregon forever. His bronze gaze now surveys a terrain park where helmeted mountain bikers zoom over dirt jumps below a steel chairlift.

I sometimes wonder if Healy realized that his vision would bring crowds, traffic jams, and million-dollar houses to the sleepy mill town of Bend. The development boom here has inspired bumper stickers in Washington's North Cascades: "Don't Bend the Methow

Valley."

Although the Mt. Bachelor trail is within sight of chairlifts all the way, it's still remarkably wild, climbing from dense hemlock woods through gnarled timberline krummholz to an aerial view of the spectacular Three Sisters.

And here's a tip: Most of the regular hikers tag the top of the Summit Express ski lift and turn around, missing the mountain's actual summit, a quiet volcanic crag atop a cirque cliff.

When planning your climb of Mt. Bachelor you'll face a decision that's tougher than it first seems. Should you climb all the way up from the trail's base near Sunrise Lodge, or should you take a shortcut by riding up a mile on the Pine Marten Express?

The problem with the shortcut is that the chairlift is expensive and takes you to the wrong side of the mountain. It's certainly fun to ride up from West Village Lodge to Pine Marten Lodge, but to access the summit hiking trail you then have to walk around the mountain counter-clockwise for 0.9 mile, losing 500 feet of elevation that you'll have to regain later.

Still, it's true that the shortcut is slightly shorter. You can argue about which route to take while driving to the mountain.

To find the trailheads, start by driving to Bend. Then follow "Mt.

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Mt. Bachelor's whitebark pines glow in the summer sun.



Some Indian paintbrush flowers bloom near Timberline.

A little instruction can go a long way with fly-fishing



Fishing

Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Should you decide to take up the pastime, the nonprofit Santiam Flycasters provides a wealth of opportunities to develop and improve your talents.

Fly Fishers International-certified casting instructor Dwight Klemin is planning a program for the event, he said. And other experienced club members will be on hand along with loaner equipment for first-timers.

"Bring your fly rod," Karnosh said, adding that, "Dwight will have two or three rods" for instruction and practice. "It's pretty informal. Anybody who's never held a fly rod" is welcome.

A little instruction goes a long way, said Tim Johnson of Salem, the club treasurer and membership chair.

"It seems intimidating at first," he said. "But it can be picked up pretty quickly."

It's sort of like golf, Johnson said. Pretty much anyone can whack and hack at a ball and eventually get it in the hole. But you're a lot more effective with less effort when you've had instruction and practice.

Much like me, Johnson said that he had been fly fishing for decades, and had caught fish.

"But taking lessons from Dwight and other instructors," made it a lot easier

Santiam Flycasters

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and more productive.

Sounds like a winner.

Unlike Johnson, though, my fly fishing skills have been up on blocks for years and the crankcase of knowledge has long since been drained.

Maybe it's time for a tune-up. Hmmmmm.

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