

Outdoors

GOING ROGUE



A view of the Rogue River from the Rogue River Trail.

Rogue River Trail an adventure in rustic splendor

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Editors note: Oregon's outdoors is largely closed to outdoor recreation following COVID-19 restrictions. Until that changes, the Statesman Journal will feature "greatest hits" from outdoors writer Zach Urness each week in a nod to armchair adventure and for future trip planning purposes. • This story was originally published April 12, 2014.

In the depths of the Rogue River canyon, there's a sense of being swallowed by a place altogether separate from the outside world.

The mountains encase the valley in thousand-foot walls, and the river glides deep and green past wildlife, forest and a civilization of rustic lodges built beginning in the 1930s.

The wilderness stretch of the Rogue River is among Oregon's most famous



Flora Dell Falls makes an amazing swimming hole along the Rogue River Trail.
PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

attractions — it's been featured in movies, novels and enough magazine pages to paper mâché half the state — but has always been the dominion of rafting and fishing.

Yet during the past decade, hiking and backpacking have become increasingly popular on a 40-mile trail built more than a century ago for pack mules

supplying gold miners.

Today, the lure of the Rogue River Trail between Grave Creek (near Grants Pass) and Foster Bar (near Gold Beach) is its ability to provide options found few places in North America.

The network of lodges gives weary backpackers the chance to spend nights in rustic splendor — meals, hot showers

and soft beds — while local outfitters offer trips that turn a challenging hike into a luxurious experience of wine and craft beers.

No matter how you experience the Rogue River Trail — typically hiked May, June, September and October — the key is just getting started.

Setting up shuttle and lodge in advance

More than anything, a trip down the Rogue River Trail is an adventure.

Rattlesnakes and black bears, waterfalls and deep canyons, long days on the trail and beachside camping spots create days that never approach dull.

My wife and I lived in Grants Pass for seven years and had plenty of Rogue experience — both paddling and fishing — but until this May had never hiked the entire 40-mile trail.

We decided to change that with a trip of four days and three nights, two spent at campsites and one at a lodge.

We settled the two most important factors ahead of time — finding a shuttle for our car (see below for shuttle details) and reserving a spot at the lodge.

All that remained was to hit the trail.

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Fishing for something to do during isolation



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

A reader asked via email about the feasibility of staging a protest in support of re-opening the Mongold boat ramp at Detroit Lake.

He proposed holding it at a golf course with the rallying theme “let’s close the golf courses for six weeks and open the ramps in Oregon.”

To my mind, added as it is, it’s an apples-and-oranges situation, a privately owned business vs. a government recreation agency.

But I sincerely feel the pain.

While I don’t have a boat, I’ve fished out of Mongold with friends who do.

The hugely popular ramp in the Detroit Lake State Recreation Area, as well as nearby Detroit Lake State Park, are managed by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

Currently, all state park facilities are closed to the public.

Chris Havel, the associate director for the department, said officials don’t have any dates for reopening any state-park facilities, but those will be based on

three priorities: public health, community readiness and parks department staffing and infrastructure to accommodate visitors.

“We know it’s going to be gradual,” he said about re-openings to avoid crowding, especially with the state on the cusp of the summer recreation season.

Another major issue is avoiding the appearance of favoritism that would come with spot openings, especially at the more popular, and congested, sites.

Many other popular areas managed by state parks such as Devils Lake in Lincoln City and Prineville Reservoir in central Oregon also feature amenities such as campgrounds and boat ramps.

“Every park is somebody’s favorite,” Havel said.

The department gets no general funds in the state budget.

And with zero revenue coming in from day-use and campground fees because of the statewide closure as well as declines in Oregon Lottery and recreational vehicle registration fees, the main funding sources, everyone at the department is as anxious as the public to get things back in operation.

“We’re all developing strong patience muscles through all of this,” Havel said. He then reiterated the criteria for a

phased reopening: Public health and social-distancing requirements, and community and state parks preparedness.

“We all want to get out,” Havel said. “We know we’ll get there. We just don’t know when, yet.”

Turkey time

There was a text message from fishing buddy Dick Wasson with a couple of attached photos of a tom turkey in full puffed-up mating strut attempting to woo a nearby hen.

Dick, a former longtime local resident who now lives on the Siletz River at the coast, said he took the photo in south Salem during a visit to town.

According to the time stamp, the text and photos were taken and sent on April 14.

My reply: “That tom obviously is oblivious to the spring turkey (hunting) opener tomorrow.”

Which was a joke, of course.

It’s illegal to shoot inside the city limits.

Fish that keeps on giving

Speaking about Dick, he reminded me that I’m glad I got lucky, past tense,

on our last fishing trip.

There still are a few hunks of halibut in the big freezer in the storage room, vacuum-sealed in heavy plastic bags from Leonard’s Landing Lodge in Yakutat, Alaska.

It sure comes in handy during the extended, self-imposed drought of fishing opportunities.

The fish — the last of a 50-pounder — is a welcome protein source and a nostalgic reminder of adventures past, and the promise of more to come.

And barbecuing lends a sense of normalcy to life.

Although “normal” hardly describes my near-fanatical penchant for all things barbecue. Anybody else you know make garlic mashed potatoes on the Q?

And because the gas grill is under the roof of the carport, there have been assorted cookouts during rain and hail storms and even near-blizzards, albeit with the grill meister clad in a heavy coat with wool stocking cap.

The greatest drawback is getting the food in the house while it’s still hot because it’s hard to sprint while holding a plate of chicken, fish or burgers and

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