

Explore terrain, science with Wallowology

■ Natural history discovery center is open weekly, and Discovery Walks are held Fridays and Saturdays

By Katy Nesbitt
Go! Magazine

JOSEPH — Driving into Joseph, a bright green woolly mammoth invites science lovers to explore the exhibits and expeditions offered by the Wallowology Natural History Discovery Center.

The center is open Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. throughout the summer season. Bre Austin, educational programs coordinator, said the children's area in the loft will remain closed this season due to COVID-19 precautions, but the upstairs library will be open by appointment.

Featured this summer is the animal tracks exhibit on the center's porch, complete with activities and free science to-go kits for kids.

"The grab bags are art and science themed and change every two weeks," Austin said.

Wallowology is the educational branch of the Eastern Oregon Legacy Lands with a mission to develop programming that encourages appreciation for the natural world. Based in science and education, EOLL's natural and cultural history programs include research, conservation planning, and policy development.



Contributed photo/Wallowology

Wallowology offers guided hikes into Wallowa County's wildlands and open spaces.

"While the center has indoor exhibits, they are all about the outdoors," Austin said.

At Wallowology, visitors learn about birds, rocks, ecosystems and biomes, all artfully displayed with beautiful photographs, maps and interpretive descriptions.

"We want to educate people about all the different systems you can see in our county that make

our land worth taking care of," Austin said. "The Center, and our extended walks, are ways to put our words into action."

Now that many of the COVID-19 restrictions are relaxing, Austin said the staff is eager to make the offerings more robust and expand programming geared toward school-aged kids and adults alike including lectures and guided

hikes.

Two-hour discovery walks, roughly three miles in length, are offered twice a week and led by naturalists pointing out the natural world hikers are experiencing firsthand.

Discovery walks are scheduled each Friday and Saturday throughout the summer from 9 to 11 a.m. Austin said the Friday walks start

at different locations, listed at www.wallowology.org, and the Saturday hikes start from the Wallowa Lake Lodge.

Registration is required for Friday walks, with a 10-person maximum group size. To register email info@wallowology.org.

Extended hikes, which will be announced on the website, will be all-day hikes of seven or eight miles.

"Wallowology's outreach programs extend into the outdoors through guided Discovery Walks, river expeditions, visits to farms and ranches, and longer outings into wilderness and backcountry areas," said David Mildrexler, the Center's systems ecologist. "These activities connect people to our region's unique landscapes and rich natural and cultural history."

On the lecture side of the Center's offerings, Austin said an astronomer will host a star gazing event in early July. The date will be posted to the website soon.

"We are collaborating with the Wallowa Lake Lodge for our natural and cultural history-based summer lecture series, held once a month in the lodge's lobby," Austin said.

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