

Road Trips With Lloyd

Everyone enjoys a Sunday drive and one of my favorite local road trips is to Blue Canyon trailhead. Winter snow pack there often exceeds 10 feet and doesn't melt until late June and early July so this trip is only available from early July to November. Take your binoculars.

On the hot dog days of August it can be 10 to 15 degrees cooler than the valley and it's a great place for a picnic, or just high country scenery. It has best view of Mount Pit that can be reached by car, and at this elevation wildflowers are still blooming in July and August. When I was there on July 19th there were many wild flowers. Most conspicuous were the red bells, Indian paintbrush and fireweed.

Butte Falls old timers know what I am talking about, but if you haven't been there, or are new to the area, it's a great drive that won't cost you a fortune in gas. The round trip is about 52 miles. There are several approaches to get there. I will describe one of the simplest.

Starting at the cattle guard on the east edge of town, travel east on the Butte Falls/Fish Lake road about 9.5 miles to Forest Service route 37. At this point reset your odometer and turn left traveling north on Route 37 about 11 miles until you come to the Blue Rock road, route 3770 on the right. Reset your odometer again and turn right on 3770. At .0.9 mile you will come to a heliport on the left, this a good viewpoint to stop at on your way up. Here you can see the crest of the Cascade Range near Sky Lakes and Seven Lakes Basins .

Continue on 3770 until at mile 4.4 you come to a junction with a gravel road veering to the right. At this point you have an outstanding view of the north side of the Mount Pit. You will be looking into what is a classic glacial cirque. During the last ice age some 10,000 years ago a glacier formed on the north slopes of the mountain and carved out the basin you are looking into. Such basins are called cirques by geologist. This is still the most active area on the mountain. You may see evidence of snow and rock slides. On this side of the mountain snow stays on the upper reaches year around.

Continue up 3770 and at mile 5.5 you will see the trailhead on the right. There is a spacious parking area and great spots to spread your blanket in the shade and have a picnic. Enjoy the mountain breeze and the fresh smell of the Shasta red fir and Mountain hemlock forest that dominate this area. There is no water so take your own drinks. And there is no garbage service so please haul yours out with you.

You can continue up road 3770 another mile to the site of the old Blue Rock Lookout and another great view of the mountain and surrounding country, but I don't recommend it for cars with low clearance. The road will be rocky and rough. The last half mile will be at 5 mph, but there is a loop at the end of the road that makes turning around easy. The lookout was built on a 40 foot tower and there was a small storage building on the ground. It was used for spotting fires until the late 1960's. I was fortunate to have spent a few weeks as fire lookout on Blue Rock.

Try this trip and have a great day.

Lloyd Holm

