



A BENT, weathered tree testifies to the harsh living conditions in the alpine terrain.



JEFF POST demonstrates the methods used to build Timberline Lodge.



FOREST SERVICE Interpreter Ron Clarno gathers his group on the steps of the lodge prior to a nature hike.

## Timberline great summer stop

In the amphitheater, a bearded woodsman chops away at an old beam, talking about the methods used to build the lodge.

Up on a trail, a naturalist cups a tiny flower in his hand, telling an enthralled audience how the plant's low profile makes it virtually immune to high winds.

Inside the lodge, camera-sprouting tourists follow in the wake of a guide, snapping pictures and learning about the colorful history of Timberline Lodge.

Timberline Lodge — long famous for fine skiing and winter recreation, but people are finding out you don't necessarily have to strap boards to your feet to have a good time. During the summer months visitors can learn a bit of natural history, hear some climbing lore or go on a "swamp stomp" at Trillium Lake.

"Bring a lunch and go on a hike," invites Ron Clarno, Forest Service interpreter at Timberline. Clarno says there are hikes for just about all interests and ages that run in duration from 30 minutes to two hours.

One of Clarno's specialties is a brief nature hike around the back side of the lodge. He stresses two things about the mountain habitat: the special growing conditions and the geology of the mountain.

On a day when sweaters were needed and a brisk wind blew, Clarno surprised his group by pulling out a thermometer and recording temperature of 88 degrees at ground level. Comparing this to a winter temperature perhaps 100 degrees less it is easy to see why alpine plants must have special adaptations.

Not only do plants have winter snows to contend with, but a very different kind of climate appears during the summer, as evidenced by the somewhat startling ground temperature.

"In fact, block out the mountain and you have a desert," says Clarno, pointing at a

particularly barren stretch of soil. One plant, the lupen, even shares a unique feature with desert flora—the leaves have fine hairs covering them to help conserve moisture.

Farther above the lodge, Clarno leads his group through a hypothetical climb of Mt. Hood, pointing out geologic features one might see on a climb and explaining to non-climbers why such a seemingly solid mass as a mountain could be so hazardous due to rock fall and avalanches.

Unlike volcanoes in Hawaii, notes Clarno, Hood is not composed of solid, dense basalt but rather is made of a mixture of light andesitic rock, ash and volcanic mud.

"It's a lot like a mudpie," he adds. "The only thing holding it together is ice, and when that ice melts..." he trails his explanation off there, leaving his audience with a vivid mental picture of an 11,500 foot mudpie suddenly going "gloop" and burying half the state.

Completing his stint as a mountain guide, Clarno demonstrates the lock, or rest-step, an energy saving technique of walking uphill.

A natural science teacher during the winter months, Clarno combines a deft speaking style with a thorough command of his material and a knack for teaching people how to answer their own questions.

At all times Clarno and the other Timberline naturalists emphasize the fragility of the mountain environment and the need for alpine etiquette, and he points out large barren areas where thoughtless strollers trampled a delicate mountain flower.

Mountain history and alpine ecology is stressed in almost all the lodge hikes, Clarno says. Some of the other strolls available to visitors include:

- Zigzag Hike: A walk to the magnificent Zigzag Canyon through alpine meadows and forests. A naturalist gives backpacking tips along the way.

- Buried Forest Hike: An introduction to

the fiery geologic history of Mt. Hood and a visit to an ancient forest ravaged by a geologic cataclysm.

- Photo Hike: A chance to learn outdoor photography techniques from an experienced naturalist and photographer. For beginners to intermediates.

- Mazama March: A visit to the site of the "Old Hotel at Timberline" and a chance to learn some of the early history of the white men and Mt. Hood.

The Timberline Lodge experience doesn't end with hikes, however. Evenings feature a slide show in the lodge, with topics such as "Alpine Adaptation" and "Moods of the Mountain" are covered nightly.

At Trillium Lake and Green River campgrounds an informal campfire and get-together each evening lets the rangers answer questions and spin yarns.

And of course, tours of the venerable old lodge are an on-going thing and one of the mountain's biggest summertime attractions. From 300 to 400 people a day visit the lodge during peak months.

Nostalgia reigns supreme currently as Forest Service personnel-turned-woodsmen demonstrate the old techniques of building and timber-shaping with adze and broad-axe in the newly refurbished amphitheater.

No shussing skiers are zooming down the slopes but the Magic Mile chairlift is still operating daily, affording visitors an easy trip to the higher elevations for fine views of the southern Cascade Mountains, Eastern Oregon and the Willamette Valley. One-way and round trip tickets are available.

Of course, there's always the mountain. Hood, while not the largest, is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful of the big volcanoes dotting Oregon and Washington. Now, with an unusually fine display of wildflowers and good access to trails, it is an especially good year to visit.



WILDFLOWERS ABOUND on the trails around Timberline Lodge.

story/photos by Douglas Gantenbein

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