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**FAMILY
TRICKS &
TREATS**



YMCA Halloween Family Night
Friday, October 25th
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
FREE & OPEN TO ALL!

Calling all ghosts, goblins and ghouls! Bring the whole family to the Y to explore spooky fun, play scary games, swim in the pool and much, much more! Costumes are welcome and encouraged, but no masks, please.

Thanks to the **Eugene Emeralds & Moderne Studios** for their support of this family fun event!

2055 Patterson Street

www.eugeneymca.org

Winter Getaways CONTINUED



HOT TIMES

**Hot springs in the
dead of winter**

BY EPHRAIM PAYNE

PHOTOS COURTESY BREITENBUSH

Endless overcast days and damp cold just aren't sexy. And we've got how many months of the same to look forward to?

There is, however, something romantic about soaking in a geothermal spring on the edge of a verdant forest while deer browse in a snow-covered field next to a mountain creek in high spate. It's almost cliché. And even better after dark in a rock-lined pool with only your partner for company and a private cabin in the woods close by.

The Cascades are full of hot spring experiences, from the anything goes free-for-all of day trippers at Cougar Hot Springs (aka Terwilliger) to the middle class propriety of Belknap Hot Springs, where bathing suits are required and your arthritic grandmother would feel comfortable taking a soak in the pool and visiting the flower gardens. Breitenbush Hot Springs Retreat and Conference Center holds a comfortably rustic, laid-back middle ground between the extremes and may be best known as a wellness and spiritual retreat. But for my money it's the go-to mid-winter romantic getaway spot within a few hours of Eugene.

While the resort bans alcohol and chemical mood enhancers, in keeping with its holistic approach to relaxation, the almost-hypnotic atmosphere of the place is enough to mellow any tension. The hot spring-fed pools and steam sauna are clothing-optional. Most people soak in the nude while scrupulously observing personal space.

The mood in the pools tends to be low-key and introspective, and there's a "silent pool" for people seeking even more peace. The rest of the common areas, where clothing is mandatory, are more communal. The usual crowd consists of urbanites from Portland and Eugene, regional travelers and European tourists. Don't be surprised if pretty much everyone seems to be smiling and in a wonderful mood. Maybe there's something in the water.

Tucked snugly in a bend of Breitenbush Creek about 27 miles up Breitenbush Road, NF 46, from Hwy. 22 in the Willamette National Forest's Santiam Ranger District, the resort exudes an aura of isolated calm away from the relentless hum of activity and information overload of daily life. Leave your smartphone and tablet at home — there's no connectivity anyway — and bring a good old-fashioned novel, a cozy sweater, a supply of dark chocolate and someone you've been dying for some alone time with. Don't forget a supply of your caffeine of choice, too; the dining hall doesn't serve any.

Accommodations range from private cabins with and without attached bathrooms to bunks in a communal dorm for the non-romantically inclined. Overnight stays range from \$56 to \$121 per person during the winter, including buffet-style organic vegetarian and vegan meals tending toward hearty comfort food.

Breitenbush accommodates day-trippers too, and offers a range of classes and seminars in meditation, yoga and other new-age-inspired practices, as well as massage therapy for singles and couples.

To break up the lulling routine of soaking, steaming, meditation and cabin-based activities, the adventurous should pack snowshoes to tramp the more than 20 miles of hiking trails in the surrounding forest. Dedicated powder hounds can save the steaming and soaking for after dark — Breitenbush's pools and sauna are open to guests at all hours — and hit the slopes of Hoodoo Ski Area an hour away up Hwy. 22.

You'd be well advised to check Breitenbush's online calendar and book a visit well in advance, as choice winter dates can fill up quickly, and the resort hosts over 150 conferences and events throughout the year, some of which are closed to the public. ■

Breitenbush Hot Springs Retreat and Conference Center, 503-854-7174 or 503-854-3321, www.breitenbush.com.