

# New book highlights backcountry skiing in the Oregon Cascades

By MARK MORICAL  
*The Bulletin*

Dexter Burke has a simple answer when asked what draws him to backcountry skiing. “Expensive lift tickets,” he said.

For that reason, and certainly many others, backcountry skiing has become increasingly popular over the last few years in Oregon and throughout the West. Burke, born and raised in Bend and a backcountry skier for more than 20 years, hopes his new book, “Oregon Ski Atlas,” will encourage more skiers and snowboarders to venture out on some of the more remote Cascade peaks in Oregon.

Basically a photographic guide, and marketed as a coffee table paperback book, Burke’s first book includes route names on several prominent peaks and some limited uphill route information.

“This book was never meant to blow up secret stashes or bring more crowds to already crowded places,” Burke said. “With the exception of Broken Top and Mount Hood, all the volcanoes in the book rarely get skied by more than one or two different groups of people at the same time. My hope is that showing these more remote peaks will lessen the crowds at the more popular areas.”

“Oregon Ski Atlas,” from Alpenglow Publishing Studio, is available for \$30 at [oregonskiatlas.com](http://oregonskiatlas.com) and select retailers across the Pacific Northwest, including REI.

The book includes 48 pages with aerial photos of Mount McLoughlin, Mount Thielsen, Diamond Peak, Broken Top, South Sister, Middle Sister, North Sister, Mount Washington, Three Fingered Jack, Mount Jefferson and Mount Hood.



John Sterling, left, and Andrew Orlich, ski along the snow below North Sister during a backcountry ski trip last year.

These major Oregon volcanoes offer an extremely vast amount of terrain for backcountry skiers throughout the year. But Burke said there is little recorded history in first descents and attempts on these rugged slopes compared with areas such as the Tetons in Wyoming, the North Cascades in Washington, the Wasatch in Utah and the Sierra Nevada in California.

“My hope is that this book will draw out some of the old ski pioneers and they will share their stories so we can start to create a better understanding of who were the first brave skiers in the Oregon Cascades,” Burke said.

He added that while the “Oregon Ski Atlas” highlights certain routes on these mountains, the backcountry

skier must still figure out the specifics and the logistics of his or her adventure.

“Part of the fun is exploring, and I feel like this book acts more like a catalyst for what’s possible,” Burke said, “but it’s up to the reader to figure out the details and dangers.”

Snow is already starting to accumulate in the Oregon Cascades and soon backcountry skiers and snowboarders will start planning their trips for this winter and spring. Burke said his favorite season for backcountry skiing is late spring/early summer, when snow still clings to the high Cascades and the weather improves.

He said the most challenging of the peaks in the book depends on the conditions.

“The unpopular truth is

some days you go out, and it’s a sheet of ice,” Burke said. “When that happens, even a 15-degree slope can become pretty challenging.”

Avalanche safety should always be at the forefront of backcountry plans, and Burke cautioned that the “Oregon Ski Atlas” does not offer information on how to ski these peaks safely. Rather, skiers and snowboarders should consult the Central Oregon Avalanche Center, Oregon Ski Guides and Three Sisters Backcountry for more information on avalanche safety.

“Even then, there is always a risk,” Burke said. “The best thing you can do is team up with someone who has been doing it for a while and have them show you the ropes.”



Campers walk through the campground at Cape Lookout State Park on the Oregon Coast.

## State to spend \$50M on new campsites, park improvements

By JAMIE HALE  
*The Oregonian*

New campsites at Silver Falls, riverside cabins at Champoeg and a visitor center at Kam Wah Chung are all on tap, as the Oregon’s state parks are set for a \$50 million upgrade over the next two years.

The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department on Thursday released a list of upcoming projects that are slated to begin in May 2022 and March 2023, utilizing money from a bond that was approved by the state Legislature earlier this year.

The list includes additional camping at some of Oregon’s busiest state parks, as well as new visitor centers, restrooms, parking lots and general maintenance upgrades that have been a long time coming.

The project at Silver Falls State Park is expected to be one of the most expensive, estimated to cost \$8 million to \$10 million. Park officials have proposed a new North Falls Complex on the north side of the park that would include a new campground, visitor center, trailhead and parking lot.

A proposed project at Cape Lookout State Park is the other big-ticket item, also projected to cost \$8 million to \$10 million, which would relocate the A and B camping loops to higher ground, where they would be safe from the eroding coastline. Crews

would also need to build new roads and facilities for the relocated campsites, and remove existing buildings that are currently being lost to erosion.

Additional camping is also being proposed at Champoeg State Heritage Area, which will get a new camping loop and riverside cabins; Milo McIver State park, where a new loop will be added to the campground; and Nehalem Bay State Park, which will see a new cabin loop and additional tent sites.

In addition to Silver Falls, two parks will get new visitor centers, with work slated to begin in 2022: Kam Wah Chung State Heritage Site, home of a historic Chinese medical clinic and community center in Eastern Oregon, and Smith Rock State Park, a popular rock climbing and hiking destination north of Bend.

“The Legislature’s incredibly generous act allows us to make significant and much needed upgrades to facilities and infrastructure, as well as modernize and expand some campgrounds,” Lisa Sumption, director of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, said in a news release. “This support for the park system’s future is especially meaningful as we commemorate our centennial in 2022 and our commitment to provide world-class park experiences.”



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