

'High thrill and low skill': Bogus Basin's new mountain coaster

800-foot drop coaster reaches 25 mph

By CHADD CRIFE
Idaho Statesman

There's a new way to speed down the mountain at Bogus Basin Mountain Recreation Area outside Boise — and you don't need a lesson, gear or athleticism.

The Glade Runner mountain coaster opened last week. Its 4,330-foot track will pull you 800 vertical feet up the mountain from Simplot Lodge toward Pioneer Lodge, then send you on a joyride of twists, turns, dips and 360s on more than a half-mile of track.

The gravity-fed descent, with rider-controlled speed that tops out at 25 mph, might tug on your tummy in the first spiral and it definitely will leave you wanting to ride again.

"It's a thrill ride — high thrill and low skill," said Nate Shake, director of mountain operations. "... It's nice and twisty and exciting along the way."

The custom coaster cost about \$3 million and took more than six months to build. It's the centerpiece of the ski area's quest to become an income-producing summer recreation area to help offset the financial struggles caused by lean snow years.

But a crew will shovel and sweep the coaster tracks all winter, too, so it becomes a two-season attraction. The coaster will be open daily during the holiday school break then Friday-Sunday the rest of the ski season. The hope is that the same guests who come to Bogus Basin for tubing will want to ride the coaster, supplementing the interested skiers and boarders.

"It was real fun," said Scott Probert of Boise, who was able to do some test rides. "It's a nice addition to Bogus Basin. ... I liked the sections where you almost do a full circle."

The coaster was manufactured by Wiegand, the No. 1 producer of mountain coasters worldwide. Coasters are becoming popular at Western ski resorts, and Bogus



The new Glade Runner mountain coaster is finally ready at Bogus Basin. The 4,150-foot long ride takes four to five minutes, depending on the rider's taste for speed. "High thrill," says Nate Shake, director of mountain operations. "But not scary."



The Glade Runner mountain coaster at Bogus Basin has a top speed of 25 mph. It's gravity run, and each sled has brakes operated by the rider.

Basin General Manager Brad Wilson has tried four others. He likes this one best — and not just because he has to.

"It's not the longest of that group but it is by far the most exciting of the group," he said.

"As soon as you get over the top, there's pretty much no let-up. It's pretty full-on fun and turns and twists and spirals. The other ones that I've ridden have more straight area, more coasting."

The coaster begins and ends

at a new building adjacent to Simplot Lodge that features a deck for loading and unloading and a storage room for the carts. Each cart can hold two passengers, with children 15 and younger required to ride with someone who is 16 or older. Both positions have seat belts that lock when you leave the station and unlock when you return. The cart is latched onto the steel rails.

A cable pulls the cart and rider to the top of the track, a relaxing journey that takes about 3 minutes, 15 seconds and includes views of Shafer Butte.

Then the cart is set free for the winding trip to the bottom — and the rider controls the speed. A pair of handles, one on each side of the cart, must be pushed fully forward to go full speed. The rider pulls back to slow down. A governor built into the cart won't let you exceed 25 mph.

"You can push it all the way down and ride it wide open, which is what we recommend," Shake said.

For some, that'll be easy.

For others, sliding down an unfamiliar track at top speed through the trees and sometimes 40 feet off the ground will be unsettling enough to pull those handles at least a bit. That's one feature that will make you want to return. If you slow down the first time, you'll want to go faster the next time.

"The beauty is it is designed to be able to go full throttle 100 percent of the way, but it's common sense to slow down," Wilson said. "You come into a turn that's more than 360 degrees at 25 miles an hour, your brain is telling you to slow down."

The descent includes more than 10 sizable turns, several left-right-left jogs and two giant circular turns — one about 450 degrees, the other about 340. You'll dip through the trees and have a particularly nice view of Deer Point and perhaps the city in the distance right before that first spiral turn. Of course, you'll only know that if you're recording a video to watch later. Your eyes will be squarely on that gnarly turn in front of you.

"The top 360 is really exciting," said Shake, who joked that the staff had the difficult job of testing all the carts. "... It was thrilling. A little nervous at first. The anticipation builds as you ride up."

My ride took just less than 5 minutes total. The descent, from the crest just short of the upper station, to the slow sign at the bottom took 1 minute, 40 seconds (with some braking).

It's recommended that you wear similar clothes to skiing, depending on the conditions. On a 30-degree, dry day, you can probably get by with a coat, stocking cap and sunglasses. On a cold day — or one with snow falling — goggles and snow pants would be good choices.

Young kids should enjoy it, although they might not want to go full speed.

"It's definitely not a scary ride," Shake said.

Chadd Crife: 208-377-6398, @chaddcrife



A dog in the Eagle Cap Extreme dog sled race is hyped up before the start of the 2017 event in Wallowa County.

Locals to compete in Eagle Cap Extreme dog sled race

By KATHLEEN ELLYN
EO Media Group

Last year's Eagle Cap Extreme dog sled race through rural Wallowa County included high winds that gusted up to 80 mph, which sent drifts across the ice and dog sleds off cliffs.

But the challenges and dangers of Eastern Oregon's largest and longest sled dog race isn't scaring any one away.

As of Dec. 29, the early registration deadline, 18 racers had confirmed their entry. Last year the race had 24 mushers and race officials expect more to register before the final deadline.

Jereld Rice, a doctor at the Enterprise Veterinary Hospital, is confirmed

among the new shooters for the 200-mile journey in his first ever outing as a musher.

"I was keeping quiet about it until I was confident," he said.

He'll get by with a little help from his friends, as Josi Thyr of Cataldo, Idaho, is lending him the extra dogs needed for the attempt.

Another big move is being made by youth musher and Iditarod dreamer Christina Gibson, 16, of White Out Racing Kennel in Riverside, Wash. Gibson is returning for the second time and upping the ante, graduating from 20-mile junior race to running the 100-mile journey. She's warming up for her bid in this year's junior Iditarod, held in Wasilla, Alaska,

from Feb. 24-25.

Returning mushers include 18-year-old Morgan Anderson of Enterprise, who will again compete in the two-day pot race. Morgan won that event last year.

Also returning are Bino Fowler of Bend for the 100-mile race; last year's 100-mile winner Clayton Perry of Power, Mont., who will attempt the 200-mile race this year; and multiple 200-mile winner and last year's second-place finisher in that race, Brett Bruggeman of Great Falls, Mont.

Defending champion Bryce Mumford of Preston, Idaho, has not yet confirmed. Yet a new shooter, 2016 Iditarod veteran Mirian Osredkar, will take part.

Vehicles collide with elk herd; at least 12 killed

HILLSBORO (AP) — A pickup collided with a herd of elk in western Oregon, killing 12 animals.

Deputy Shannon Wilde of the Washington County Sheriff's Office says the crash happened Thursday at 4:25 a.m. near North Plains — about 20 miles west of Portland.

According to Wilde, a 2004 Chevrolet Avalanche was heading east as the herd tried to cross the Sunset Highway. Some elk died before authorities arrived and others were euthanized.

The 36-year-old driver was not hurt.

Troopers from the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division responded to assess whether any of the elk meat was salvageable for donation.

Missing kayaker found dead in Seaside

SEASIDE (AP) — Authorities say they have found the body of a kayaker who went missing while crabbing in the Seaside Estuary.

The Seaside Police Department says Wednesday that 42-year-old Matthew Manley's body was spotted at the waterline of the Pacific Ocean west of the Seaside Turnaround.

Manley had been missing since New Year's Day when he was last seen on his kayak near the mouth of the Necanicum River.

Authorities are still looking for the Tualatin man's kayak.

They say it may have been taken from the shoreline sometime Tuesday and they are asking anyone with information to call the Seaside police.

Man swept out to sea along Oregon coast

BROOKINGS (AP) — Oregon State Police say a

BRIEFLY



At least 13 elk were hit by at least one, possibly more, vehicles Thursday morning on busy Highway 26 in Washington County.

21-year-old man is missing after being swept out to sea by a wave.

Sgt. Jeff Proulx says Christopher Kareck of Sparks, Nevada, was standing on some rocks Wednesday morning when the wave carried him into the Pacific Ocean near Brookings.

Searchers spent the

afternoon searching for Kareck without success.

Large, unpredictable "sneaker" waves have killed about two dozen people along the Oregon coast since 1990.

The incidents generally occur during late fall and winter.

Warning signs are posted at Oregon beaches.

SKI REPORT

Mt. Hood Meadows Government Camp, Ore.
New snow: None
Base depth: 34"
Conditions: Groom is hard pack with icy spots. Off piste is hardpack and granular, softer later. Early season conditions exist.

Ski Bluewood Dayton, Wash.
New snow: None
Base depth: 25"
Conditions: Hardpack snow on and off groom.

Anthony Lakes North Powder, Ore.
New snow: none
Base depth: 20"
Conditions: Light winds, low-snow conditions. Extreme caution.

Ski Fergi Joseph, Ore.
CLOSED UNTIL CONDITIONS IMPROVE

Spout Springs Tollgate, Ore.
CLOSED FOR SEASON