

**SNOWMOBILING IN CENTRAL OREGON**

# 'Go places that you wouldn't go in your lifetime'

BY BRIAN RATHBONE  
The Bulletin

For a quarter of a century Jim Valentine, the president of Ochoco Snow Sports, a Prineville snowmobile club, has been enjoying snowmobiling trails all around Oregon.

North, south, east and west of Bend there are areas to rev up the engines of snowmobiles and cruise through the snowy forests.

"The thing about Central Oregon is there are a lot of good riding areas between Mount Bachelor, Paulina Lake, Sisters, out in Prineville," Valentine said. "You have a large area to choose from out of Central Oregon."

Part of the duties of Ochoco Snow Sports is to groom the 79 miles of snowmobile trails in the Ochoco National Forest. Moon Country Snowbusters is a similar club responsible for grooming the trails of the Deschutes National Forest.

Valentine encourages each owner of a snowmobile to become a member of the Oregon State Snowmobile Association, which helps support the grooming programs that allow snowmobiling trails to be a prominent winter activity in the area.

In the Deschutes National Forest, there are 10 different sno-parks and two in Ochoco National Forest. Snow passes are required.

There are four sno-parks in the Bend/Sunriver/La Pine area of the Deschutes National Forest: Dutchman, Edison Butte, Wanoga and Kapka. Crescent Lake and Junction sno-parks are in the Crescent area. Lower Tree and Upper

Tree Creek are in the Sisters-Metolius area. The Newberry National Volcanic Monument has 10 Mile and 6 Mile sno-parks.

There are two sno-parks in the Ochoco National Forest, Ochoco Divide Sno-park and Walton Lake Sno-Park.

At Walton Lake Sno-park, located off Forest Road 22 east of Prineville, the 10 different trails make it the greatest concentration of snowmobile trails in the Ochoco National Forest, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

The two snowmobile trails link up together, which can be beneficial because getting to Walton Lake can be a difficult feat in wintry conditions.

"It can be a little challenge at times to access because of its location off the main highway," Valentine said. "Sometimes the conditions are a little harder to get to. People should be prepared with tire chains just in case they have to use them. It is not like driving to Mount Bachelor."

There are several local businesses such as Central Oregon Rentals that rent snowmobiles, and there are places such as Central Oregon Adventures that offer two-hour tours starting at Wanoga Sno-park. Wherever the destination, snowmobiling is a fun yet challenging way to explore the area during the winter.

"The fun part is the scenery and experiencing the outdoors, and you get to challenge yourself and go places that you wouldn't go in your lifetime," Valentine said. "You access places that you would never see."

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TRAILS



A snowmobiler rides around a clearing at Wanoga Sno-park on Saturday.

Ryan Brennecke/  
The Bulletin



## Buttes

Continued from B1

The trail transitioned downhill as I headed to the west side of the buttes, where a cluster of enormous homes have been constructed on the hillside to provide a staggering view of snow-covered mountain peaks.

Much of the Cascade Range of Oregon was visible on the clear day with minimal clouds, all the way from Mount Hood to the Three Sisters.

The singletrack on the west side of Cline Buttes is special, not only because of the view of the Cascades towering over an endless expanse of juniper trees, but also because of the rolling, side-hill character of the trail.

The trail continued around and eventually connected to a gravel road that leads to the summit. I pedaled hard up the steep road, determined to reach the top.

Surrounding the summit of the butte, at 4,067 feet, is a barbed-wire fence that protects a radio facility, and three extremely technical downhill trails can be found after riding for a bit to the right of the fence.

The downhill trails are for advanced riders only, and riding the original singletrack as an out-and-back route is an option for those who want to avoid the challenging downhill.

I headed back down the



Mark Morical/Bulletin file photo

A mountain biker rides along singletrack on Cline Buttes.

way I had come along the gravel road and then onto the pristine singletrack.

The ride back was fast and tricky, as I had to negotiate the narrow singletrack and the steep drop-off to my left. I made it back to my car about two hours and 11 miles after starting, fairly tired but wanting to add more miles. So I crossed the highway and headed to the Maston area — a mostly flat network of singletrack — for another three miles of riding to make for a 14-mile outing.

All in all, the ride required 2 hours, 15 minutes and included nearly 1,500 feet of elevation gain — and some of the most dramatic views and dynamic terrain on the High Desert of Central Oregon.

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### Cline Buttes trails

**Directions:** From Tumalo, drive north on Cline Falls Highway. The trailhead is located on the left about 2 miles after the Maston Trailhead sign (about 30 minutes from Bend). The trailhead includes a small parking area and a green gate, as well as a Cline Buttes Recreation Area sign.

**Distance:** 8-mile loop, or 10-mile out-and-back

**Features:** Rolling, narrow singletrack around the buttes and a challenging road climb to the top of the highest butte; three downhill trails that are steep and technical, for advanced riders only; loop includes 1,250 feet of climbing and the same amount of descent.

**Rating:** Aerobically intermediate to advanced; technically advanced.

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*Michael Pritchard*

**THANK YOU!**

