

TOP PICKS: WHERE TO EXPLORE



A light snow begins to fall as a group of sledders make their way up the hill at Wanoga Sno-park.

Ryan Brennecke/Bulletin file photo

Tumalo Mountain — The summer hike favorite is also open to snowshoeing and backcountry skiing come the winter. The trail may be hard to find given the snow, so have the route downloaded to your smartphone before you set out. Recent reports on Alltrails.com give a good powder report for adventurers taking the 3.8 mile trail to one of the best views in Central Oregon.

Wanoga Sno-park — Consisting of both a snow play area for sledding and traditional sno-park for cross-country skiing, fat-biking and snowmobiling. The snow has been piling up and the sledding hill isn't as icy as it had been earlier in the season, but make sure you pack out any broken sleds when you head home. The sledding area is unmonitored, so tubing is at the user's own risk. Currently, the shelter is closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Willamette Pass Ski Area — The ski area 70 miles south of Bend along State Highway 58 has one of the steepest skiing slopes in the world, RTS which measures in at up to 52% pitch. It may have less snow than it's northern ski area siblings, but that also makes it less busy and with 555 acres of skiable area (225 groomed acres) there is plenty of powder to call your own. All tickets and rentals must be purchased online prior to arrival at the ski area.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

A few trails are shared with motorized vehicles at Edison Butte Sno-park, although most trails are not.

Edison Butte

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 "If you live in Bend, you know that there is (no snow) there," Morris said, following an early afternoon 4-mile snowshoeing trek. "I came here with my wife and daughter on Saturday, and we might come up Thursday. We go a couple of times per week."

Beneath several feet of snow, the lava beds in the Deschutes National Forest are prominent throughout the trails. For those who have only experienced Edison Butte in the winter, it creates curiosity about what lies beneath the blanket of the snow.

"It was really nice to hike this trail in the summer or spring when there is no snow so that we could see the type of terrain that we are moving over," Rutherford said.

Another perk of the park is that pets do not have to be

Edison Butte Sno-park

From Bend: Travel west on Cascade Lakes Highway for 19 miles, past Wanoga Sno-park, then drive 4 miles south on Forest Road 45.

tethered to a leash: They are free to run around and enjoy the snow as well. That is not the case at all sno-parks in the Deschutes National Forest.

"This is my favorite park because you can take your dog, there are shelters everywhere so you can have a fire, hang out — sometimes I'll pack a lunch and drinks and hang out," said Liz Bluhm, an avid cross-country skier from Bend. "But my favorite part is being able to bring my dog, and she can run around off-leash."

For first-time cross-country skiers, Edison Butte might be a tough place to learn, says Bluhm. Unlike places like Meissner and Swampy sno-parks, the trails at Edison Butte

are not groomed.

"Lot's of ups and downs," she said. "I wouldn't really recommend it for beginner cross-country skiers; the trails aren't groomed so it feels a little more in the backcountry so you feel more remote more so than other parks."

If you are seeking solitude in the forest, weekends at Edison Butte might not be the best time to visit.

"I came up on a Sunday and drove around the parking lot and just ended up going home because there were too many people," Rutherford said. "There is no point in going to the forest if there is going to be crowds of people."

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