



Makenzie Whittle/Bulletin photos
Mike Whittle stands on the rim of the plateau of The Peninsula with The Island research natural area in the distance. The Island has been closed off since 1997 to protect animal and plant life there.



Tam-a-Lau trail begins its climb up the hillside.

Trail

Continued from B1

Named for the Sahaptin “place of big rocks on the ground” Tam-a-Lau begins in the Deschutes Campground at the state park then hugs the steep hillside above before reaching the relatively flat plateau above.

Right now, the campground is closed for the season, so in order to reach the trailhead, visitors need to park across Jordan Road at the Upper Deschutes Day-use area and walk about a quarter-mile to the trailhead.

The trail first travels over a smaller hill for a little over a

quarter-mile before descending into a small valley of large boulders for which the trail gets its name. The break in the trail’s ascension is short, and soon, the bulk of the uphill travel starts. Looking up, you can see the cutout trail zigzag up the 600-foot hillside eventually disappearing behind rock formations near the top.

It’s a mostly uphill climb from there with a few of the steeper sections featuring lumber steps carved into the dirt.

Take your time going up the trail if you need to. It narrows considerably with steep hill-sides and drop-offs on either side. So if you need to pass or pause, use the switchbacks —

they can be the widest spots in the road. While stopped, check out the view of the lake as you climb and note the changes in the rock as you get closer to the top. These intracanyon basalts from 1.2 million years ago mixed with the thicker bedrock of the Deschutes Formation that formed between 7.5 million and 4 million years ago, which then were cut through by the powerful water flows from the Deschutes, Crooked and Metolius rivers.

Some of the rock formations lay just above the trail so look up every once in a while.

On top of it all

Eventually, the steep zigzag-

ging trail opens up toward the top for the final ascent to the plateau.

During the winter the entire Tam-a-Lau trail is subject to steady freeze-thaw weather patterns (and can sometimes be covered in snow). Because of this, when the sun hits the trail, especially near the top, the ice cover melts and the trail can get quite muddy.

The last section of the uphill travel follows what looks like an old road and is rocky.

Before you know it, you’ll have reached the top and are greeted by a small sign indicating the Tam-A-Lau Loop trail on top of the plateau. This 3.5-mile loop is fairly flat through scrublands of sage and western juniper, hugging the rim of the hillside and offering perfect views of Mt. Jefferson and even Mt. Hood, the Deschutes and Crooked River arms of the lake and a great look at The Island Research Natural Area to the north.

The Island has been closed since 1997 when it was made a protected area. Its remote placement and sheer cliff sides kept it from cattle grazing prior to the lake formation and as such features an untouched

landscape with rare plants and animal inhabitants.

Hikers who go clockwise on the loop are greeted to the views immediately. It’s here where you can find a small rock or flat place to sit, enjoy the view and maybe a snack before continuing on your trek around the loop.

Eventually, the trail loops back to the main downhill section and when, if you brought them, the hiking poles can come in handy, especially if you hit a muddy section and your shoe decides it would rather stay behind.

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TOP PICKS WHERE TO EXPLORE

Top outdoor picks in, near Bend

Deschutes River Trail, Awbrey Reach — While the South Canyon section of the trail that stretches throughout Bend is the most popular, the northernmost 3.9-mile section is just as stunning. Starting at Sawyer Park, the trail travels along a high ridge offering views of the river, Riley Ranch Nature Reserve and the Cascades. The trail terminates in the Awbrey Glen neighborhood so always be respectful of private property along the way.

Huntington Wagon Road Interpretive Trail — The short trail located between Bend and Redmond on McGrath Road just outside of the Boonesborough neighborhood is definitely a hidden gem. Maintained by the Bureau of Land Management, the 2.4-mile out and back trek is easy and full of rich information on the 1850s supply wagon road that the trail follows including historic campsites, tree blazes and even some bullet holes remaining from target practice of those that used the route back then.

Shevlin Park — The land that became Shevlin Park was gifted to the city 100 years ago this week from the Shevlin-Hixon Lumber Company, so what better time to mark the occasion. The nearly 1,000 acres of parkland features hiking and biking trails of varying distances and difficulties as well as abundant picnic areas and river access for warmer days. The park to the west of Bend is still a local favorite and is one of the crowning jewels of the city’s parks.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin



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