



Mountain bikers ride in the Radlands trail network with Smith Rock State Park in the background.

Mark Morical/Bulletin file photo

Radlands

Continued from B1

I left early in the morning, in order to ride the trails while the dirt was still frozen and before muddy conditions might develop with a thaw. (Riding in mud is not just unenjoyable, it also can damage trails by leaving behind ruts.)

Starting from the trailhead at the High Desert Sports Complex, the trail was smooth and fast, cutting through sagebrush and old, twisted juniper trees. It took a while to reach the rocky sections of the trail, but once I did, they never seemed to end.

Much of the rock built into the singletrack at the Radlands is flat slab rock that is relatively easy to ride over. But some rock sections are particularly tricky, with the rocks jutting up sharply for long stretches.

Full-suspension bikes that can help to smooth out a ride are recommended at the Radlands.

Riding over rocky, technical terrain on a mountain bike usually is all about mind over matter. Those who have the confidence and make a quick decision to just go for it often will ride a challenging section without incident.

Hesitation can cause problems.

At the Radlands trails, I focused on riding fast and continuously through the myriad rock gardens, using my momentum to carry me through the rugged terrain. Braking hard or stopping can be disastrous, as that can lead to a loss of balance or tipping over to crash onto the rocks.

Posted signs at the Radland rate the singletrack trails as “easy,” “more difficult” or “most difficult.” The area also holds many miles of double-

If you go

Directions: From Bend, take U.S. Highway 97 north to Redmond. Turn right on Oregon Highway 126/Evergreen Avenue. Turn left on Ninth Street. Turn right on Negus Way. Stay straight to go onto Maple Avenue. The High Desert Sports Complex and the Radlands trailhead are on the left.

Length: About 10 miles of singletrack bike trails, with several loop options. Plans call for 30 miles of trails eventually.

Rating: Technically intermediate to advanced; aerobically easy to intermediate.

Trail features: Trails range from easy to advanced. Many of the trails include technical riding over lava rock. Views include the Cascade Range and Smith Rock State Park.

most anywhere in the network.

The variety of the trail features in the Radlands is pretty unique, from continuously rock-strewn trails to smooth, flowing High Desert single-track. The area has little elevation change, so mountain bikers need not worry about hellacious climbs or teeth-chattering downhill sections.

The technical rock challenges are enough, and they make the Radlands a good destination for any mountain biker in the winter and spring.

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track dirt roads to explore.

On the north end of the trail system, bikers have three loop options of varying skill levels. Duck 'n' Cover is the most technical and rocky segment of the trail system, according to bendtrails.org.

On the south end of the Radlands, the Outer Loop provides more miles and fewer rocky sections.

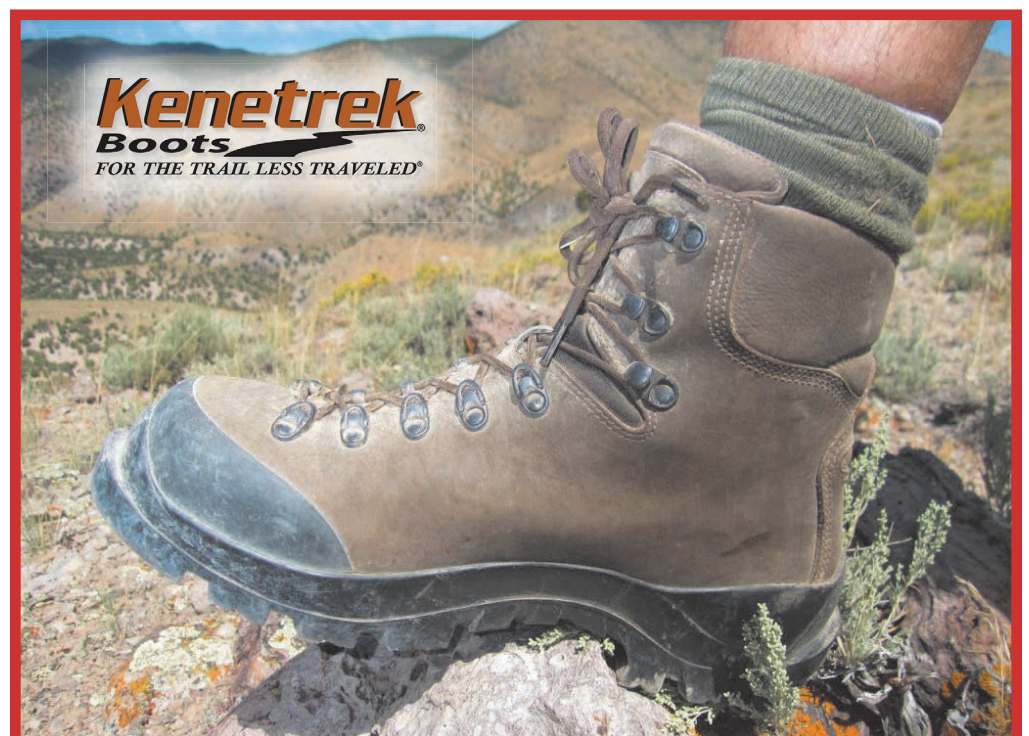
I rode the Outer Loop once around, then tried the intermediate Bobber Loop (inter-

mediate) and Duck 'n' Cover.

All told, I rode about 10 miles in one hour, 40 minutes, as the lava rock sections made for slow going.

Aside from the technical riding challenges, the Radlands offer some underrated views.

Redmond is home to dramatic vistas of the Three Sisters to the west and Smith Rock State Park to the north. The flat, open expanse of the Radlands makes the most of these views, as the mountains are visible



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TOP PICKS WHERE TO EXPLORE

Get out in the snow near Sisters

Camp Polk Meadow Preserve — The preserve located east of Sisters is great for winter bird-watching including eagles and owls, teals and waxwings. The 151-acre preserve was acquired by the Deschutes Land Trust in 2000 and includes wetlands, meadows, aspen groves and more. The area is also historically significant both to the Native American people who inhabited the lands for centuries as well as for the European explorers and settlers of the 19th century. Remnants of the Hindman Barn remain and can be viewed respectfully from designated areas.

Maxwell Butte Sno-park — Located 3.5 miles west of the Santiam Junction along state Highway 22, the sno-park has 25 miles of trails of all difficulty levels some of which wind through old-growth forests with great views of Three Fingers Jack and Duffy and Maxwell buttes. The park can get busy on the weekends, so plan accordingly. This year the Mountain View and South Maxwell shelters are closed due to COVID-19.

Suttle Lake — The lake north of Sisters and just off state Highway 20 is open year-round to fishing for brown trout and kokanee, if the lake isn't frozen over. But if it is, the lake still offers peaceful surroundings to explore along the shore with ponderosa pines towering above and views of Mount Washington beyond. If you feel peckish, the Suttle Lodge's Skip Bar is open for takeout.



Bulletin file photo

Dale Blackburn, of Corvallis,
 snowshoes with his dogs
 at Maxwell Butte Sno-park
 in 2011.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin

Trampled By Turtles

Live From First Avenue

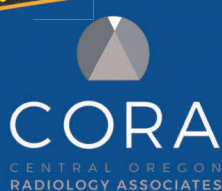
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