



Bulletin file photos

ABOVE: Bare juniper trees line singletrack in the Horse Butte area. **BELOW:** Boyd Cave near Horse Butte is one of three lava caves in the Deschutes National Forest that are open and accessible to the public, according to the U.S. Forest Service. The others are the Arnold Ice Cave and the South Lava Ice Cave.



Horse Butte trails

Directions: From Southeast 27th Street in Bend, turn east on Rickard Road. Go 2 miles east on Rickard Road, then turn right on Billadeau Road, which turns into Horse Butte Road. This road becomes gravel and is marked by a Deschutes National Forest sign. Continue until you see the Horse Butte Trailhead sign. Turn right and park. The Arnold Ice Cave Trail is just across the road from the parking lot. The Coyote Loop Trail is farther south down the road.

Length: Loop options of 10 to 30 miles. The Coyote Loop Trail-Arnold Ice Cave Trail loop is about 10 miles; bikers can combine other singletrack and dirt roads for much longer rides.

Trail features: High Desert singletrack riding among sagebrush and some juniper trees; expansive views of the Cascade Range and other mountains; a few lava caves are located in the area; trails should be avoided in mid-to-late summer when they become quite dusty.

Horse Butte

Continued from B1

The trails traverse the burn where the 1996 Skeleton Fire scorched 17,000 acres, opening up sprawling views in every direction and leaving behind sagebrush and bare juniper trees.

To the west, I could see nearly all the prominent Cascade peaks of Oregon: Mount Bachelor, the Three Sisters, Broken Top, Mount Washington, Mount Jefferson — even Mount Hood to the far north on the extremely clear day.

The trails near Horse Butte are rideable for all skill levels and offer a good warmup before heading out to more grueling rides this season.

It is extremely important that all user groups cooperate in areas like Horse Butte, where frequent users include hikers, trail runners, mountain bikers and equestrians. Mountain bikers are required to yield to pedestrians and horseback riders.

While the trails at Horse Butte are nice for biking this time of year, they also allow for access to lava caves. Sure, you can drive down China Hat Road to find some of these caves, but getting there via mountain bike seems to add a sense of adventure.

I followed the signs on the trail to Boyd Cave, located about a quarter of a mile north from the Coyote Loop Trail along Forest Road 560.

Boyd Cave is one of several lava caves in the Deschutes National Forest that is open and accessible to the public, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

I walked down the access stairs and stepped into the dark cave. After strapping on a headlamp, I ventured a few hundred feet into the lava tube.

The lava caves were formed thousands of years ago from crusts of solidified lava that grew over the top of flowing lava, according to the U.S. Forest Service. When the eruption that produced the lava stopped, the lava drained out of most of the lava tube, forming the cave.

Boyd Cave is a well-preserved lava tube with little

collapse and a total length of about 1,880 feet, according to the Forest Service. (Boyd Cave was reportedly vandalized and defaced with graffiti earlier this year. Trail users should respect the area and never leave anything behind.)

I headed back up the steps, into the bright sunlight and back on my way.

On the return trip to the trailhead, I stopped a couple times just to take in the quiet of the High Desert and the

warmth of the spring sun.

The ride back to my car was fast and flowing. I cruised through the sagebrush and past old juniper trees as the snow-covered mountains dominated the horizon.

Sure, Central Oregon is filled with mountain biking options this time of year, but Horse Butte still offers a special oasis away from the west-side crowds.

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TOP PICK OF THE WEEK

Aspen Day Use Area

BY DAVID JASPER
The Bulletin

Aspen Day Use is a versatile spot along the Deschutes River west of Bend. A popular put-in for paddlers and rafting companies heading to downstream rapids, Aspen is also an excellent place to start a hike on the Deschutes River Trail. Upstream lie Dillon and Benham falls, located 1-mile and 4.5 miles away, respectively. Big Eddy and Lava Island Day Use areas are 1 and 2 miles downstream.

Any of these destinations make for a good hike in a placid, scenic setting. On a recent Saturday, my daughter Lilly and I opted to go upstream toward Dillon Falls, passing below towering stands still in want of leaves and enjoying views of the meandering river below. We chose the low-level trail closer to the riverside when the trail split, leading to the base of a steep, rugged set of steps, which eventually leads to Dillon Falls.

Remember to practice good

trail etiquette. If you like letting your dog off-leash, now is the time to go, as dogs must be leashed May 15 through Sept. 15.

Getting there: From Bend go west on Cascades Lakes High-

way, then south on Forest Road 41 for about 2 miles. Follow signs to Big Eddy/Aspen Day Use areas. Stay right at split. A recreation pass is required.

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