

TOP PICK OF THE WEEK



Benham Falls as seen from the viewing area near the west trailhead. Makenzie Whittle/Bulletin photos

Benham Falls

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE
The Bulletin

Chances are, you've ventured down to Benham Falls during the summer, maybe showing off the beautiful section of the Deschutes River to visitors from out of town.

But before the summer crowds arrive, grab your Northwest Forest Pass and check out the falls on your own, which make for a great and easy weekday afternoon walk with a 1.5-mile, out-and-back path from the Benham Falls East Trailhead near Lava Lands south of Bend.

Things are just starting to bloom and turn green so the river trail is buzzing with anticipation and hungry bees hovering around the few flowering trees along the path. Since most of the riparian vegetation has yet to fill out in its spring and summer looks, the lava rock that forms Benham Falls from Lava Butte are much more noticeable and even more impressive.

The walk itself is easy and flat until you get to the falls with the official viewing area being a gentle descent to the outlook. There are also a few spots that can be accessed through the gaps in the wooden fence and lead down to the river's edge.

If you'd rather just see the falls and not make the walk, the Benham West Trailhead takes you directly to the viewing area above the falls.

Whichever way you go, the Class 5 falls are worth the trip.

Getting there: To the Benham East Trailhead, from Bend travel south on U.S. Highway 97 for about 11 miles then turn right at Lava Lands, fol-



A trail marker at the Benham Falls East Trailhead indicates distance to the falls, to Sunriver and to Lava Lands.

lowing the signs to Benham Falls along Forest Service Road 9702. To Benham West Trailhead from Bend take Century Drive west 13 miles and turn left following the sign towards the Deschutes Recreation Sites (Dillon Falls Road). Drive 4

miles then turn left towards Slough and Benham Falls on Forest Road 400 then continue down the gravel road for 1.2 miles and bear left towards the trailhead.

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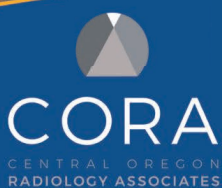
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