



**THE REGION'S HUB FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES**

Each week in this section, you will find the area's most complete guide of what's open and closed; outdoor activities and events; top picks of places to explore; conditions of hiking and biking trails, fishing holes, water flows, camping spots, parks and more — as well as features from outdoor writers and field experts.



**PETERSON RIDGE**

**A mountain biking trail network outside Sisters that has it all**

BY MARK MORICAL • The Bulletin

SISTERS — A good friend of mine recently moved from ever-crowding Bend to Sisters, craving a more relaxed, small-town lifestyle for his young family.

I did not need another reason to make the half-hour drive to Sisters. I have always enjoyed outdoor adventures in the area, especially along the Peterson Ridge trail system just outside of town.

Now, I have a willing riding partner in Sisters who can bike to the PRT trailhead.

We met there early Sunday morning, after rainfall from the day before put the trails in perfect shape to quell the dust and make the dirt firm and fast.

The network consists basically of two main trails — Peterson Ridge Trail West and Peterson Ridge Trail East — with about a dozen smaller trails that connect the two sides. The network is well-marked with signs on nearly every trail connector. (The trailhead kiosk is usually stuffed with detailed maps that show every numbered junction in the network.)



Mark Morical/Bulletin photos

**PHOTOS FROM TOP:** Sisters resident Jeremy Dickman rides his mountain bike along the PRT West Trail at Peterson Ridge on Sunday. Dickman, of Sisters, rides a technical section of singletrack.



TRAILS

The plan was to climb PRT West from the trailhead, then loop back and descend PRT Middle and PRT East. This is my preferred route at Peterson Ridge because PRT West is a bit more technical and cuts alongside the edge of the ridge. Bikers can better enjoy the views as they climb. PRT East features more flow, with sections specifically designed for downhill riding.

We started out climbing gradually through open forest. PRT West took us along smooth singletrack that was flat and easy but became increasingly challenging as we climbed the ridge. The higher we got, the steeper and more technical the trail became, with many sections of lava rock.

Most of the trails in the Peterson Ridge area are not technically demanding or particularly strenuous, but some were built to provide a more technical option for those who seek out that style of riding. PRT West has many such areas.

Some 10 to 15 years ago, Peterson Ridge consisted of merely one lone 10-mile trail with a small loop on the south end.

But from 2008 to 2010, volunteers with the Sisters Trails Alliance and the Central Oregon Trail Alliance built up the area into a vast network of trails to give mountain bikers, hikers and equestrians more options. The system now includes 30 miles of expertly designed singletrack and seemingly endless loop options.

The network includes several miles of horseback riding trails that are separate from the mountain biking trails. The trails do cross in places, however, so mountain bikers should take care to yield to equestrians.

See **Biking** / B9

**TOP PICKS WHERE TO EXPLORE**

**North of Bend**

**Alder Springs Trail** — The full 5.7-mile (round-trip) hiker-only trail between Sisters and Terrebonne is perfect for a spring hike as there is practically no shade over the duration. It's a moderate hike with a quick and steep descent into the stunning Whychus Creek Canyon with a river crossing about 1.3 miles in where hikers will have to ford the Whychus to continue to its confluence with the Deschutes River. If you're not up for wading into the frigid creek, the shortened hike is still very much worth it.

**Camp Sherman Campground** — One of the few campgrounds that remains open throughout the year, the sites are first come, first serve until May 28, when they become reservation only. But for those who want to brave the unpredictable spring weather in Central Oregon, Camp Sherman Campground sits along the banks of the crystal clear Metolius River among the ponderosa pine trees. All sites are non-electric. For reservations further out in the summer, visit [recreation.gov](http://recreation.gov)



Bulletin file photo

**The clay hard pack of the Cole Loop trail usually makes for good riding. But watch out for the mud after it rains.**

**Cole Loop Trail** — This is the longest loop trail in the Crooked River Grasslands, clocking in at 25 miles total if you're up for a long bike ride through High Desert terrain. The trail circles around Gray Butte and connects to a few other trails and camps in the Skull Hollow area, including Trail Crossing Corral, Scales Corral, Cyrus and Warner Loop Trail.

— Makenzie Whittle, The Bulletin

**Correction**

In the "Top Picks: Where to Explore" feature, which appeared Friday, April 30, on Page B9, Rosland Day Use Area was misspelled.

The Bulletin regrets the error.