

TOP PICKS WHERE TO EXPLORE

Visitors and swimmers play around the sandy beach of Cultus Lake Resort in July 2017.

Ryan Brennecke/
Bulletin file



Central Oregon mountains

Cultus Lake — While the entirety of the Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway has yet to reopen, the southern section from the Crescent Cutoff Road to Lava Lake has reopened for cars, meaning that the brilliant blue waters of Cultus Lake are once again accessible. This weekend is the annual fishing derby hosted by the Cultus Lake Resort (which reopened Thursday) so it's a great time to drop a lure or just to take in the beautiful lake.

Paulina Lake — The seasonally closed road up to Paulina and East lakes has also reopened for the season. Recent catches include 11- and 12.5-pound

browns and good-sized kokanee, according to the Paulina Lake Lodge's Facebook page. The lower trails may still have some spots of snow and dead-fall from the winter, while Paulina Peak and Big Obsidian Flow trails typically are covered in snow until June.

Upper Deschutes River — Rounding out the "now open" areas of Central Oregon's mountains, the Deschutes River from Benham Falls upstream to Little Lava Lake reopens for fishing beginning May 22. Daily limits are set at two rainbow trout per day with an 8-inch minimum, and all wild rainbows must be released.

—Makenzie Whittle, *The Bulletin*

Ticket to Ride

Continued from B1

The welcome station, completed in 2015, was originally proposed in late 2008, but the project faced an appeal by Central Oregon tourism interests in 2010, according to Bulletin archives. The appeal questioned whether the building would include trail access or simply be a spot to stop for information.

Responding to the appeal, the Forest Service added plans for a trailhead and, eventually, more trails, built by the hard-working and motivated volunteers at COTA.

I drove to the welcome station on a cool Tuesday morning, planning to ride the Ticket to Ride loop in both directions for a total of about 12 miles.

Each way is equally fun. Riding the loop counterclockwise, though, allows mountain bikers to descend a swooping section through a small rock canyon.

While the trail is rated as green (easy), a fair amount of climbing — about 500 feet of elevation gain — awaits in either direction.

After riding the east end of the loop in a counterclockwise direction, I arrived at a sign that led me to the junction with ELV and to the north section of Ticket to Ride. This included a steady climb all the way to the intersection with Voodoo Child. There, riders have several options. They can ride Voodoo Child to connect to the more technically challenging Grand Slam or Voodoo trails. Or, they can stay on Ticket to Ride and complete the loop, which I did.

From the northwest corner of the Ticket to Ride loop, the climbing ended and the descending began. Eventually I came to the small canyon, cruising along the swooping turns that cut through the terrain. A few rocks were exposed here and there, but for the most part it was a smooth and fast ride back to the welcome station.

The Ticket to Ride loop was designed to be rideable in either



A pair of mountain bikers make their way along the Ticket to Ride trail near the U.S. Forest Service's Cascade Lakes Welcome Station on Saturday.

Ryan Brennecke/
The Bulletin

direction, so I headed back out to ride it clockwise.

I climbed back through the canyon and continued climbing for about two miles before beginning another descent. The downhill was fun and flowy, with a few small jumps here and there to test my freeride skills. Some technical rocky portions are included on Ticket To Ride, but

for the most part it is an easy trail that is rideable for all skill levels.


One final short climb brought me back to the welcome station. The 12-mile ride included nearly 1,000 feet of elevation gain and took about two hours.

Rain that is forecast for the next couple of days should quell the dust that has built up

on the trails and put them in prime condition for riding.

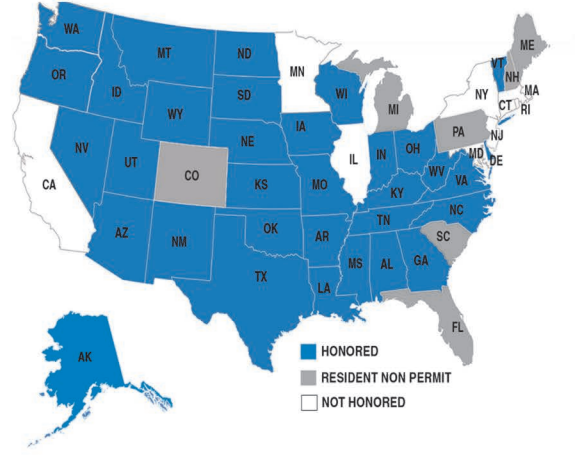
Ticket to Ride usually remains rideable well into the fall, offering a quick, easy option for busy mountain bikers.

■ Reporter: 541-383-0318,
mmorical@bendbulletin.com



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