



The Fall River meanders along a trail in La Pine State Park.

Mark Morical/The Bulletin

## La Pine

Continued from B1

Sections of the Upper Deschutes and the Fall River wind serenely through the giant ponderosa pines of La Pine State Park, situated in the heart of the Deschutes National Forest.

This past Saturday, I drove with my 13-year-old son, Mason, 30 minutes south from Bend to La Pine State Park for a half-day father-son ride.

We started on the 3.25-mile Cougar Woods loop trail near the main picnic area and soon linked up to the Big Pine loop.

While the trails in the park are often sandy and dusty in the summer, on this day they were in perfect shape after significant rainfall the day before.

The Big Pine Loop, less than a mile, led us to what is recognized as one of Oregon's largest ponderosa pines, simply named "Big Pine" on maps and signs in the park.

The tree is 162 feet tall and 27 feet in circumference and is thought to be more than 500

years old, according to [www.oregonstateparks.org](http://www.oregonstateparks.org). While it is not the tallest ponderosa in Oregon, it is considered the biggest in circumference.

Just a few feet from the massive tree is the shimmering Upper Deschutes, which calmly twists its way through the park. The stretch of river through the park is popular among kayakers, who can enjoy the slow-moving current.

We crossed a vehicle bridge over the Upper Deschutes and found the Fall River loop trail. The singletrack led us north to the Fall River, which flows into the Deschutes just a couple of miles to the east.

At about 5 miles in length, the Fall River loop trail is the longest in La Pine State Park. It takes hikers and bikers into the more remote areas of the park right along the crystal-clear Fall River. I consider it the best trail for mountain biking in the park because of its scenery and solitude.

Along the trail, the meandering stream twists and trickles through green marshy areas

and yellow and purple wildflowers.

At the far northwest end of the trail network, we arrived at Fall River Falls, a small waterfall that shined a bright white in the afternoon sun. Just upstream, several fly anglers casted for rainbow or brown trout. This section of the river called the "tubes," is popular among Fall River fly anglers who can access fishable water both above and below the falls.

After taking a break at the falls, we turned south back toward the Deschutes River area of the park. The Deschutes loop follows the meandering river and runs past some of the park's 137 campsites. That part of the park is more populated with campers and hikers than the north end along the Fall River.

Aside from the biking, La Pine State Park is an ideal location for camping, hiking and fishing through the summer and into fall.

We eventually worked our way back to the car, having

covered most of the park's trails in about 2 hours, 35 minutes. We rode more than 15 miles but totaled only about 400 feet of elevation gain — a laid-back ride in a gorgeous location.

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## La Pine State Park

**Directions:** From Bend, take U.S. Highway 97 south. A few miles before reaching the town of La Pine, turn right onto State Recreation Road. Follow the road for about 3 miles to the park (about a half-hour from Bend).

**Distance:** The park includes about 14 miles of singletrack. Loops range from 1 to 5 miles but can be linked for longer rides.

**Rating:** Aerobically easy and technically easy.

**Trail features:** Rolling singletrack through a scenic section of the Deschutes National Forest along the Upper Deschutes and Fall River.

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