

MOUNTAIN BIKING IS A SPORT THAT'S GAINING GROUND IN GRANT COUNTY

Local cyclists shared a few of the trails they enjoy and noted that forest roads, not specific to mountain biking, also offer an opportunity to take in the peaceful atmosphere.

Russ Comer of Canyon City said the serenity of the forest trails in Grant County is like no other.

"You can ride all day and not encounter another person – it has a different vibe," he said.

Comer is among a group of local cyclists who've organized a group to develop and improve trails in the area.

Mountain biking enthusiasts formed a chapter of the Central Oregon Trail Alliance (COTA) and held a work party in 2015, sprucing up and repairing areas of the North Fork Malheur Trail located southeast of John Day.

Here are three mountain biking trails that local riders recommend:

NORTH FORK MALHEUR TRAIL

The 12.4-mile path travels through a canyon and along the North Fork Malheur Wild and Scenic River.

The remote area gives riders an opportunity to enjoy the solitude of the forest.

Some local mountain bikers say they like the opportunity the sport gives people to experience the mountains and forest in a different way, often riding all day without encountering another person.

Directions from Prairie City: Turn onto South Main Street and follow to the junction with Bridge Street. Turn left onto Bridge Street and continue past the cemetery, the road then becomes County Road 62. Follow County Road 62 approximately 19 miles to the junction with Forest Road 16, then turn east onto Forest Road 16 and follow for approximately 11 miles to the junction with Forest Road 1675. Follow Forest Road 1675 for approximately two miles to the campground. The trail is open in April. Length: 12.4 miles.

RILEY CREEK TRAIL

This trail travels along Riley Creek and provides access to McClellan Mountain Trail #216 and the McClellan Mountain Semi-Primitive Roadless Area, which is closed to all motorized vehicles. The trail allows visitors a wonderful hike in a quiet setting. The trail is soft compacted earth starting at Riley Creek Trailhead and continuing along the McClellan Mountain Trail #216. After connecting to the Fields Peak Trail it becomes a more rutted road surface and pretty steep. The trail traverses through beautiful wooded areas connecting with McClellan Mountain Trail allowing for beautiful views of McClellan Mountain and Riley Mountain. Parking is limited to passenger vehicles. Parking for vehicles pulling trailers is available at the junction of Forest Road 2190 and Forest Road 2190589.

The trail is open in June. Length: 2.2 miles

Directions from John Day:

Take Highway 395 south approximately 15 miles to the junction with County Road 63. Follow County Road 63 west approximately 6 miles to Forest Road 21. Follow Forest Road 21 approximately 5 miles to the junction with Forest Road 2190. The trailhead is located at the end of Forest Road 2190.

BIG CREEK/SUMMIT PRAIRIE TRAIL

Local riders say this trail is easy to ride because it's located on the former Hines Railroad Grade. The trail travels through steep grade, filled to accommodate railroad traffic, deep cuts through rocky hills and flat open areas. The cut rocks show layers of geologic material. The dirt and rock trail travels through stands of ponderosa and lodgepole pine trees. Along the way, visitors will see a variety of wildflowers, as well as wildlife in the area including deer, elk, multiple varieties of birds and many other animals.

The trail is used by visitors to Lake Creek Youth Camp and other nearby campgrounds, including Big Creek Capground and Murray Campground. The trail is open in May. Length: 12.5 miles

Directions from Prairie City:

From Prairie City, turn onto South Main Street. Follow South Main Street to Bridge Street, turn left onto Bridge Street and continue past the cemetery. Bridge Street then becomes County Road 62. Follow County Road 62 approximately 19 miles to the junction with Forest Road 16. Travel west on Forest Road 16 to the junction with Forest Road 1600133. Travel on Forest Road 1600133 to the junction with Forest Road 1600097 where the trailhead is located.

For more information on these and other trails, contact the Malheur National Forest office at 541-575-3000 or visit www.fs.usda.gov/malheur.



MYTCHELL MEAD PHOTO



Mountain Biking

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS OFFER FORESTED SOLITUDE

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