

Ghosts

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you see today. A long-abandoned community school, general store and church are all very visible to visitors of Fox.

The Fox store ceased operations in the '80s. Historic Fox Church was built by settlers in 1889 and has remained unused for years. The small community has worked to restore the church in recent years. The post office was established in 1883 and went out of service in 2002.

U.S. Route 395 runs right through the middle of the community, with the town's historic buildings set along both sides of the highway. A small number of ranches that have been in operation since the late 1800s and early 1900s are still present in Fox. The community has four full-time residents and a small number of part-time residents.

Fox is somewhat of a time capsule, with the community's historic buildings giving visitors a sense of what life was like as an early pioneer in Eastern Oregon. If you have the time, both Fox and Austin's few residents are more than willing to give you a history lesson about the rise and fall of the population and industries in each town.

The drive to both locations is scenic, with a mix of wide-open grazing lands and picturesque mountain views. While there isn't necessarily much to do in both communities, there is still a lot to take in.

Being in both locations really gives you a sense of why the few remaining residents in the communities choose to remain there.

It's private, quiet and remote. Both communities are the blueprint for descriptions of life in rural Eastern Oregon.



The Fox General Store on Thursday, July 14, 2022. The store ceased operations in the 1980s.



The front of the old schoolhouse in Fox on Thursday, July 14, 2022. Like the general store, the school hasn't been in use for a number of years.



The inside of the Fox School. The school looks as though classes could be held there today even though the building has not been used for a number of years.



A pasture full of cows that sits adjacent to the town of Austin on Thursday, July 14, 2022.

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Lake

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The lake radiates expansive and blue and is flanked on both sides by rugged mountain peaks while glassy creeks feed the body of water.

The stocked lake offers brook and rainbow trout for those interested in fishing.

The shortest and easiest way to enjoy the full beauty of this scenic high country lake is a 4-mile loop that takes you all the way around the shoreline before heading back to the trailhead. This hike features 550 feet of elevation gain and is open from July to November.

If you're up for a longer trek, you can keep going for another 0.9 mile from the head of the lake to 60-foot Strawberry Falls. From the top of the falls, a 0.4-mile spur will take you to Little Strawberry Lake.

Fit and adventurous hikers may want to tackle 9,038-foot Strawberry Peak, the highest point in the range. That hike, generally open from August through October, makes for a 13-mile round trip with 3,300 feet of elevation gain.

According to the Forest Service, water from springs, lakes, ponds, and streams should have proper treatment before drinking. No matter how pure it may look, surface water should be considered unsafe to drink until adequately treated. The Forest Service recommends boiling the water.



Sun rays peek through conifer branches near Strawberry Falls.

Bennett Hall
Blue Mountain Eagle

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