



Mt. Lassen, southernmost peak of the Cascade range, is the only active volcano in the contiguous United States. The main feature of Mt. Lassen Volcanic National Park, is a drive of less than five hours from Medford over good highways. This view shows the northeast slope. The giant eruptions of 1915-1917 blew off much of this side of the mountain, and resulted in a cascade of mud, water, rocks and lava which created the "Devastated Area" from which this picture was taken. The small trees in the foreground have all grown up since that time.



Last Columbus Day, the storm which devastated so much timber in Oregon also resulted in massive blow down in Lassen Park, estimated at some 4,000,000 board feet. A sample of the destruction is shown. Entomologists are endeavoring to protect standing timber from insect damage, and fire-fighting crews have been enhanced to save the blowdown from fire. But the downed trees will be left as a graphic example of Nature's forces.



Bumpass Hell, a one mile hike from the main road through Lassen Park, is the site of the most violent volcanic action in the park. It includes burbling mud pots, steam fumaroles, hot streams, and other features. Shown above is one of the largest of the fumaroles, emitting sulphureous-smelling steam. The hikers are Mrs. Josephine Moore, head of the news bureau at the University of Oregon, Eugene, and Robert B. Frazier, associate editor of the Eugene Register-Guard.



Crumbaugh lake, in the back country of Mt. Lassen Volcanic National Park, is an example of the beautiful wilderness country preserved by the park. This view was taken from a trail circling from Bumpass Hell (where volcanic activity is high) around to King Creek — a relatively easy 3 1/2 mile hike in all.



Chaos Jumbles, foreground, and Chaos Crags, rear, are examples of recent volcanic activity in Lassen Park. A huge avalanche swept away a forest during an eruption in the 1915-1917 active period.

Lassen Has Combination of Attractions

By ERIC W. ALLEN JR.
Mail Tribune Managing Editor

Manzanita Campground, Mt. Lassen Volcanic National Park — Here, less than five hours by good highway from Medford, is one of the nation's loveliest and most interesting national parks.

It is overshadowed in size by many others, and, as far as proximity to the Rogue Valley is concerned, by Crater Lake, in many ways most beautiful park of all.

But Lassen has a combination of attractions which make it unique. It is a splendid destination for a single day, or a two-day loop drive, over good roads and interesting country. It has a fine campground for the camper, complete with running water and flush toilets. It has trails for the back-packer and horse-camper which traverse some of the most beautiful wilderness areas on the west coast.

Majestic Alpine Scenery

It has majestic alpine scenery. It has desolate areas of special interest. It has fish and wildlife. It has easy trails for an afternoon stroll, as well as strenuous trails which challenge the hardest outdoorsman.

And it has the added fascination of containing the only live volcano in the contiguous United States. Evidence of volcanic activity is scattered throughout the park, and can be witnessed from one's car or, closer up, after a hike or a stroll.

Far beneath the mountains of the park lies a giant mass of white-hot rock, and it makes its presence known in a multitude of ways — boiling springs fed by rain and snow and heated by the lava beneath; burbling mud pots; steam-spitting fumaroles; hot lakes; steaming clay banks, and, over all, the pervading smell of sulphurous fumes.

Paved Main Road

Winding through the park is a paved main road, which displays all the variety of the park to those wishing an easy drive, from the badlands of the devastated area — swept clean of all vegetation by a giant avalanche of water, rocks and mud only 48 years ago — up through tall timbers and sub-alpine scrub, to near timberline at 8,512 feet above sea level, then twisting down past the hot and gaseous Sulphur Works, down the gorge into the forest below.

The back country is less accessible. But if not intimidated by dusty, bumpy roads, and long detours outside the park, one can journey to Butte Lake, in the far northeast corner; to Drakesbad resort (a sort of guest ranch operated by a concessioner) in the south-central portion; to Juniper and Horseshoe lakes in the eastern part. Most of the rest of the park can be reached only on foot or horseback — which is the way it should be if it is to be preserved for future generations in its natural state.

Two principal problems now face the National Park Service men in caring for their "little jewel of a park."
Most Urgent Problem

The most urgent, but probably less important in the long run, is a vast accumulation of blown down trees, caused by the same Columbus Day storm that did such damage in Oregon. Because of the devastation done in Oregon, few reports of the Lassen Park damage came through at that time. But rangers estimate that some 4,000,000 board feet were blown down in that storm.

The Park Service is mounting as strong a fire-fighting force as possible to protect the downed trees until the "flash fuel" of dried needles has decomposed. Then, since the Park is not a source of timber, but is for preservation of Mother Nature's ways, the blowdown will be left — as much mute evidence of Nature's forces as are the charred and battered carcasses of trees destroyed by the eruptions of 1915 and the following few years.

With the cooperation of other government agencies, an entomological camp has been established, in efforts to keep the insect infestation danger at a minimum.

The second principal problem, a longer-range one, is to provide for the needs and wants of an increasing number of visitors.

Huge New Campground

Four years ago, on our last visit to the Park, the campground at Manzanita lake was little more than a dusty outdoor slum. Today, that same area is quiet, and, hopefully, soon will be rehabilitated with man-

zanita and other shrubs. It has been succeeded by a huge new campground to the south of the lake, with six "loops," each containing up to 40 or more separate camp sites.

The sites are provided with a camp table and fire-place; many are in shade, some are in open sun, and all have a modicum of privacy. Toilets and running water are nearby. It is estimated that up to 1,000 campers per night can be accommodated more or less comfortably there. The only problem is the lack of readily available firewood.

There are other campgrounds, too. The most popular of the smaller ones, almost always crowded, is at Summit Lake, near the center of the park. It is also the take-off point for many of the trails. The south portion of it is now closed, due to the October storm blowdown, and it is being reconstructed. The Butte Lake campground is also closed, for the same reason.

The Warner Valley campground, near Drakesbad, is small and relatively isolated, thus is less used, but it is one of the most attractive (and primitive) of all.

Full Measure of Appreciation

One has to see Mt. Lassen, look at the sights, visit the excellent little museum, and read the literature, to obtain a full measure of appreciation for the dramatic story of the mountain which long lay quiet, and then, in 1915, blew its top.

Evidences of the eruptions are numerous and fascinating. There are Chaos Jumbles, where a giant avalanche wiped out a whole forest. There are Chaos Crags, the source of the volcanic avalanche, looming menacingly above. There is the scarred face of old Mt. Lassen itself, where the mighty explosion occurred. There are the still-remaining evidences of the magma pool far below.

The western section of the park is spectacular; the eastern section is a gentler kind of wilderness, abounding in lakes, lava beds, streams, meadows and tall forests. Our party was camped in the park for five days, but

it also offers opportunities for visits ranging from one day to several weeks.

The mountain itself is the most easily climbed of any major Pacific Coast peak, with a good trail zig-zagging 2 1/2 miles to the summit from the road. The only real hazard for careful climbers is the need for heart, lungs and muscle to carry one from 8,500 to 10,457 feet.

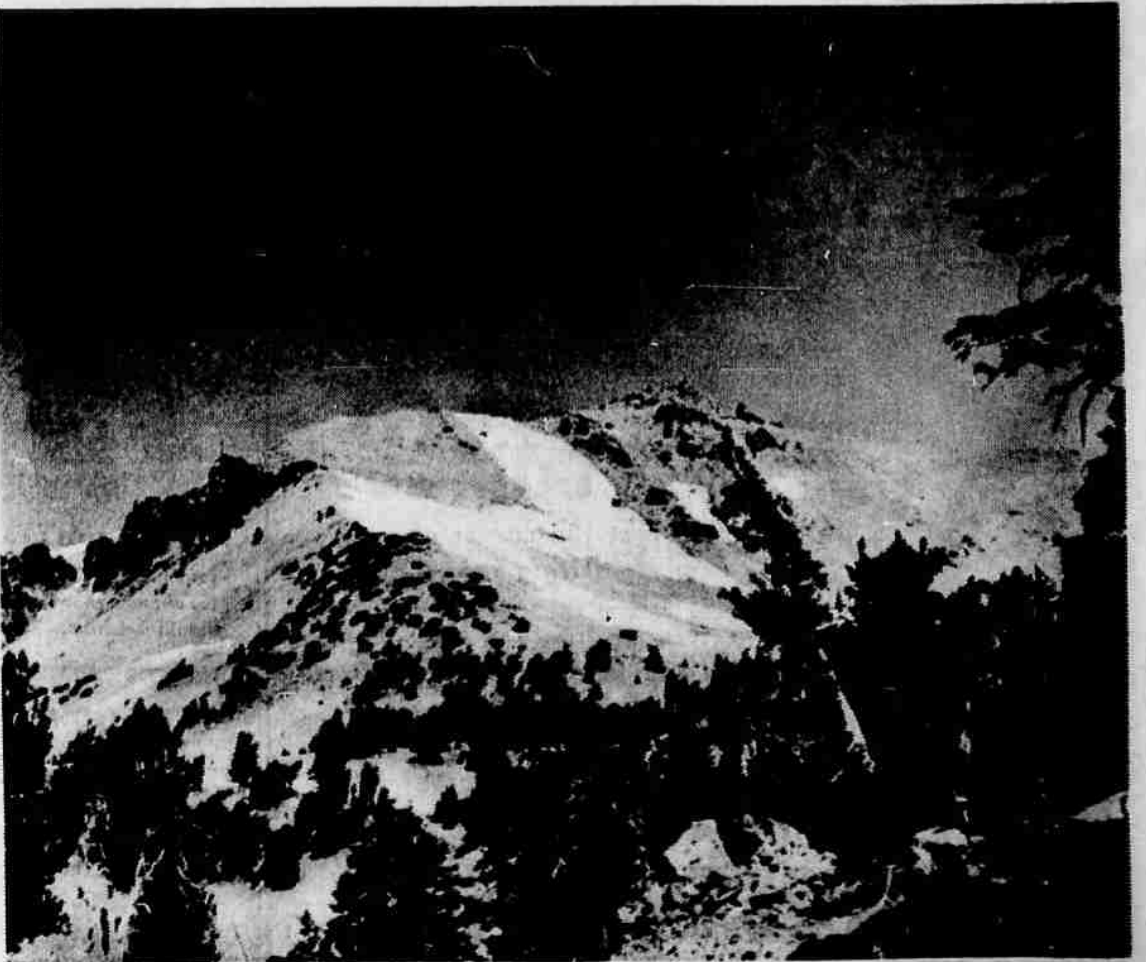
Another excellent and interesting hike, an even easier one, is the 1-mile trip to Bumpass Hell, where the most spectacular evidences of current volcanism are visible. For the slightly sturdier and more adventurous, this can be extended by hiking another 2 1/2 miles around to King Creek, lower down on the highway, through some of the most beautiful lake-dotted back country anywhere. There are many others.

Facilities inside the park, in addition to the campgrounds described, are a lodge (advanced reservations necessary), store, museum and ranger station at Manzanita; and the guest lodge at Drakesbad. There are other ranger stations scattered throughout the park, but headquarters is at Mineral, on Highway 36 some miles south and west.

Dedicated Group of Men

The Park rangers and other permanent personnel are a dedicated group of men, obviously in love with their work and with the park, and determined that it shall be preserved for the enjoyment of its owners, the people of the United States, forever. It is a never ending job and, ironically, their greatest enemy in doing it is not the forces of nature, but the often-destructive and more often thoughtless tendencies of their bosses, the people of the United States — more than 400,000 of them per year.

The Park men must balance their functions of preservation with their functions of service to a demanding public. It is a delicate balance to maintain. So far, we think, they have succeeded admirably, considering the paucity of funds and support necessary to do the job.



Mt. Lassen viewed from the southeast. The trail to the top zig-zags up the ridge just left of center, cutting across the tip of the snowfield. The mountain, 10,547 feet high, is among the most easily climbed of the major peaks of the Pacific area, and the hike is only about 2 1/2 miles from the parking area, out of sight below left.