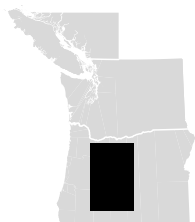


Central Oregon & the Oregon Cascades

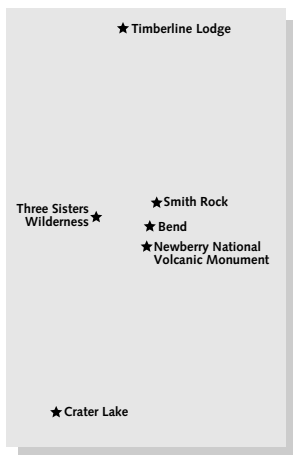


Love mountain tops? Well, that's what Central Oregon and its Cascades are all about. You can practically skip your way from peak to snowy peak through this whole region – from Mt Hood, to Jefferson, to Bachelor, to Three-Fingered Jack and the Sisters volcanoes, through Thielsen and finally to Crater Lake's Mt Scott. As you can imagine, there's plenty of awesome skiing and mountaineering here, along with exceptional hiking and camping. And it's not just mountain-lovers who come – there's also great biking, golfing, rafting, kayaking, fishing and rock climbing in Central Oregon. And did we mention the weather is great here too? Boasting over 300 days of sunshine a year, what more could you ask for?

How about the amazingly stunning Crater Lake, which started life as a 12,000ft puffy volcano before blowing its top and then collecting only fresh water and snow into a lake almost 200ft deep? And the Newberry National Volcanic Monument, where lava flows, lava tubes and a lava cast forest are all frozen in time? Or the gloriously cool and clear Metolius River, which flows straight out of a hillside and offers world-class trout fishing? And as much as the outdoors may beckon, when it's time for a break there's the exploding city of Bend, right smack in the middle of this region, providing the visitor with plenty of good food and accommodations (or head to nearby Sisters for a more personal atmosphere).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Taking in the surreal beauty of gorgeous **Crater Lake** (p285)
- Carving powder in winter (and summer!) above **Timberline Lodge** (p273)
- Photographing summer wildflowers in the **Three Sisters Wilderness** (p277)
- Sampling **Bend's** (p278) finest cuisine, after golfing, rafting, skiing or hiking nearby
- Setting up a multi-pitch climb at spectacular **Smith Rock** (p275)
- Peeking through a lava tube at **Newberry National Volcanic Monument** (p283)



Geography & Climate

The Cascades run the length of the state, getting higher from south to north and forming a second barrier – after the Coast Range – against the moist air that comes in from the Pacific Ocean. Their western slopes wring out much of the remaining wetness as it heads east, and this second pressing of the clouds results in precipitation totals around 50% to 75% of those on the coast (which is still an awful lot). The northern Cascades at their higher elevations get a dumping of snow that can average hundreds of inches annually. And even in the south, the highest recorded annual snowfall total for Crater Lake National Park reached almost 900in, with on-the-ground depths of more than 20ft. Though signs point toward decreasing totals and warmer winters, snow generally persists through April at 4000ft; above 7000ft it will remain year-round in the form of glaciers. Though there are enormous variations in temperature, average lows in winter in the western Cascades run in the low 20s, with summer highs in the 70s.

East of the range's summit is a different world. Most of Central Oregon lies above 2000ft in elevation, and the rain shadow cast by the Cascades makes this high desert country. Precipitation averages vary here from the low single digits to just shy of the teens, good conditions for the juniper trees and sagebrush throughout the region. Average minimum/maximum temperatures in January run in the low 20s/40s while July highs/lows are in the mid-80s/40s.

National Parks & Wilderness Areas

Crater Lake National Park, at the extreme southern end of Central Oregon, is the state's sole national park and truly a jewel in the park system's crown, holding the world's ninth deepest lake and plenty of opportunities for hiking, Nordic skiing and scoping magnificent vistas. Other outdoor joys in the region include the Three Sisters Wilderness, a mountaineers' paradise featuring scenic peaks, and the tranquil Mt Jefferson Wilderness Area, which offers exceptional camping, hiking and fishing opportunities.

Getting There & Around

The Redmond Municipal Airport, 18 miles north of Bend, is the only show of its kind around here. It sees dozens of commercial flights arrive daily from Portland, Eugene,

all of Oregon's neighboring states but Idaho, and the outliers Utah and Colorado. Amtrak's *Coast Starlight* rail route, on its way between Klamath Falls and Eugene, stops at Chemult (northwest of Crater Lake National Park), with connecting buses between there and Bend. Various city and county bus systems provide service around and between several of the towns in this chapter; you may be able to cobble together an itinerary using **TripCheck** (www.tripcheck.com), a site maintained by the Oregon Department of Transportation.

MT HOOD

The state's highest peak, Mt Hood (11,240ft), pops into view over much of northern Oregon whenever there's a sunny day, exerting an almost magnetic tug on skiers, hikers and sightseers. In summer, wildflowers bloom on the mountainsides and hidden ponds shimmer in blue, making for some unforgettable hikes; in winter, downhill and cross-country skiing dominates people's minds and bodies. Timberline Lodge (p273), a handsome wood gem from the 1930s, offers glorious shelter and refreshments to both guests and non-guests all year round, and can't be missed.

Mt Hood rises above the Western Cascades, a ridge of older volcanoes stretching between Mt Rainier and Mt Shasta. These volcanoes erupted between 20 and 40 million years ago, and their peaks have long since eroded. Mt Hood began to burp toward the end of the last ice age, and geologists reckon that Mt Hood's last major eruption was about 1000 years ago.

Mt Hood is accessible year-round on US 26 from Portland (56 miles), and from Hood River (44 miles) on Hwy 35. Together with the Columbia River Hwy, these routes comprise the Mt Hood Loop, a popular scenic drive. Government Camp is at the pass over Mt Hood, and is the center of business on the mountain.

For maps, permits and information there's the **Mt Hood Information Center** (☎ 503-622-4822; www.mthood.info; 24403 E Welches Rd, Welches; ☎ 8am-5pm). Various area ranger stations provide similar services and include **Hood River** (☎ 541-352-6002; 6780 Hwy 35, Parkdale; ☎ 8am-4:30pm Mon-Sat), **ZigZag** (☎ 503-622-3191; 70220 E Hwy 26, Zigzag; ☎ 7:45am-4:30pm Mon-Sat) and **Mt Hood National Forest Headquarters** (☎ 503-668-1700; www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood; 16400 Champion Way, Sandy; ☎ 7:30-11:30am, 12:30-4:30pm Mon-Fri).