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## ***Stop 39. Mount Hood***

Arrival datetime:	Thursday, June 19, 5:40PM
Departure datetime:	Saturday, June 22, 7:20AM
Departure weather:	50° Cloudy
Sites visited:	Mount Hood National Forest
Accommodations:	Timberline Lodge
States traveled:	Oregon

We stopped at the major scenic overlooks on the way out of Crater Lake as it had been too foggy the previous day to see the whole view. We were happy to be able to recognize Mount Lassen and Mount Shasta, and we realized that, though we did not plan it, we would eventually have seen most major mountains in the Cascades Range. At the Wizard Island overlook, we saw a woman, bundled against the cold, leaning on the railing, waiting for a helicopter to arrive to bring a new dock. “It may not seem like a big thing to you,” she said, “but it is a major event around here.” At the next overlook, we saw the helicopter. Then we experienced a road closure due to the helicopter needing to land to pick up more dock pieces. It prevented us from parking at the Pumice Desert, but we could see it clearly from the car, barren red soil strewn with baseball size pieces of volcanic rock.

The tables for two in the Crater Lake Lodge dining area were set diagonally in pairs, so that the two diners sitting next to each other were closer than those with whom they were seated. This had annoyed us for the most part because every time we turned to look out the window, we were catching the eye of a stranger. But over breakfast, we thought

we might have found an advantage because our neighboring diners were talking about “Oregon’s best kept secret.” It was that there was another Crater Lake not fifty miles away, and it was just as pretty as this one, Paulina Lake. We found it on the map on the way to Mount Hood, so made it an enroute stop.

The Lake was set in the Newberry National Volcanic Monument. Unlike all the monuments we had so far visited, this was run not by the Park Service, but by the Forest Service. Hence, our park pass did not get us in without paying the fee. In every other respect, it was run just like a National Park, complete with Visitors Center, Ranger Programs, interpretive exhibits. We first did a mile loop hike at Big Obsidian Flow. The Flow was one of jagged black rock. Most was a very dark gray, some was striped with dark black or gray, but some was the very shiny black you see in jewelry. Most of the rocks were sharp-edged boulders, two to five feet in diameter. But between these, there were smaller, broken pieces that had very sharp edges. The trail was set on hard gravel and made it possible to pass safely among these dangerous objects. A few inches of snow covered part of the trail, and signs indicated that



*Big Obsidian Flow (foreground), Paulina Lake, with Mount Lassen and Mount Shasta in the distance*



*Large chunks of obsidian from the Big Obsidian Flow.*

the trail was therefore closed. But little old ladies were nimbly hopping over it, so we were not about to wimp out. From the highest point in the trail, you could see Paulina Lake. It was not as blue as Crater, but it was a deep blue. High sloping banks testified to its being set in a crater. Small fishing boats bobbed on its surface. A Ranger pulled up as we got off the trail and asked us how the trail was. Forgetting that it was supposed to be closed, we said it was beautiful. He just smiled.

We drove to East Lake, another, smaller, blue lake in the same crater that housed Paulina Lake. It was buggy and the only boats for rent were obviously for fishing. Instead, we tortured the car with a long windy narrow drive on a gravel road to

the top of Paulina Peak. From here, we had views of the snowcapped Mount Lassen, Mount Shasta, Mount Bachelor, and Three Sisters, among other peaks. We could also see the full outline of the obsidian flow, and some kind of desert basin to the southeast.

We stopped at a “resort” on Paulina Lake for lunch. The wooden sign next to the door outside the restaurant said “Closed.” But a neon sign in the window said, “Open.” We walked in and were greeted by a blond nine-year-old girl in jeans and sneakers. We asked, “Are you open?”

She said, “Yes,” and pointed to a chalkboard listing food items with no prices. “Our menu is here.” She pointed to a whiteboard opposite the chalkboard listing beverages with prices, “Our beverages are here. Just a minute.”

She came back with a waitress’ notepad. We ordered and she carefully wrote down our “Gril Chezz,” etc. We kept expecting she would be replaced. But she not only served us, but four others tables that came in after Jennifer went outside and moved the “Closed” sign to it “Open” position. We were not quite sure it was child labor, because we heard a conversation between the child and a man in the back. His, “Do you want to quit?” was met with a defiant, “Of course not!”

On the wall of the restaurant, we found newspaper articles that told us Paulina was a marauding Indian who scalped pioneers and burned ranches. He was finally killed by a frustrated cowboy. The cowboy has one post office in Oregon named after him. The marauder,

a lake, a peak, a waterfall, and who knows what else. We stopped at the waterfall next. A small stream dropped 80 feet over a broad array of colorful volcanic rock, seeming to gain speed, width, and volume as it crashed in bursts of white foam. Another fee gave us access to the Lava River cave. Molten lava had cooled on its outer edges, while the still liquid center had passed through this tube. Sand had filled in one end, and the other was a natural entrance to the now empty lava passage. It was shaped like a subway tunnel and easily could have accommodated a train for its entire mile or so length. The walls were horizontally lined, indicating the passage of different types of minerals.

Between Lava Land and Mount Hood, we were never out of sight of a mountain that dominated the not too distant horizon. Mount Bachelor’s picturesque white peak, the Three Sisters more jagged white crags flanking it, Mount Jefferson’s perfectly triangular profile, then Mount Hood. We also passed a few small, specialty-looking farms, llamas or herbs along the sides the road. Then we were once again in forest. Not the towering canopies of the California coasts, but 20-40 foot decently thick evergreen trees. Through these, we approached Timberline Lodge.

We had read from the brochure there was skiing. But we were still amazed by the scale. It was a summer camp for kids that were hotshot skiers. Our room had a view of the slopes. Just above them were the scattered peaks of Mount Hood. There was a flat rectangular groomed area just below the peak that people referred to as “the glacier.” It had snow all year round and the ski resort only

closes on Labor Day for a few weeks for maintenance. We inventoried our clothing and decided we could ski if only we had a hat. Luckily, we caught the gift shop still open and bought some balaclavas, giving us a neck warmer in the bargain. We interviewed a teenager in the parking lot and found that, though the slopes were open from 7:00AM-1:30PM, they were icy for the first few hours and slushy for the last two.

Too jaded to dress for dinner in the much-touted Cascades Dining Room, we opted to dine at the Ram's Head bar. Still, a cheese fondue was our menu item of choice in the small and eclectic menu. However, we had a large picture window view of the Mountain that we would have

had to see through twelve individual panes from our room. We even lingered for desert, watching the snowcats groom the trails.

Though our teenager had warned us against the morning ice, we were too excited to miss too much of the day and left our room at seven. After fast food breakfast and rental shop, we were on the left at 8:10AM. The slopes were icy. But no more icy than your typical eastern ski resort between major snowstorms. We were easily able to cut edges. The trails were steep but there were no bumps or moguls, all was freshly groomed and brightly illuminated in the morning sunlight.



*View from the chairlift at Timberline Ski Resort on Mount Hood.*



*Skiing on Mt. Hood, June 20, 2002.*

It was not even very cold. The balaclavas were necessary, but our three layers of long sleeved shirt, sweatshirts, and hiking rain gear were adequate against the cool breeze. We were also wearing two layers of hiking gloves, cotton and leather. To the casual eye, we appeared to be outfitted in ski clothes. There were only two lifts open and we stayed on the bottom one waiting for the ice to soften. We carved ice for an hour until we found ourselves in soft fluffy snow.

A run or two later, we headed for the glacier. Most of it was roped off for the ski camp. Racing courses of all sizes and varieties laid out with sticks and flags. But we found steep smooth slopes that allowed us to practice our turns and still

dodge enough rocks to make us connect with the fact that we were on a real mountaintop. We skied until the snow turned to thick slush, at about 11:30AM.

From the slopes, the Cascades Dining room had advertised a “ski-in, ski-out” lunch, so we hoped for a Stein Erickson-like experience. Though still nothing beats the premier restaurant at Park City, it was not bad. We had been too hungry to do the hot tub before lunch, but made for it after. We also swam. Then lazed about the lodge. Mount Jefferson loomed large in the horizon from the windows to the south, Mount Hood from the windows to the north. In a small auditorium, we caught a video on how Timberline was built during the depression by the WPA. We then roamed

with a mission, checking out the artwork and furniture, with the appreciation that it was done by blue-collar laborers on tight budgets. Everything was done by hand, from the heavy wooden furniture to the wildflowers drawings in our room.

Carpenters and blacksmiths did it under the direction of a few skilled artisans. The results are really remarkable.

Woodcarvings and iron grillwork are simple, but they fairly compete with any we had seen at other “great lodges of the west.” The handmade fixtures on window, door, and furniture latches are both inventive and functional. We had dinner at the Cascades, relieved to find that there were enough choices and the food was good, thought the wine list “under construction” and they were out of everything we ordered.

We had told the rental shop we were returning, so they had kept our skies and boots aside and minimized the paperwork for us, and we got on the slopes at 7:40AM. It was even warmer and the slush set in a half hour earlier, but we had another great day skiing. At the top this day, we smelled sulphur, an ominous

reminder that we were on a volcano.

When we got back to the Lodge, we found a National Forest Service Information Desk and asked them if the volcano was active. “Yes.” We asked them when it last erupted. “About 200 years ago.” We asked what the sulphur smell at the top was. They did not believe we had smelled it. “You can’t smell it or get to there from the chair lifts. There are a few fumaroles very close to the top that climbers sometimes encounter.” We told them that the wind must have been blowing the smell downhill. They smiled indulgently.

This time, we got to swim before lunch. We lingered in front of the windows at the Ram’s Head, writing postcards and chatting with the people who sat across from us on the big couches. One couple was from Washington and gave us tips on the drive to Olympic National Park. Another was Kelly from Portland and her friend from Florida, Diane. They had driven out to the lodge as a scenic activity for the day, giving testament to the success of the WPA project, as it was meant to provide economic assistance to the local community.

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Miles traveled: 260  
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