



CENTRAL OREGON

Adventureland!

A DOZEN ADVENTURES CLOSE TO HOME

STORY BY

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Whether you're visiting Central Oregon for the first time or call it home, there are always new adventures to be had around these parts. Go stargazing in the desert, canoe the high lakes at night or get your cowboy on at the Crooked River Roundup Horse Races. Better yet, turn our suggestions into a checklist and challenge yourself to a spring and summer full of Central Oregon adventure! See you out there.

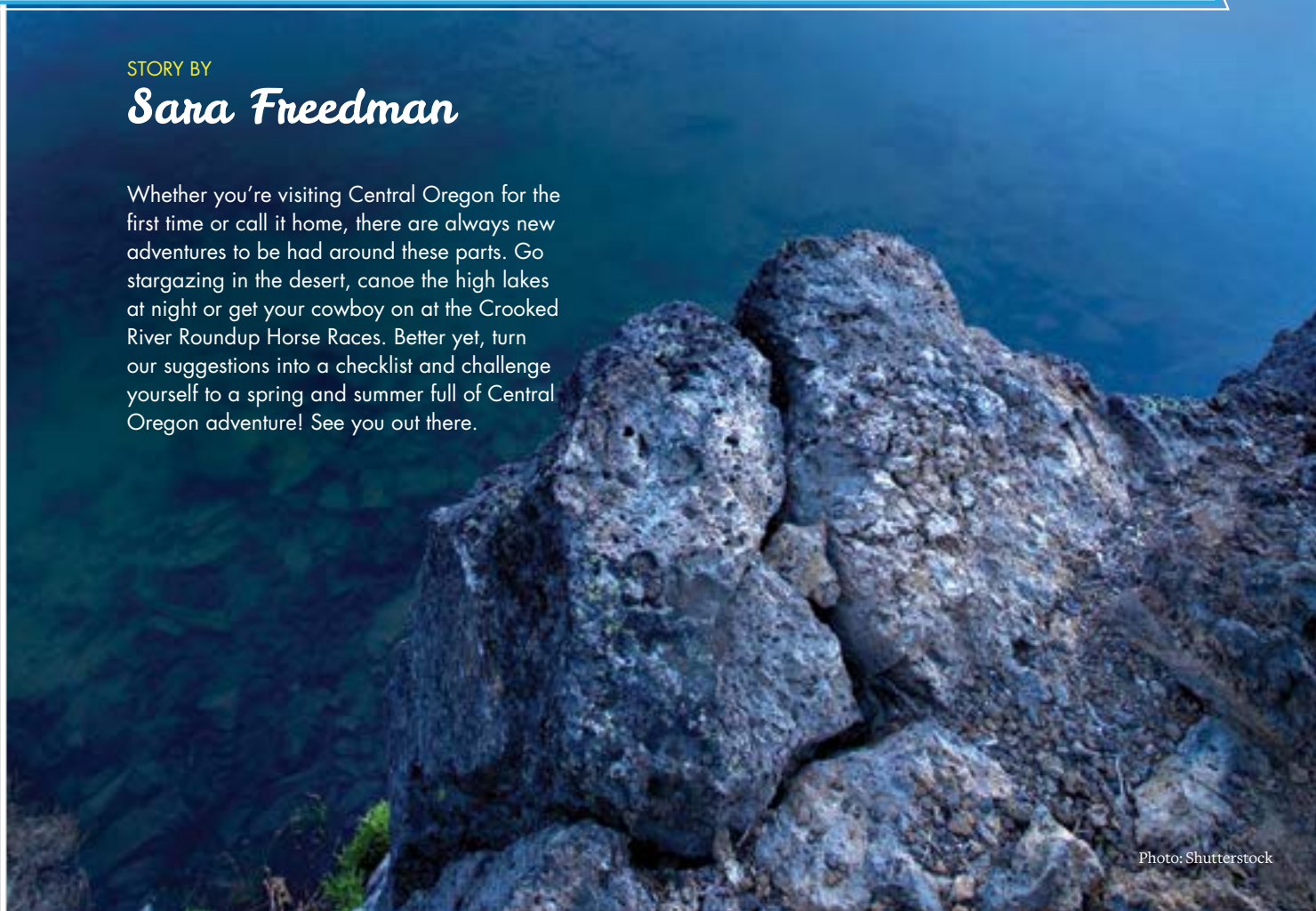


Photo: Shutterstock

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Explore Fort Rock

Rising up out of the desert 70 miles south of Bend, the ancient Fort Rock formation is eerie and beautiful all at once. The jagged rock ring was shaped by a volcanic eruption and has walls reaching 325 feet high. You can hike around the State Natural Area and then take a guided tour (by reservation with Oregon State Parks) of nearby Fort Rock Cave, where 75 pairs of sagebrush bark sandals dating back 10,000 years were discovered in 1938. Fast forward a few thousand years and check out the Fort Rock Valley Historical Homestead Museum featuring an early 20th century village complete with school, church and cabins left behind by the families who called the area home. The museum opens in May for the summer; guided cave tours are in the summer months.

OregonStateParks.org

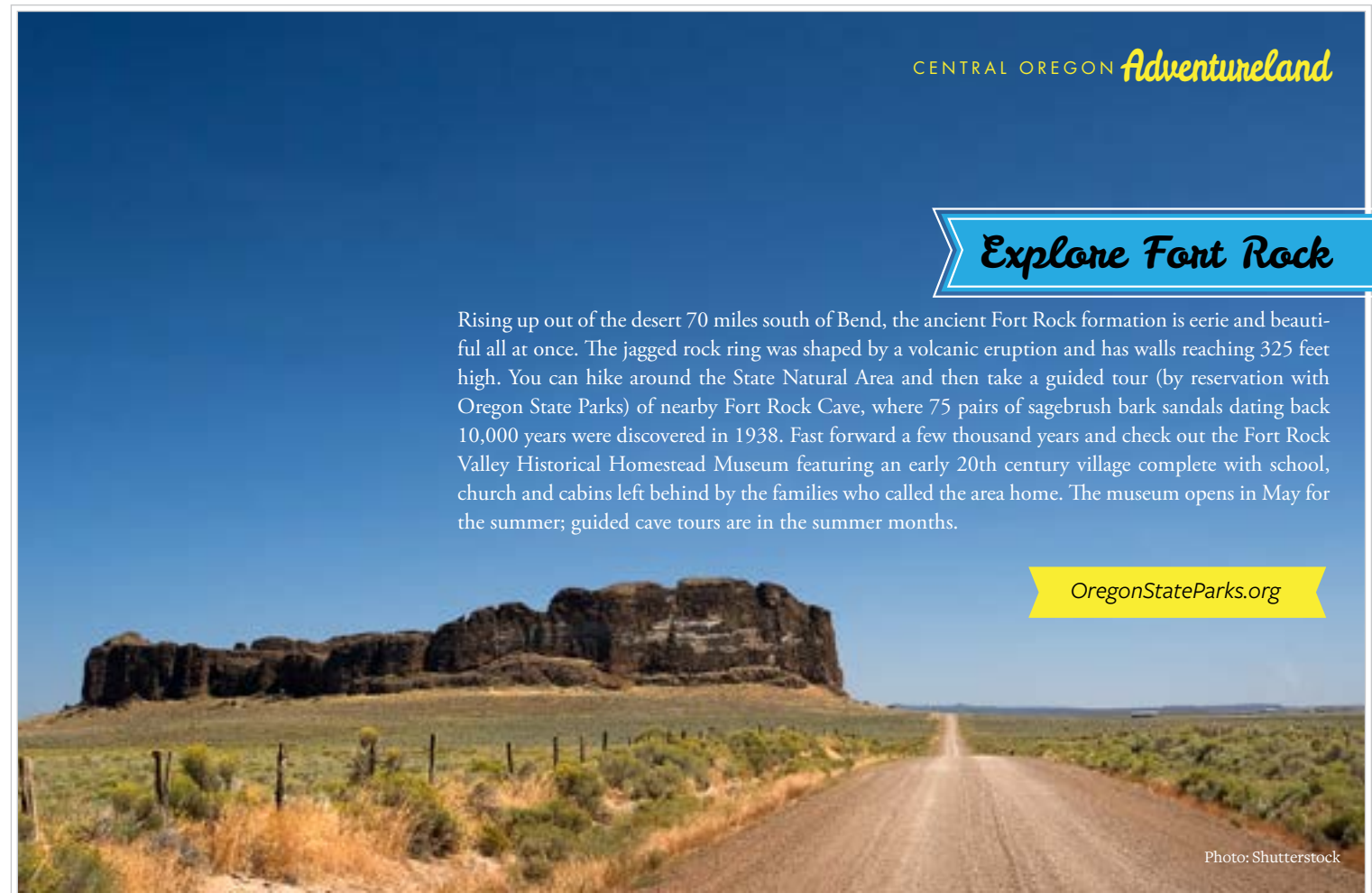


Photo: Shutterstock

Walk the Magical Metolius

The Metolius River 10 miles west of Sisters is always an adventure. There are plenty of walking trails up and down the river—a good one starts at the Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery. Check out hatchery ponds filled with trout and kokanee before you head downriver about three miles. Cross Lower Bridge 99 and head back up the river for a six-mile loop. You'll hike through beautiful old growth ponderosa pine, fir and cedar—but the star of the show is the clear, bubbling Metolius. Grab lunch at the Camp Sherman Store, which masters a perfect combination of old school quaint with new school deli counter.

MetoliusRiver.com



Photo: Christian Heeb

Jump in a Waterfall

The Paulina Plunge Downhill/Waterfall Mountain Bike Tour combines mountain biking, hiking and natural waterslides in one big adventure. This is a guided adventure that takes off from Sunriver and requires you to do nothing but show up. The tour company provides mountain bike, helmet and even a backpack, as well as shuttle service to and from Newberry Crater. You'll head out with a guide and explore six miles of forest trails by bike—stopping to jump in waterfalls and slide down natural waterslides in Paulina Creek. You can purchase an optional brown bag lunch, and all ages are welcome on this easy and fun adventure.

PaulinaPlunge.com



Photo: Paulina Plunge

Catch a Fish

Always wanted to try fly fishing? A great place for first timers is the Crooked River, about 45 minutes from Bend. Do a half-day walk-in trip with a guide company like Deep Canyon Outfitters—who claim the Crooked River offers anglers of all abilities the best opportunity to catch a few trout. The counts were last estimated at 4,500 fish per mile in this waterway, so your chances are pretty darn good. The Crooked River winds through a rugged canyon, with eagles and osprey soaring overhead, so whether you catch a fish or not, you'll enjoy a beautiful day out on the river.

DeepCanyonOutfitters.com



Photo: Andy Maphet/Deep Canyon Outfitters

Canoe Under the Moon

Canoeing is pretty much one of the most fun things you can do as a human, and our access to the Cascades Lakes makes Central Oregon an ideal place to do it. But have you ever canoed at night? Wanderlust Tours offers moonlight canoeing tours all summer long—when the full moon is out, they're up at the lakes. The tour starts at 7 p.m., and you'll see the beauty of Central Oregon in a whole new way on an evening canoe. The tour includes naturalists, gear, transportation, hot cocoa, desserts and even local craft beer.

WanderlustTours.com

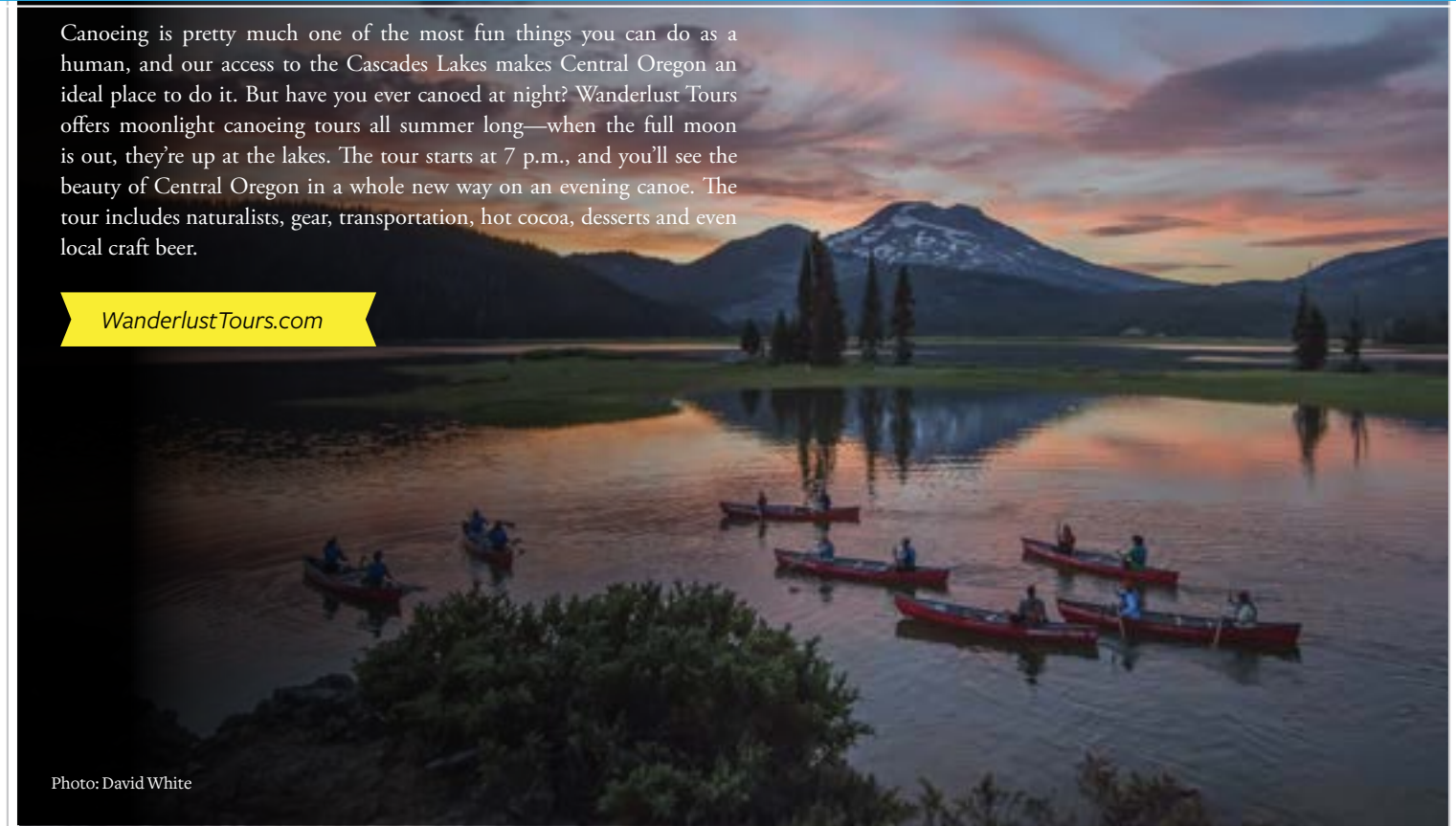


Photo: David White

Bet on a Horse

Pull on your favorite blue jeans and head to Prineville this summer for the Crooked River Roundup Horse Races. The locals come out for this beloved summer event, and you'll be right at home in a cowboy hat and boots. The beer is macro, the evenings are beautiful and the horses go fast. This is the real thing—place your bets at the window and loudly cheer your horse around the track. Spend your winnings at the Cinnabar Lounge—that's where you'll find the unofficial after party, which includes live country music and dancing. Crooked River Roundup Horse Races are July 9 through 12, 2014.

VisitPrineville.org



Photo: Shutterstock

Giddyup!

We do live in the Wild West, and every once in a while, it's fun to pretend you are an old cow poke. A number of resorts around Central Oregon offer the chance to jump on a horse. Explore trails that showcase sweeping mountain views and the sagebrush cowboy terrain of the high desert. All levels of riders welcomed.

SeventhMountain.com

Brasada.com

BlackButteRanch.com

Sunriver-Resort.com



Photo: Brasada Ranch

Run the Deschutes

Rafting the Deschutes River never gets old. Most of us don't keep up on our rafting equipment, though, so your best option is to sign up for the Big Eddy Thriller tour with Sun Country Tours. They've been doing this tour since 1978, so you know you are in experienced hands. You'll get shuttled to the Upper Deschutes River, placed on a raft and told to keep paddling! You want a little excitement with your river rafting, and this trip delivers with three miles of Class III rapids (intermediate)—enough to get the heart rate up and still keep you in the boat (most of the time).

SunCountryTours.com



Photo: Sun Country Tours



Photo: Shutterstock

Paddle around Elk Lake

Ten miles past Mt. Bachelor on Cascades Lakes Highway sits a blue gem called Elk Lake. There's a charming little lodge right off the highway that hasn't changed too much over the last 75 years, and down at the marina you can rent paddleboards, kayaks, canoes and row boats by the hour. As you paddle around the lake, you'll be surrounded by majestic Cascade mountain tops. Enjoy a cheeseburger and fries on the lodge deck, where on summer weekend evenings there's often a band playing outside.

ElkLakeResort.net

Visit Every Local Brewery

The Bend Ale Trail sends you to 12 local breweries to taste the latest and greatest in local craft brewing. Get a Bend Ale Trail passport (phone app, online form, or pick up a hard copy at Visit Bend) and then collect stamps from each brewery you visit. Complete the tour and earn a custom Bend Silipint! But really, you've already won with this excuse to hit all local breweries with purpose.

VisitBend.com

Photo: Shutterstock

Summit a Mountain

Seems like just about everyone around town has summited the South Sister and lived to brag about it—will this be your year? It's a very difficult hike, but relative to climbing other large mountains, it's considered a good one as there is a trail that goes to the top and the summit can be reached without technical gear or climbing skills. During the summer months, the hike can be done in a day, taking an average between 7 and 10 hours round trip. The hike is 12 miles up and back, with an elevation gain of about 5000 feet. The view from the top is worth the effort. Find the trailhead at Devils Lake Campground off of Cascades Lakes Highway, about 6 miles past Mt. Bachelor.

Photo: Christian Heeb

Gaze at the Stars

You know what a vast high desert is good for? Stargazing! Pine Mountain Observatory is an astronomical observatory about 30 miles southeast of Bend off of U.S. Highway 20. Built in the 1960s, it sits at 6500 feet. Check out stars, planets, meteors and more using the telescopes provided by the University of Oregon Physics Department. There are also volunteers who love to talk to newbies and set up their telescopes for visitor use. And don't worry about getting back to town in the dark—there's a rustic public campground right next to the observatory so you can spend some real quality time with the night sky. The observatory is open to the public on Friday and Saturday nights from Memorial Day weekend through the last weekend in September.

PMO.UOoregon.edu

Photo: Shutterstock