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5 Reasons Central Oregon is Mantastic!

by Jason Long

Looking for a male bonding experience that won't break the bank or scrimp on excitement? Think Central Oregon. Easy to access with SkyWest service to Redmond/Bend, this juniper-scented stretch of high desert serves up near-perfect summers and plenty of activity. Here are five reasons it's a sure bet for a great guy-getaway.



1. GET YOUR GAME ON.

Central Oregon is golf mecca. The sun shines more than 300 days out of every year. The terrain is gorgeous and varied. More than 30 courses offer plenty of options for every skill level and pocketbook. Combine your playing time

with some spectator status and plan your trip around a tournament. A major championship on The Champions Tour (formerly the PGA Seniors), The JELD-WEN Tradition takes place August 16 through 22 and attracts big names to Sunriver's Crosswater Club just outside of Bend. The same club hosts the West's largest amateur tourney, the Pacific Amateur August 30 through September 4.

2. COWBOY UP.

When the local lumber industry declined, Sisters, Oregon reinvented itself by emphasizing its Old West roots. Just walking the wooden sidewalks of this kitschy Western town makes you swagger. To feel like John Wayne, check out a local guest



ranch or book a trail ride with an outfitter. From working the herd with honest-to-gosh top-hands to simply exploring on a guided ride, your time in the saddle will be well spent.

3. TAKE TO THE WATER.

The Deschutes and Metolius rivers offer blue-ribbon fly-fishing for everything from the elusive Redside Trout to fighting Steelhead. Area waters also include crystal clear lakes and rippling streams. There's plenty of white-water rafting to boot. Expert guides can help you maximize your experience.

4. EAT, DRINK, BE MERRY.

There are lots of good restaurants in Central Oregon. (The Blacksmith, a local top-pick, has been favorably reviewed in *The New York Times*.) Plan on eating well, but be advised, it's the potent potables that really set this place apart. Haven't got any hard data here, but I bet this place has more microbrews and small-batch distilled drink per capita than anywhere else in the nation. Bendistillery makes a bevy of award-winning beverages—Crater Lake Vodka, Cascade Mountain Gin, Cofia Hazelnut Espresso Vodka and Manama, a pepper-infused vodka.



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So many things to do.

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EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN.



McMenamins in Bend's old St. Francis School

There are a bunch of micro-brew-eries—a half-dozen at least. Deschutes Brewery founded in 1988 serves up locally inspired products like Black Butte Porter and Cascade Ale. It should be on every beer-lover's itinerary. McMenamins, a Portland-based outfit that blankets the state, is noteworthy for its Bend location—a former Catholic school.

5. UNWIND AT A SPA.

Admit it. After a day of outdoor adventure a little pampering is pretty sweet. Treat yourself to a massage, maybe even a facial. Soothing spas dot the Central Oregon map. Several resorts—Sunriver in the community of

the same name and Five Rivers in Sisters come to mind—have on-site facilities. Other hotels can hook you up with one of the many day spas in the area.

Pick and choose from this recreation roster to tailor a trip that's just right for you and your friends. Ask about special packages that fit your idea of fun. Then head for the high desert. One word of warning—this place is habit forming. Bet you'll be back to ski in winter. Didn't I tell you? Mount Bachelor is just up the road. ■



Sage Springs Club and Spa at Sunriver



Sunset at Mount Bachelor

SPA: SUNRIVER RESORT | MCMENAMINS: LIZ DEVLIN

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