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# Lazy Days

A BLACK BUTTE RANCH GETAWAY IS GOOD FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY



photo credit: Mike Houska



photo credit: Rick Schafer

Every year about now, I'm reminded what an absolute delight it is to ride a bike down a wooded path on a hot summer day with nothing but time on my side. Last year, the pleasant rediscovery came in June, during a week's trip to Black Butte Ranch. After a long lazy afternoon at the Glaze Meadow pool—swimming, reading, noshing on hot dogs—my daughters and I set off on a bicycle tour of the resort. As we took off in our sundresses and a leisurely summertime stupor through a forest of pine and aspen, our skin was bathed in pleasure and the delights of summer vacation were held in perfect freeze-frame.

Black Butte Ranch in Central Oregon offers a fantastic resort experience. Its location means it's not too far from anywhere in Oregon (two to three hours from most of the Willamette Valley and Southern Oregon). Black Butte is just a few miles west of the quaint western town of Sisters, which offers dining, shopping and grocery options, on top of what is available at Black Butte. But once we arrive on the Ranch property, it's tempting to just stay put in the peaceful woods. What a treat to unpack our bags at a lovely forest cabin and not get in a car for a few days, instead filling time with board games and picnics on the deck, walks or bike rides to the pool, the recreation room, a restaurant, a country store.

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Black Butte is, for many, a longstanding family tradition. Some groups come back year after year, and have since the Ranch was founded, over 40 years ago. We used to visit Black Butte every year when I was a child, and a few years ago we picked up the tradition again. On that June day last year, we rode first from the pool to Paulina Springs, which burbles out of the ground right next to one of the Ranch's walking/biking paths. These trails—18 miles of them, total—are the heart and soul of the resort. They connect, flow, and allow for exploration of every corner of the sprawling 1800-acre ranch. The springs is a hidden gem—picture-perfect and peaceful. The girls barreled from their bikes into the trees, pretending to be forest nymphs.

Back on our bikes, past the springs, the trail emerged into the Ranch's large central meadow, where cattle feed and bald eagles, geese and songbirds glide overhead. In addition to Black Butte itself, the Cascade Range peaks Mt. Washington, Three Finger Jack and Mt. Jefferson hang on the horizon. Then it was on to the General Store, next to the stables, where we found a small but bountiful Saturday Market, hosted by Schoolhouse Produce out of nearby Redmond. Potatoes, corn, nectarines, apples, greens, berries and more spilled from overflowing tables, providing color as much as temptation. We acquired a few juicy peaches to enjoy in the shade before continuing on our journey.

Spring, a good time to get ready for summer travel.


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Past the stables is the heart of the resort—the Lodge itself, and the site of the Ranch’s fine dining destination, the Lodge Restaurant, where I’ve had several fantastic meals over the years. For decades, the Lodge has maintained a reputation of excellence, for good reasons. The setting is one. The building isn’t new, but the design—a multilevel structure with lots of huge windows and killer views at every turn—is timeless. Another reason is the food. These days the restaurant sticks with a philosophy of locally sourced foods, prepared by Chef Dean Ecker and his team.

We cycled through the aspen grove to next pass Robert’s Pub, on the Big Meadow golf course, after a brief pit stop at the playground nearby for some time on the swings. We’ve eaten here many times for family friendly meals. This casually elegant restaurant serves pub food, cocktails, wine and some of Central Oregon’s famous local microbrews.

By the time we looped back around to where we started, Glaze Meadow Recreation Center, everyone was tired and happy. Black Butte has four pools, as well as 19 tennis courts and two 18-hole championship golf courses. Glaze Meadow Recreation Center is a large recreation center, with an indoor and outdoor pool, as well as a fitness center, equipment rental shop and snack stand. It’s also the site of Black Butte Ranch’s spa, which is modest but lovely. The outdoor pool is a masterpiece, with a green grass perimeter, waterfall, children’s pool, fountain play area, hot tub big enough for 18 and lots of comfortable lawn chairs.

We were still in our swimsuits and the weather was still in the 90s, so why not? We jumped back in the pool. With three more leisurely summer days in front of us, time was on our side and the living was good.



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