

### AT-A-GLANCE

**Drive time:** 5 hours from Bend, OR

**Season:** Year-round, although winter snows periodically close the campground road.

**Great fall destination:** aspen, hot springs, bids

## HOT SPRINGS CAMPGROUND



Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge  
GREATER HART-SHELDON REGION

As the name implies, you'll find a great soaking at the Hot Springs Campground located on the eastern flank of Hart Mountain. Soakers can choose between two hot springs - the protected comfort of a 6-foot deep pool surrounded by wind-blocking stone walls, or a primitive pool hidden off a closed road on the backside of the parking area.

In a short stroll from this 29-site campground, you're likely to see many birds, including Northern Harriers, Bullock's Orioles, Yellow Warblers and Greater Sage-Grouse. Cold Creek and Bond Creek flow in from the south and southeast respectively, joining forces to create Rock Creek. Each of these riparian corridors forms long arms that extend out from the center of the basin and abound with designated campsites and hiking opportunities.

Autumn is a particularly pleasant time to visit, as the aspen trees that fill Hart Mountain's numerous draws and basins turn fiery red, orange and yellow, accenting the already dramatic topography of the fault block mountain's eastern flank. At 5,600 feet in elevation, this time of year brings the possibility of snowfall, creating stark contrasts between the red rocks, green lichens and golden foliage. *Photo: Mark Darnell*

**DRIVING DIRECTIONS** From the Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge headquarters, head south following signs for the Hot Springs Campground. About mile down the well-graded gravel road, the road splits. Stay right, following signs for the Hot Springs Campground, which is roughly 4 miles south of headquarters.

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### AT-A-GLANCE

**Drive time:** 2.5 hours from Bend, OR

**Season:** year-round

**Great fall destination:** cooler temps, solitude

## COTTONWOOD CANYON



Cottonwood Canyon State Park  
JOHN DAY RIVER BASIN

Rugged and vast, Cottonwood Canyon State Park holds vertical cliffs carved by the John Day River, deep canyons and arid, rocky grasslands that extend for miles in all directions. With 8,000-plus acres open for exploration in the park and another 10,000 acres of BLM-managed public lands surrounding the park, you'll have no shortage of room to roam in this unique landscape.

For hiking you can take the Pinnacles Trail or the Lost Corral Trail to follow either side of the John Day River downstream. Each is 4.3 miles one way. Upstream, the Hard Stone Trail travels 1.5 miles one way and is open to foot traffic only. Or, you can strike out on your own and follow old, unmaintained ranching roads that lead into the back country. The J.S. Burres day-use area is a popular boat launch for rafts, kayaks, canoes and drift boats. For anglers, the John Day River has steelhead, catfish, carp and smallmouth bass.

Be sure to carry plenty of water as potable water is available only at the developed day-use area and in the campground. Note that the park doesn't have cell phone coverage anywhere. *Photo: Mark Darnell*

**DRIVING DIRECTIONS** The park is located on Highway 206 between Condon and Wasco. Because the park is new, online mapping services may not show the park name or location. You can use the lat and long 45.478371,-120.47233 to get driving directions to the main park entrance.

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### AT-A-GLANCE

**Drive time:** 7.5 hours from Bend, OR

**Season:** Best May-October. Other months are subject to closure due to snow, mud, running water over the road

**Great fall destination:** cooler temps

## BIRCH CREEK CAMPGROUND



OWYHEE CANYONLANDS

Head here to enjoy cream and chocolate colored hills, barren red cliffs, towering rock spires and historic buildings on the Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places. The Birch Creek Ranch, established in the early 1900s by a Basque shepherd and a West Virginia cattle rancher, is still evident today. Stone walls built in the Basque tradition ascend the mesa while remnants of a waterwheel hint at lush gravity-irrigated alfalfa fields.

From the Birch Creek Historic Ranch, you can follow an old road/trail that heads upstream for about a mile before the path disappears. If you want to continue hiking, stay on the east side of the drainage and follow game trails or make your way cross country as far into the Birch Creek Canyon as you like. The canyon is a beautiful green oasis in this remote area of desert. Keep your eye out for wildlife on this hike including bighorn sheep and deer. *Photo: Devin Dahlgren*

**DRIVING DIRECTIONS** From Jordan Valley, continue north on Highway 95. After 8 miles, turn left (west) at the Jordan Craters sign onto Cow Creek Road. Follow BLM Owyhee River access signs for 28 miles to the Birch Creek Ranch.

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### AT-A-GLANCE

**Drive time:** 1 hour from Bend, OR

**Season:** April to November (road closed Dec 1-Mar 31)

**Great fall destination:** fall color, sleeping rattlesnakes, lower creek level

## ALDER SPRINGS



Whychus-Deschutes proposed wilderness area  
CENTRAL OREGON BACKCOUNTRY

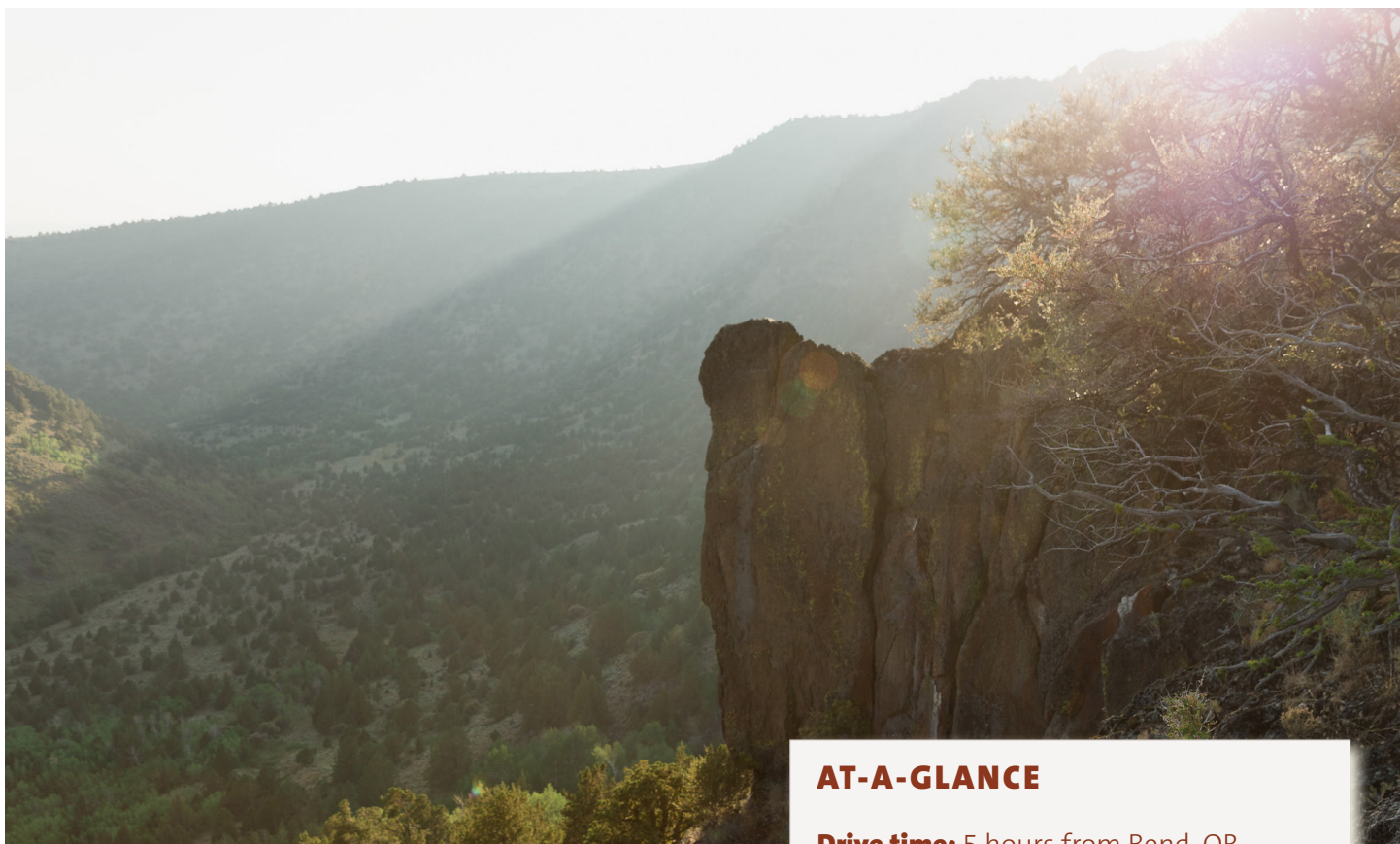
Located on Lower Whychus Creek, Alder Springs is an oasis in the high desert. The trail starts at the top of the Whychus Creek Canyon and descends gradually to the creek, with panoramic views of the Cascades, towering rock formations, and the rushing waters of Whychus Creek below. At 1.5 miles, hikers reach Alder Springs, which is so large that many people mistake it for Whychus Creek itself. Though you can't see it through the dense vegetation, cool water is gushing out of the hillside here at a constant flow of 60 cubic feet per second. Once you've reached the confluence of Alder Springs and Whychus Creek, you have the option of returning to the trailhead the way you came, or, for an additional challenge, you can ford the creek and continue on the trail to the spectacular canyon where Whychus Creek and the Deschutes River come together. The maintained trail ends at the Deschutes, so after enjoying the cool shade of towering Ponderosas and the deafening roar of the river, return the way you came for a round-trip hike of about 6 miles. *Photo: ONDA archive*

**DRIVING DIRECTIONS** From Bend, head west on Highway 20. After 13 miles, turn right on Fryrear Road. At the intersection with Highway 126, go straight to continue on Holmes Rd. After 1.5 miles, take a right to stay on Holmes Rd. At milepost 7, take a left on NF 1393. Go past the kiosk and up the hill. After about 5 miles on the gravel road, turn right at the sign for Alder Springs Trailhead.

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### AT-A-GLANCE

**Drive time:** 5 hours from Bend, OR

**Hiking distance:** 16 miles round-trip (10 miles one-way w/ shuttle option)

**Great fall destination:** fall color, cooler temps

## BIG INDIAN GORGE



STEENS MOUNTAIN REGION

The Big Indian Gorge Trail is 8 miles to the headwall of the gorge and passes through meadows as well as cottonwood and aspen groves. It's easy to follow for the first 7 miles and then it fades away and becomes a cross-country hike. There are three stream crossings along the way, which can be difficult or impassable at times during spring and early summer. The U-shaped gorges, carved by glaciers, are sure to amaze, as will the wildflowers and waterfalls. A number of primitive campsites exist along the way.

For those hikers interested in turning the round-trip hike into a one-way trip with a shuttle on the far end, plan for a climb out of the gorge to the Steens Loop Road and to add two miles, for a ten-mile one-way trip. From South Steens Campground hike up the gorge until the trail starts to disappear. The drainage on the north side of Big Indian Gorge is your exit, and is a steep 2,000' cross-country hike up and out of the canyon. There are intermittent traces of a trail, and you may find yourself crossing back and forth over the seasonal creek on your climb out. *Photo: Sage Brown*

**DRIVING DIRECTIONS** From Burns, take State Highway 78 southeast for approximately 2 miles. Turn right onto State Highway 205 and travel south for 60 miles to Frenchglen. Travel approximately 9 miles, then turn left on the Steens Mountain Loop Road south entrance. The trailhead is found in the South Steens Campground, which is just over 18 miles from State Highway 205.

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