

Fun Activities

via al fresco

Outdoor activities abound in and near Salem. With the Willamette River flowing through the city, there are many opportunities for water sports – from water-skiing to kayaking and canoeing to fishing for Trout and Salmon. The North Fork of the Santiam River, a major tributary to the Willamette, and many other smaller rivers also offer fishing opportunities.

Silver Falls State Park near Silverton is the state's largest state park. Only twenty-six miles east of Salem, this park's trails accommodate hiking, bicycling and horse riding. Here nature has carved a canyon that contains ten magnificent waterfalls – all accessible through a network of trails.

If bird watching is of interest to you, there are an abundance of opportunities to take your binoculars and hope to find an unusual or rarely sighted bird. To the west of Salem is Baskett Slough, a wildlife refuge area where birders are often found. This national wildlife refuge feature grasslands, farmland, forest and shallow water wetlands. Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge, 20 minutes south of Salem, also offers nature opportunities. Nearly 200 wildlife species may be seen on the refuge including many species of birds, deer, reptiles and amphibians. The refuge

has wildlife observation areas and trails that meander through wetland and oak/ash forests to allow visitors a close-up view.

The natural experience of the outdoors is best taken as a pedestrian. If hiking and walking is what you enjoy, you will not be disappointed in the numerous parks in the Salem area. The Union Street Railroad Bridge connects two large urban parks, Wallace Marine and Riverfront Park in Salem; connecting their trail systems into a single bicycle and pedestrian network. Bush's Pasture Park, walking distance from historic downtown Salem, features biking and walking trails, tennis courts, playing fields and playgrounds, and a soap box derby track.

To really experience nature in all its glory, you need to go to the mountain forests. The Willamette National Forest encompasses seven volcanic peaks, including Mt. Jefferson which can be seen from Salem's hills. A part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Cascade Range provides geothermal activity that heats natural hot springs.

Breitenbush Hot Springs provides many amenities for those seeking physical and mental solace. There are several hot springs from which to choose to soak away your cares. At the hot spring pools you'll find that some visitors are comfortable with the "clothing optional" environment while others choose to wear swimsuits.

Opal Creek Wilderness is one of the last great old-growth forest reserves in western Oregon. The extensive trail network in this wilderness provides access to the breathtakingly beautiful Opal Canyon. This 35,000-acre watershed lies 42 miles northeast of Salem. Here you'll find 45 miles of streams, spectacular waterfalls, lakes and pools.



OREGON STATE PARKS

North Falls, Silver Falls State Park

Photos below, l to r: Canoeing on the Willamette River; Union Street pedestrian bridge; Baskett Slough; Opal Creek.

