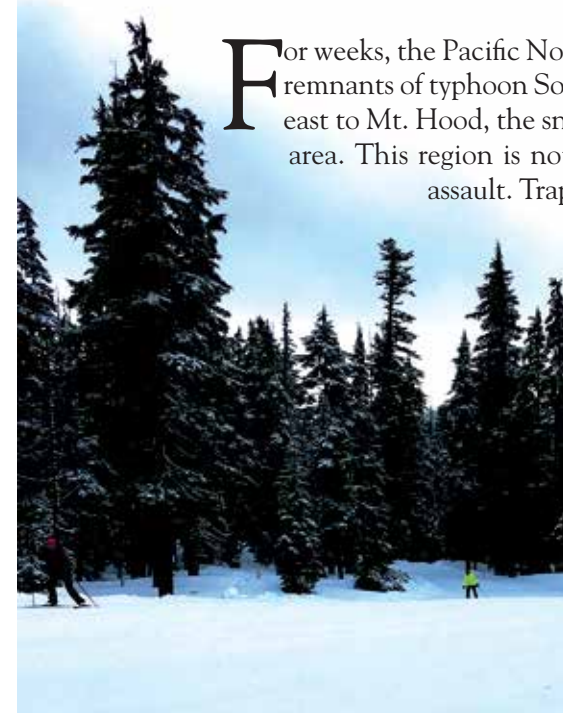


Into the eye of the storm

Relaxing, invigorating cross-country ski retreat to Mt. Hood



For weeks, the Pacific Northwest has been under siege from remnants of typhoon Songda. From Eugene to Seattle and east to Mt. Hood, the snow, ice and rain have ravaged the area. This region is not prepared for this type of winter assault. Trapped indoors, residents are getting restless. It's time to break free and retreat — not to the glorious sunshine of the south nor to a sandy beach abroad, but into the eye of the storm.

Escape to Mt. Hood and the surrounding communities to enjoy the pleasures of a wild winter in the Pacific Northwest. Pack up the gear and head to this winter wonderland, for the exhilaration, adventure, and joy of a cross-country ski retreat.

envisioned the cabin maintaining its quality and uniqueness for more than 100 years.

The rich reds and browns of the living room create warmth that defies the frigid cold outside. This is the first line of defense. The wood stove steps in as the second line, with glowing, red-hot embers permeating the room with additional warmth. Four guest rooms are available for rent, and each expresses its own personality. After settling in, it's time to head into Hood River for dinner.



creamy, perfectly ripe avocado. It sits atop a crunchy, Asian-marinated slaw tossed with red chili for spice. Try the lamb shank braised for hours in au jus. The tender lamb falls apart when eaten and leaves the faintest essence of rosemary and thyme when finished. Another appealing option is the duck breast, pan-seared and topped with a chanterelle mushroom demi-glaze finished with cognac, Dijon and cream. The mashed potatoes are silky and smooth in contrast to the crisp seasonal vegetables.

To finish the meal, order the Chocolate Gateau Ganache. The sweet, tart raspberry mousse lies between two layers of moist chocolate cake. A thin layer of dark chocolate ganache coats the entire dessert and cracks when pierced with a fork. Silky raspberry sauce decorates the plate while fresh whipped cream with thinly sliced apples adorns the cake, adding additional texture. One bite of this dessert will satisfy the most devoted chocoholic. After an amazing meal, it's time to return to the lodge for a good night's sleep.



Day 2 – The Adventure
Wake to the smell of fresh-brewed coffee. Steel-cut oats cooked with

Story and photos by Tracy Beard

banana become sweet, creamy, and soft. Mixed berries provide texture, acidity, and color to the dish. The fried eggs arrive with a light sprinkling of blue cheese and a dusting of parsley. The eggs are nestled next to chicken-bacon-pineapple sausage, sautéed with caramelized onions and thinly sliced fresh apple. The sausage dish delivers a combination of flavors both salty and sweet. It balances perfectly with fresh orange juice and toasted English muffins. A basket filled with mini pastries: cream puffs, almond-paste bear claws, and buttery croissants rest on the table.

Now nourished, it's time to prepare for this outdoor adventure. What is required to ensure a perfect day? The right gear and the right lunch is a great place to begin. Head back into Hood River and stop at Boda's Kitchen to pick up a picnic lunch. Forget about the traditional ham and cheese sandwich or a PB&J; let Sirota Johnston, or one of her staff, assemble a meal made in heaven.

A winter picnic requires something hot
Packed in a vacuum-sealed thermos, Boda's creamy, perfectly seasoned Bean and Kale Soup is a luscious first course. Move on to the French triple-cream Brie along with Sleeping Beauty cheese from Cascadia Creamery. A few slices of Fra mani mortadella and Molinari hot Toscana Italian meats pair impeccably with the dried Angelino plums and Pichu berries. Herbed Valencia almonds are easy to munch on, and the Spanish olives add just the right brininess to the meal. Add a few slices of Lou's bread. A local resident, Lou supplies Boda's Kitchen and several other local restaurants with fresh, artisanal bread each day. Finish this amazing picnic with a mini maple-pecan bite, a flourless chocolate-cake bite, and a few tiny wedges of Sirota's lemon bars. It's a picnic never to be forgotten.

Now amply supplied with food, take a short drive to any of the four groomed cross-country destination parks: Mt. Hood Meadows, Teacup, Trillium Lake, or Cooper Spur. Several less-maintained parks are scattered in between for those looking for a bit more solitude and who have their own gear. Cooper Spur is the target

this trip. Rental gear is available at the lodge, along with the necessary track pass.

Cooper Spur is a one-stop shop. Winter explorers can stay at the lodge and downhill ski, cross-country ski, snowshoe, and eat at the Crooked



Tree Tavern and Grill. Cooper Spur Nordic Park offers an array of trails: short easy loops for beginners and more difficult, longer trails for hardcore athletes. Maps are available for guidance. With groomed trails, a map and fresh snow, anyone can kick and glide their way through the beautiful forest. Workers groom Cooper Spur trails every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the season.

Before leaving, stop in the Crooked Tree Tavern and enjoy a Tilly Jane Rumble. The hot chocolate spiked with 100-proof peppermint schnapps will remove any residual cold after skiing. Exhausted but exhilarated, head just down the road back to the lodge to shower and get ready for dinner.

Double Mt. Brewery is located in Hood River on Fourth Street. Enjoy an artisanal beer with a New Haven style pizza. This pizza has light toppings and a

At Double Mt. Brewery, opt for something out of the ordinary and try the Truffle Shuffle pizza, a white pizza with mozzarella, goat cheese, marinated portabella mushrooms, and green onions.



Tracy Beard, pictured at left enjoying a picnic in the snow, is an aspiring travel and food writer. The former Longview resident now lives in Vancouver, Wash.

Day 1 – The Escape

Two major highways along the Columbia River Gorge lead to Hood River. Both I-84 in Oregon and Washington's SR-14 experienced consistent shutdowns throughout January. Sometimes the only escape route to the mountain is US 26 in Oregon through Sandy and then OR 35 around the back side of Mt. Hood. Leave mid-morning and make a quick stop at Joe's Donut Shop in Sandy for the most delightful pastry ever made. The Cronut is a light and flaky croissant deep-fried and dipped in a sugar glaze. There is nothing else like it.

Farther down the road, stop for a quick lunch at the Huckleberry Inn in Government Camp, a quaint little town on the south side of Mt. Hood near many of the downhill ski resorts.



The Huckleberry Inn Restaurant is an old-fashioned diner. Enormous donuts line up along the back counter. The daily menu offers burgers, shakes, salads, and fried foods. Try the fried halibut and chips. The crispy fish is lightly fried and tender without being greasy. The chips are golden brown and served piping hot. When finished, drive 28 miles to Parkdale and settle into a room at the Big Foot Lodge B&B.



Big Foot Lodge is perched on a hill with an uninterrupted view of Mt. Hood. Twenty-five years ago, Nilsa Nippolt and her then husband designed and built a one-of-a-kind log cabin. Nilsa

Above: Big Foot Lodge is often snow-covered during winter months. Large foreboding icicles hanging from the roof partially obscure the perfectly framed view of Mt. Hood through the gigantic picture windows. At left: Brittany Beard, ready for an old-fashioned lunch at Huckleberry Inn. Right: A dining alcove at Three Rivers Grill.



Just 10 minutes away on Oak Street is the Three Rivers Grill. A perfect dining spot any time of year, the restaurant is perched high on the hill overlooking the Columbia River. The wrap-around deck is available for seating during favorable seasons (photos, above).

A winter meal should begin with a hot beverage. The Hot Apple Pie cocktail is delivered steaming hot, topped with whipped cream. Hold the cup, take a sip, and feel your body warm from the inside out. The Spanish Coffee is another tempting option.

Cuisine at the Three Rivers Grill is Pacific Northwest served in an elegant but casual style. Start with the ahi tuna appetizer. The fresh and clean-tasting tuna rests inside half a smooth,

IF YOU GO Hood River Escape

Restaurant Suggestions

Three Rivers Grill
601 Oak Street, Hood River, Ore
Great for dinner and drinks

Boda's Kitchen
404 Oak Street, Hood River
Awesome picnic lunch

Double Mountain Brewery
8 Fourth Street, Hood River
Fantastic for a beer, lunch, or dinner

Where to Rent Cross-Country Ski Gear

Cooper Spur Mountain Resort
10755 Cooper Spur Road, Mt. Hood
Adult Rentals Full Package \$25

2nd Wind Sports
202 State Street, Hood River
Adult Rental Full Package \$25

Mt. Hood Meadows Nordic Center
14040 Hwy 35, Mt. Hood, OR
Adult Rental Full Package \$29

Otto's Ski Shop
38716 Pioneer Blvd
Sandy, OR 97055
Adult Rental Full Package \$20

Where to Cross-Country Ski

Cooper Spur Mountain Resort
10755 Cooper Spur Rd, Mt. Hood
Track Fee \$15

Mt. Hood Meadows Nordic Center
14040 Hwy 35, Mt. Hood
Track Fee \$19

Tea Cup Nordic
Oregon Hwy 35, located one mile north of the Mt. Hood Meadows turn-off
Track Fee \$10 donation

Trillium Lake
US-26 E. Mt Hood Hwy
Look for sign on right side of the road.
Free