

Preface

Oregon has so many options for outdoor recreation that we are in danger of becoming a cliché. There is a guidebook for every pursuit imaginable and Oregonians love getting outside.

Mountaineers and hikers flock to the Cascades and to the rich national forests throughout the state. The Columbia River Gorge, famous for its high winds, attracts windsurfers and kiteboarders. White-water kayakers run the wild and scenic rivers of central and southern Oregon. Rock climbers, bicyclists, and skiers populate central Oregon's high desert outdoor playground.

When I was approached to write this book, I wondered if we really needed another guidebook. But, as I learned more about the concept and began the research, I realized it was perfect: a guidebook for nontechnical climbing (called "scrambling") covering peaks in every ecoregion of the state. It sounded like a working vacation.

As I embarked on the scrambles, I discovered that getting to the trailhead in remote mountain ranges is not straightforward at all. Detours scraped into ridges; washboarded and rutted roads ended abruptly; and jeep roads were so out of grade my van threatened to flip every time I hit a rut. I never quite knew what I would find. I began carrying a tow rope, and fortunately I only needed it once!

Even my months of preparation had not prepared me for the stunning natural beauty I would encounter. At Steens Mountain a full moon illuminated the towering western juniper as coyotes howled a serenade. The darkness and quiet were almost palpable. In the Wallowa Mountains I was struck by the number of high peaks surrounded by deep glacial valleys and high, sharp ridges. The awe-inspiring scenery was matched by the wilderness solitude—I was almost always alone on Wallowa summits.

Yet not all scrambles are so remote. Scrambling in more accessible and popular locations has its rewards, too. It may be a nice change, after primitive camping or backpacking, to visit a campground with running water.

This book covers a range of scrambles that should appeal to many types of scramblers. Some scrambles are short, located in unique places that deserve your attention. These are a good introduction to scrambling for less-intrepid hikers or perhaps families hiking with older children.

Some scrambles are for the adventurous and hardy—mile after mile of harsh terrain, difficult climbing, and endless sky once you reach that summit. Those scrambles demand patience. Those scrambles reward you with a surprise view of a family of mountain goats nimbly crossing a nearly vertical cliff face, or a herd of pronghorn antelope racing away across the sage-covered plain.

I hope this book will inspire you to explore new places around Oregon—some wild and some not so wild. Use it, too, for visiting familiar places with a fresh perspective. We are stewards of a rich heritage of natural wonder. By visiting these places, we can enjoy them and work for their preservation for the future.