

# McCall's Mountain Biking Magic:

## A dreamy blend of trails with something for everyone



I stood up on my mountain bike's pedals as dusk fondled the air, wrapping the evening in a tight embrace. A cliff tumbled toward Payette Lake, and in the distance a mountain peak pricked at the patchwork blue sky. Nearby, a dark-winged bird banked, aiming for a pine.

The gravel pathway I was following ended on top of Ponderosa Park's Osprey Point and I rested on a bench. My bike leaned behind me, like a friend looking over my shoulder. Quiet permeated the evening, yet McCall lay a mere two miles away.

Civilization seemed more distant, though, as breathtaking scenery and serenity whirled around me. McCall's mountain biking had gripped me in its spell, a dreamy blend of dense forests, meadows, logging roads and skinny trails. Best of all, this magic is available to everyone, regardless of their mountain biking ability.

### Ponderosa State Park

A one thousand acre peninsula jutting into Payette Lake, the park

boasts 150-foot ponderosa pines, red-tail hawks, bald eagles and colorful wildflowers. It offers mountain bikers a combination of dirt roads, skinny trails and two-tracks that practically demand a slow pedal. You'll find yourself stopping frequently to look up at the canopy of trees or watch a fox scamper across a meadow.

Riders of all abilities can enjoy the Fox Run Mountain Bike Trail, a wide ramble through the forest, or tackle the 300-foot climb to Osprey Point. From there, more adventurous cyclists cruise down Huckleberry Bay Mountain Bike Trail, a skinny path that twists through tight trees and over exposed roots. Be sure to check in at the Visitor's Center for trail maps and route advice.

For more information contact Ponderosa State Park at 208.634.2164 or visit <http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/ponderosa.aspx>.

### Brundage Mountain Resort

On a summer afternoon, I stood on top of Brundage Mountain, straddling my mountain bike and looking out over

the valley far below. It stretched into velvety patches of green and brown, and the Seven Devils Mountains poked craggy fingers into the sky. Nearby, the Bluebird chairlift churned, whisking more cyclists up the mountain. I hopped on my bike and steered onto the South Lodge Lane followed by Elk Trail, bypassing the gnarly Zorro and Growler. Following a series of mellow switchbacks, I cruised down 1,800 vertical feet back to the lodge.

Typically open July fourth through Labor Day weekend, Friday through Sunday, Brundage features chairlift-assisted mountain-biking on more than 30 miles of trails over about 1,300 acres. More aggressive riders can challenge themselves by climbing to the top and then cruising down.

"There's something for beginner to advanced riders," says Jared Montague, Brundage's director of sales and marketing. "It's very pleasing to the palette."

Day passes and one-ride lift tickets are available, as well as rentals—check with Brundage for current prices



and schedules. For more information contact Brundage Mountain Resort at 208.634.4151 or 800.888.7544 or visit <http://www.brundage.com>.

### Tamarack Resort

On another sunny afternoon, I rested on a picnic bench on top of Tamarack, North America's newest destination resort, near the Summit Express chairlift. The wind riffled through the trail map and dust layered my skin. Lake Cascade glimmered almost 3,000 vertical feet away, and 30 miles of trails branched out below me, just waiting for my fat tires.

From the top of Tamarack Express, beginners can cruise down La Pura Vida for a serpentine descent. The dusty trail hooks up to other routes before spitting cyclists at the base of the chairlift for the ride back up.

In addition, the Tamarack Meadow trails line Lake Cascade and skirt around the golf course before rolling into foothills on single-track and two-track paths. These routes provide families and beginners a relaxing jaunt with endless views of the lake and countryside.

"The International Mountain Biking Association team that built the trails did a great job of playing with the terrain," says Jesse Murphy, Tamarack's public relations coordinator. "You can go up the mountain for more challenging biking or stay near the lake and Osprey Meadows."

Tamarack also sponsors a variety of workshops and events, like a women's weekend with instructional, nutritional and training tips. Check with the resort for current prices and schedules.

### Payette Lake Ramble

A pleasant introduction to off-road cycling, this ride combines paved and dirt roads in an 18-mile loop. It rolls past towering trees and sidles up next to the north unit of Ponderosa State Park. Cyclists whiz past log mansions and cottages from a bygone era.

From the east side of Payette Lake, the route begins on Lick Creek Road

then turns off onto Eastside Drive. After a few miles, the road becomes dirt and rolls past waterfalls before dipping back down to the lake. The sandy beaches of Ponderosa Park's North Unit beckon cyclists to stop and take a dip in the lake's refreshing waters—don't even try to resist. The ride continues on Eastside Drive to Warren Wagon Road and then back to McCall.

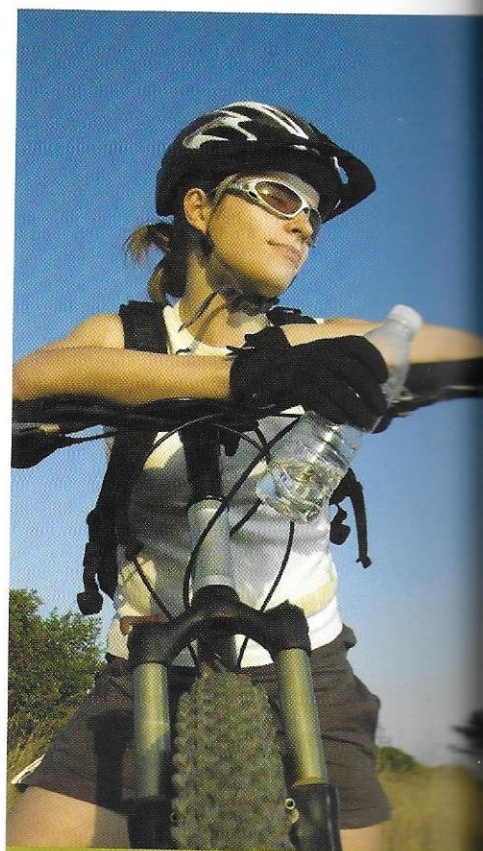
### Bear Basin

Located north of McCall, just off Highway 55, the Bear Basin Cross-Country Trail System rolls over logging roads through open meadows and beneath pines. Soon the popular ski area will also host a mountain biking system. Using grant money from the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, the National Forest Service built two miles of trail during the summer of 2007 with plans to develop 15 miles, combining single-tracks, two-tracks and old roads, appropriate for all riding abilities. For more information contact Bear Basin at 208.634.0700 or visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/payette>.

### Valley County Pathways

Founded in 2004, the Valley County Pathway Committee has a master plan that encompasses more than 100 miles of pedestrian-friendly trails throughout Valley County, including the Long Valley railroad right-of-way and routes around Lake Cascade and Payette Lake. For now, bicyclists can explore a four-mile section of the rail-trail that runs south of McCall—check out [www.valleycountypathways.org](http://www.valleycountypathways.org) for a detailed map and updates.

The trails mentioned above are only a jumping off point for exploring the greater McCall area, where dirt trails and roads slip into hidden corners. It's a place that allows you to pedal away from civilization and soak in a still afternoon, and if you listen carefully you can almost hear the day unfold. For more information you can call Valley County Pathways at 208.325.8191 or visit their website at [www.valleycountypathways.org](http://www.valleycountypathways.org). **MM**



## Tips for Beginners

(and reminders  
for more advanced riders)