

MOUNTAINDALE SUN RESORT

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FALL IS PERFECT FOR HIKING AT MOUNTAINDALE SUN RESORT

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Fall is one of the best seasons for an abundance of outdoor activities, but few are higher on the list than a lazy hike through a beautiful forest or peaceful meadow, particularly if the only things you're wearing are a pair of hiking boots and a broad smile. Mountaindale Sun Resort, one of Oregon's oldest clothing-optional havens, offers beginning and experienced hikers alike over 3 miles of natural hiking trails within its 104 acres located only minutes from the center of Portland, but light-years away from the hustle and bustle of crowded city life and its cares and worries.

The resort, off highway 26 in the Tualatin Hills of Portland, is open to visitors year-round, but the hiking activity picks up most in the spring and fall. That's when the environment is more conducive to hiking in secluded glades and forest, with mild temperatures and plenty of sunlight. Trees and flowers of all descriptions line the well-groomed paths, and deer and sometimes elk can be spotted grazing on the tree leaves and meadow grass. There may be some coyotes out there, too, but most of the animals are tame, and used to seeing humans. Some hikers even shun the boots and like to go barefoot along the groomed paths, especially in the fall when they are covered by thick layers of fallen leaves and needles from the canopy of trees. Depending on the season, phantom orchids, wild iris and bleeding hearts can be spotted along the way, but it's in fall that the trees are in their finest glory with the incredible colors of the vine maples and other Oregon natives.

The Sanctuary Trail, a short and easy hike near the resort entrance, allows inexperienced hikers an opportunity to acclimate to the forest. The towering firs offer cool shade as one walks down the fern-lined path, with an occasional burst of sunlight shining through the canopy, spotlighting a decaying tree in the near distance. Hikers should stop along the way to read some of the plaques that serve as memorials to MSR members that have made significant contributions to the club during its 66-year existence. Walking sticks and maps are available only a few yards from the trail at the club's fountain, and at the clubhouse.

Another short and inviting trail is Maple Cove, a double-track path that leads through more fir and maple trees, and up a hill where the woodland transitions to meadow. Spectacular views of the Dairy Creek Valley and the distant Tualatin Valley can be savored while sitting on the supplied bench. Here, the hillside is dressed in a colorful mixture of daisies and fox glove in the spring and early summer, and deer and elk can frequently be seen grazing the meadow. A perfect spot for photographs.

More experienced hikers will continue up the hill to one of the forest's highest points (750 feet), guiding them to Fern Trail, a dark part of the Mountaindale forest with trees so dense and tall that they block the sun, resulting in very little vegetation growth on the forest floor. In spring, phantom orchids push their way through the dense layer of pine needles on the floor, feeding off the fungus under the ground. At certain times of the day, the orchids can appear to glow in the darkness of the forest. Another great photo op.

Descending from the dark forest, the Elk Trail guides hikers down a ridge paralleling the second of two MSR creeks, and intersecting with the Mossy Creek Trail that exits near the MSR clubhouse.

Undoubtedly, the most difficult trail is Bill Harkson Road, an old logging road with a magnificent view of Bald Peek and Dairy Creek Valley. Because of its difficulty, the hiker is almost assured quiet solitude along the way.

Although barefooting is possible on most of the trails for experienced hikers, Mountaindale suggests sturdy hiking boots, and for those inclined to do their hiking in the buff, bug spray is a good idea. Plenty of water is always a must. There are no restroom facilities along the way, but plenty of his and her trees and privacy. A smile is always a perfect adornment.

Mountaindale Sun Resort is a clothing-optional family resort located at 27100 NW Dairy Creek Road in North Plains, Oregon, and is a proud member of the American Association for Nude Recreation. For information call 503-647-2449, or visit the MSR web site at <http://mountaindalesun.com/>.