


Experience the Methow

Outdoor Recreation in the Valley



A hike to Goat Peak Lookout can make you feel like you are on top of the world.

Enjoy High Cascades by Foot or Pedal

By Kristen Smith

July is the true arrival of summer in the Methow Valley, and a perfect way to celebrate is with a hike or bike ride.

Here is the Methow Valley Sport Trails Association (MVSTA) top hike and bike ride pick for July.

Hike: Goat Peak Lookout

This hike is no secret. It might be the most popular trail in the Methow Valley, and for good reason. This is a high-mountain, ridge-top hike that rewards hikers with some of the most incredible views found anywhere.

One might wonder if anyone can ever tire of the views from the top. The person to ask would be “Lightning” Bill Austin, the U.S. Forest Service employee who has staffed the Goat Peak Lookout for the past 15 years.

The lookout was built in the 1950s and is one of the few remaining active fire lookouts in the state. Lightning Bill and his two dogs live at the lookout from June through September spotting wildfires for the Forest Service.

This roughly five-mile round-trip hike is not easy. It climbs 1,400 feet, but the views along the way are worth every step.

The first half mile climbs gradually, with sneak peeks at what lies ahead. The next mile is a climb to what many hope is the top. Alas, you do reach a ridge top at two miles, where the views are outstanding, but it’s another half mile farther up the ridge line to the Goat Peak Lookout.

Don’t skip the last half mile because the views get even better. If you are lucky enough to meet Lightning Bill he will share 15 years of fire lookout stories.

From the 7,000-foot summit, you have views of the peaks of the Pasayten Wilderness, the North Cascades and the Tiffany Highlands.

The peaks look even more striking in July as the snow on the mountains is a great contrast to the green forests below.

Driving directions to the trailhead: From Winthrop drive west on Highway 20 for 12 miles. Turn right on Goat Creek Road (County Road 1163) at the Methow River Bridge. Travel 6.2 miles and turn right on Forest Service 52. Continue 3.7 miles and turn left on Forest Service Road 5225. Drive 4.6 miles to Forest Service Road 200. Proceed three miles to the trailhead parking lot.

As you drive up the road, keep a keen eye for wildlife. Open meadows along

this road are also popular launching areas for paragliders.

Bike Ride: Mazama to Lost River

This 14-mile round-trip ride from Mazama to Lost River is a great way to work off any pastries consumed from the bakery at the Mazama Store.

As a word of caution, the road has light motorized traffic. The road is relatively flat and cruises past unusual forest cabins, open meadows and the Methow River.

Take a moment to stop at Fun Rock to watch rock climbers or take advantage of the many pullouts along the Methow River for a refreshing dip in the river.

To start this ride, park at the MVSTA trailhead parking at the four-way intersection in Mazama. Take Lost River Road from the Mazama Store headed north. It is seven miles to the community of Lost River, where the pavement ends. Retrace your route and enjoy another pastry or some Husky ice cream from the Mazama Store after the ride. ■

The Methow Valley Sport Trails Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing and promoting environmentally sound recreation on or near the trail system in the Methow Valley. The trail system includes about 125 miles of groomed trails. Learn more at www.mvsta.com.