



Grant's Getaways: Oregon Snowmobiling

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Folks who play in the Oregon outdoors this time of year embrace the fun that comes from fresh powder – whether on snow shoes or skis or even inside cozy confines of a dog sled.



For others, it's thrill of speeding across the wintertime landscape toward distant, hard to reach areas aboard a snow mobile.

Kirk Snyder is the President of the **Mt Hood Snow Mobile Club**, the state's oldest chapter.

He is a rider with decades of experience during the region's harshest season.

Snyder said it's exciting and challenging to travel to a place that's "snow special" and draws folks back for exciting adventures season after season.



"I get to see a different side of Oregon in winter and I really enjoy the back country. It's not unusual for us to travel 50 miles or more on snow mobiles and not see another person all day. I consider this Oregon's finest season."

He said it's the ease of access across thousands of miles of US Forest Service Roads in Oregon--- roads that are designated for "multiple-use" --- that draws many winter riders.

It was one of the big reasons that he joined the club several years ago.



Snyder's sons, Oskar and Niko, joined Kirk when they were old enough to ride. They each took a snow mobile safety course and a passed a required exam to earn their entry into the sport.

Snyder said that he insists that his kids – and the folks who ride with him – wear helmets and carry critical safety gear including extra food, clothing and fuel.

“Things happen, so you’ve got to be ready,” said Snyder. “We might spend the night in the snow, so you must be ready for the worst that Mother Nature serves up.”

The Mt Hood Snow Mobile Club is one of 26 statewide chapters within the **Oregon State Snow Mobile Association**. The club's weekend rides begin at **Skyline Road Sno-Park** and can reach across the Cascades toward Mt Jefferson and the Santiam Basin.



“That’s what I like to do most of all,” admitted Oskar Snyder. “The long rides allow you to have fun all day with other people. Best part of this sport!”

Ryan and Susan Robinson said that each of them “fell in love” with snowmobiling after their first ride two years ago. It was the solitude that comes from travel into remote areas that drew them to the sport.

Ryan added that getting started was easy for them too. He advised others to consider renting a snow mobile for a day to find out if it’s a good fit.



“Just one sled for one day will allow you to find out if you like it, if the family likes the snow, the weather and whether they enjoy riding around together.”

Susan added, “We fell in love with it from the get-go and met some nice people in the Mt Hood Club. That was a big plus for us because they helped show us the way.”

The Robinsons made the sport a family event when their sons, Dylan and Trevor, joined them last year. Like the Snyder’s, each youngster went thru a safety class and passed a test before they could begin riding with the family.



“Snowmobiling is amazing,” said Dylan. “There’s no other feeling quite like the pure adrenaline rush of riding across fresh snow.”

According to Snyder, there are hundreds of miles of trails in the Mt Hood National Forest. For the most part, they are multiple use trails (the club grooms many of them each week) so they’re open to cross country skiers, dog sled teams and snow shoeing too.



“When you ride a snow mobile, you've great responsibilities to obey the ‘rules of the road,’ cautioned Snyder. “That means when you meet others; especially non-motorized recreationists, you slow down and move to the right and give them ample room.”

Kirk added that it’s a remarkable experience to tour Oregon in winter, but riders are vigilant too – the ever-changing weather demands a rider’s respect.



“There’s nothing like this – and I want to see more folks consider trying it too – our club is a fine way to start – we encourage beginners to contact us, show up on the weekends and we’ll make sure they have a good time.”