

Mt. Bachelor, OR

Feb 20 - 27

Jacksonville Ski Club (JSC) participated in the Florida Ski Council (FSC) February trip to Mt. Bachelor in central Oregon. There were seven FSC clubs in attendance and Jacksonville accounted for 19 of 135 participants.

We traveled by air via Southwest to Portland with a short layover in Denver. The itinerary was ideal, with a 9:00 am departure and two very manageable flights of roughly 3 ½ and 2 ½ hours, respectively. Once we arrived in Portland, we met up with the Boca Ski Club and shared a private motor coach to the town of Bend, OR, which would be our home for the next week.

The ride from Portland to Bend was just over 3 hours, but was such an incredible journey through varying topography with incredible scenery along the way. About 30 minutes into our ride, we encountered the breathtaking view of Mt. Hood in the distance. We eventually passed within 5-10 miles or so and it was an incredible sight, towering into the sky with snow covering the entire mountain. After passing Mt. Hood, we encountered 3-4 other ski areas as we passed through the Cascade mountain range. Later we entered the high desert area and eventually a large mesa area near Madras. Then, it was just a short 45 more minutes and we were in Bend.

Upon arrival at the DoubleTree, we were greeted by welcoming staff and other members of the Florida Ski Council and our tour operator. They held a welcome reception, which included local craft beers and appetizers. There were representatives of Mt. Bachelor, Wanderlust Tours, and Mountain Ambassadors to provide us with an orientation, take reservations for optional tours, and to answer any questions we might have. After the reception, it was time for some rest after a long travel day.

Sunday morning we were off to the mountain for our first day of skiing. Our group had dedicated private motor coaches on set schedules to and from the mountain at various times. The ride provided incredible views of Mt. Bachelor and the surrounding peaks known as the Three Sisters. The morning was incredible with very nice ski conditions. Around noon, a front came through which dumped several inches of fresh snow and made visibility somewhat difficult. Several members opted to call it day early and head back to town, while some of our hard core skiers stayed and took advantage of the fresh powder.

Monday provided incredible ski conditions and our travelers took advantage of it, exploring the entire mountain. Many folks stayed all day and into the evening, as the FSC and Mt. Bachelor hosted the Monday night dinner party at the mountain. FSC members had exclusive use of the mountain tubing hill from 4pm to 5pm. This was a blast and many of our folks took several runs down the hill. Our party was held in the West Village Lodge and the theme was "Confluence of the Hawaiian Islands and Cascade Mountains", which highlighted the influence of the Polynesian Islands on the central Oregon culture and lifestyle. Following dinner, we were entertained by several

Hawaiian dancers performing a variety of interpretive dances and performances, each unique to different islands of the region.

On Tuesday, the FSC held a Fun Race, in which competitors from all clubs competed in a timed course that included three obstacles / tasks that had to be completed before proceeding down the course. Those included “snolf” or snow golf, in which individuals had to stop and putt a tennis ball into a hole dug in the snow. Next, there was a ring toss, and finally there was a corn hole toss. All in all everyone really enjoyed this fun event. Jacksonville had 6 folks participate in the event including: Steve Goldman, Gary Long, Cameo Shane, Steve Callahan, Linda Walker, & Steve Bratcher. A big “Thank You” to Steve Goldman for serving as Race Captain and “Congratulations” to Gary Long for being our fastest competitor. While Jacksonville did not place, we did put up a fine showing. Tampa was the fastest team, followed by Orlando, and then Ft. Lauderdale. Following the race, we all enjoyed a delicious lunch at the Pine Marten Lodge mid-mountain.

The rest of the week provided excellent spring-skiing conditions and blue-bird skies. The snow held up incredibly well, despite the afternoon temps rising into the mid-40’s. Some of our die-hard skiers stayed on the mountain on Thursday all day and racked up some impressive skiing statistics. Dick Keith skied over 31,000 vertical feet, the most of anyone in our group.

On Thursday evening, we took a short ride to the High Desert Museum just outside of Bend for our evening party. FSC had exclusive entrance to the museum and were treated to a catered dinner in the main hall. Prior to dinner being served, we were able to tour the museum, which provided a great deal of history of the central-Oregon area, the native American culture, and the evolution of the forestry / lumber industry of the area. There were also several exhibits that included information about the wildlife of the area and some exhibits even included live animals. The evening concluded with Awards Presentations and live entertainment.

Friday was our last day of skiing and our travelers took advantage of such to get in some final runs on the incredible mountain that is Mt. Bachelor. Later in the evening, FSC held an Apres’ Ski at a local martini bar. Several JSC travelers gathered for drinks and then went to dinner at various local establishments in downtown Bend.

Saturday morning, we once again loaded onto a private motor coach for the roughly 3 hour drive back to Portland. And once again we were able to awe at the incredible views and massiveness of Mt. Hood, before arriving to Portland. Our flights were enjoyable and uneventful and we arrived to JAX on schedule. By all accounts this was a very successful trip that was enjoyed by all who attended.

By: Steve Bratcher – Trip Leader