

Arts & Life

SECTION
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Life: Heather Rayhorn, (503) 583-6820, hlife@statesmanjournal.com

Sunday, March 20, 2011



Alex Decker walks along the stonework in the Roman garden at Belknap Hot Springs. The area east of Eugene features a pool, lodge, cabins, camping and gardens for day use or an extended stay.

COOL WEEKEND at the HOT SPRINGS

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PHIL DECKER
Special to the Statesman Journal

Earlier this school year, I shopped online for a photographer to take my daughter Alex's senior pictures. I discovered senior pics can be quite expensive. So I decided to hire myself. Because I'm more of a documentary photographer than a portrait photographer, I needed inspiration (and a relaxing family weekend). The choice was easy: Belknap Hot Springs.

Belknap is a fascinating resort tucked along a bend in the McKenzie River on the western slope of the Cascades, about 60 miles east of Eugene along highway 126. We first learned about Belknap about eight years ago, by accident, when my oldest daughter, Rubi, was a student at the University of Oregon. She was hiking along a McKenzie River trail and happened upon a long steel bridge where thick steam billowed from the mountain side.

People lodge in tent sites, RVs, cabins, vacation homes and rooms in a lodge. Over the years, my family has sampled most of these options. And then there's always the more economical option of day use.

The core of Belknap is a large rectangular pool fed from hot spring water piped in from across the river bank. Hovering over the pool are clouds of white steam, struck by the sun, to create showers of morphing light. Bathers soak in the thick dark blue-grey water of the pool, many lounging on noodles and rafts left behind. The best times are early morning and night, when the air is still crisp and cool.

Folks have been sojourning to the hot springs for centuries. The native inhabitants of the region visited seasonally for about 1,000 years. While modern use of the hot springs began in 1869, Rollin

Your Travels

Would you like to share your latest vacation, or are you planning a trip you'd like to tell others about? Call Heather Rayhorn, (503) 583-6820, or email her at hrayhorn@statesmanjournal.com.



Simcon Belknap took claim to the land in 1870 to build a health resort.

Belknap placed an ad in the Oregon State Journal in 1874 encouraging those "in search of health or pleasure" to visit the springs, claiming that the medicinal properties of the water can cure various diseases, such as "female weakness, scrofula, rheumatism, inflammations and general debility."

In addition to the water's healing powers, another great Belknap secret is the array of well-maintained gardens, including a Japanese garden, complete with pagoda, ponds and bamboo, and a Roman garden, complete with aqueducts, waterfalls and fountains that run on the pure power of gravity. Throughout the forest gardens, you'll discover prime spots for picnics, throwing a Frisbee, reading a book and hosting a wedding.

Phil Decker is the principal of Photo Services, a photography school in Salem. He is also a documentary photographer who studied at the International Center of Photography in New York City. To see more of Decker's photo essays, go to www.philodecker.com.

A father and son cross the bridge to Belknap Hot Springs' lodge.

To see more photos see this story at [Statesman Journal.com/Life](http://StatesmanJournal.com/Life).

IF YOU GO

DIRECTIONS: From Interstate 5, head south. At Eugene, take Highway 126 McKenzie River exit (Exit 184a) east through Springfield. Follow the McKenzie River past Waltersville, Leaburg, Vida, Blue River and McKenzie Bridge for about 55 miles. Turn left off the highway onto the Belknap Springs Road, (a blacktop road) and continue past the Belknap Hot Springs Resort sign on the right.

POOL HOURS: 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily

COST: \$7 for one hour or less (with shower and bathroom facilities) or \$12 per day; \$2 pool towel available. Check web site for prices on cabins, rooms and camping.

CONTACT: (541) 822-3512 or www.belknaphotsprings.com

Nine-day poetry fest to start Saturday

By BARBARA CURTIN
Statesman Journal

SILVERTON — Poets, would-be poets and poetry lovers will be right at home in Silverton Saturday through April 3, when the 11th annual Silverton Poetry Festival takes over the town.

The event is the largest in the state in terms of length and number of events,

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according to Molly Murphy, a board member of the Silverton Poetry Association, the sponsor.

Some of the state's most respected poets, including Ingrid Wendt, Brian Doyle and Christopher How-

ell, will read their work. There will be how-to workshops, an evening of poetry and jazz, and even a feast of poets to cap off the nine-day event.

Murphy credits an arts community that goes back to the 1960s and '70s with founding and nurturing the festival: "Those individuals are still here, doing art, reading poems."

Her favorite event is the reading on Saturday at the Gordon House, where she works. Other events will take place at eateries, an art gallery and the library.

The event is paid for through donations and grants.

For more information, call (503) 583-6820 or visit www.belknaphotsprings.com.



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Talon Torok, 5 on March 8

Submit photos of Statesman Journal.com Birthdays Club or send your child's photo with some facts: Full name, last name, birth date, age, birth date and your name and phone number to Birthdays Club, Statesman Journal, 147 Pine 20020, Salem, OR 97309-5700. Included photos will not be returned.

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