

# MOUNTAIN BIKE *Momentum*





# MCCALL'S SINGLE TRACK SCENE FINDS ITS FLOW

By McKenzie Kraemer

Inviting one of the best freeride mountain bikers in the world to test the trails in McCall is a bit daunting. And when another professional mountain biker, quickly rising to the top of the sport and competing in huge events like Red Bull's Rampage, comes along on the trip, the intimidation factor increases tenfold.

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Mountain biking in McCall has been not-so-quietly growing over the last five years. In 2015, the area was designated as a Silver Ride Center by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) and since that time, the existing backcountry trails paired with brand new purpose-built trails around the Valley have only increased McCall's mountain bike appeal.

So, when the opportunity to have Darren Berrecloth and KC Deane explore the area's offerings arose, we jumped at the chance to see how McCall measured up. The verdict? "Mountain biking in McCall is top notch," says Berrecloth. "The trails are so smooth in comparison to other places like Moab where it is rough and rocky. Really good flow—a good rhythm." On top of that, one thing that made McCall stand out for this global traveler was the charm. "McCall has a very laid-back feel—the way it used to be—everyone was so friendly," says Berrecloth. "It was a treat."

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Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson





Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson

## BACKCOUNTRY TRAILS

With more than 500 miles of trails in the greater McCall area, there is certainly no shortage of options. But where do you start? The Central Idaho Mountain Bike Association (CIMBA) has a mission to protect, enhance and create quality trail experiences for mountain bikers throughout Central Idaho. As part of that mission, the organization developed a comprehensive trail map with close to 30 recommended routes (purchase locally at Gravity and Home Town Sports or online at Adventure Maps). In addition, CIMBA works to preserve and maintain the trail system while also adding new, purpose-built trails to expand riding options. One of those new trails is the Payette Lake Trail.

“The Payette Lake Trail is really unique because it provides a backcountry experience that starts from downtown McCall,” says Wayne Ruemmele, President of CIMBA. “You can start with breakfast by the lake in the morning, ride the trail and end at a brewery in the afternoon. . .all without getting in your car.”

When complete, the Payette Lake Trail will be 33 miles, tying together several pieces of existing trail and building out new single track to make a full loop around Payette Lake. “This trail is

During their visit, Berrecloth and Deane were accompanied by renowned outdoor photographer Grant Gunderson who captured the experience. From riding the Payette Lake Trail, Brundage Mountain Resort, Jug Mountain Ranch, Tamarack Resort and a few backcountry trails in between, the trio provided a brilliant visual representation of what you can expect to find on McCall’s mountain bike scene.



Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson



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like a central hub," says Dave Bingaman, Trails Chair for CIMBA. "It will connect a lot of other systems including Brundage Mountain, Bear Basin, Ponderosa State Park and the Payette Rim Trail." In addition, the Payette Lake Trail will also offer a place to access other backcountry rides along the way like the Blackwell Loop.

As of this summer, more than half of the Payette Lake Trail is complete. The remaining route along the East side of the lake is a few years from completion, currently in the approval process for nine miles of new single track and raising the necessary funds required to build.

One group that has been instrumental in helping CIMBA fund projects like the

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Payette Lake Trail and continue maintenance efforts in the backcountry is One Track Mind. "At some point, you have to pay knowledgeable people to build the technical parts of the trail," says Bingaman. "The level of expertise these organizations bring to the table skyrockets our capabilities." This year will mark a major milestone in the CIMBA/One Track Mind partnership with just over \$1 million in funding received for projects in Central Idaho.

In addition to the Payette Lake Trail, CIMBA is also starting a new project this summer, the "Brundage to Bear Basin Trail," which will include building five and a half miles of new single track in 2020 and an additional three miles in 2021 to connect the two ride parks. On top of this, CIMBA is actively working with groups including the McCall Area Composite Mountain Bike Team, the Central Idaho Trail Riders Alliance and the Idaho Conservation Corps to clear and preserve existing trails throughout the region.

To get connected with CIMBA's efforts, make a donation or volunteer, visit [cimbarides.org](http://cimbarides.org)

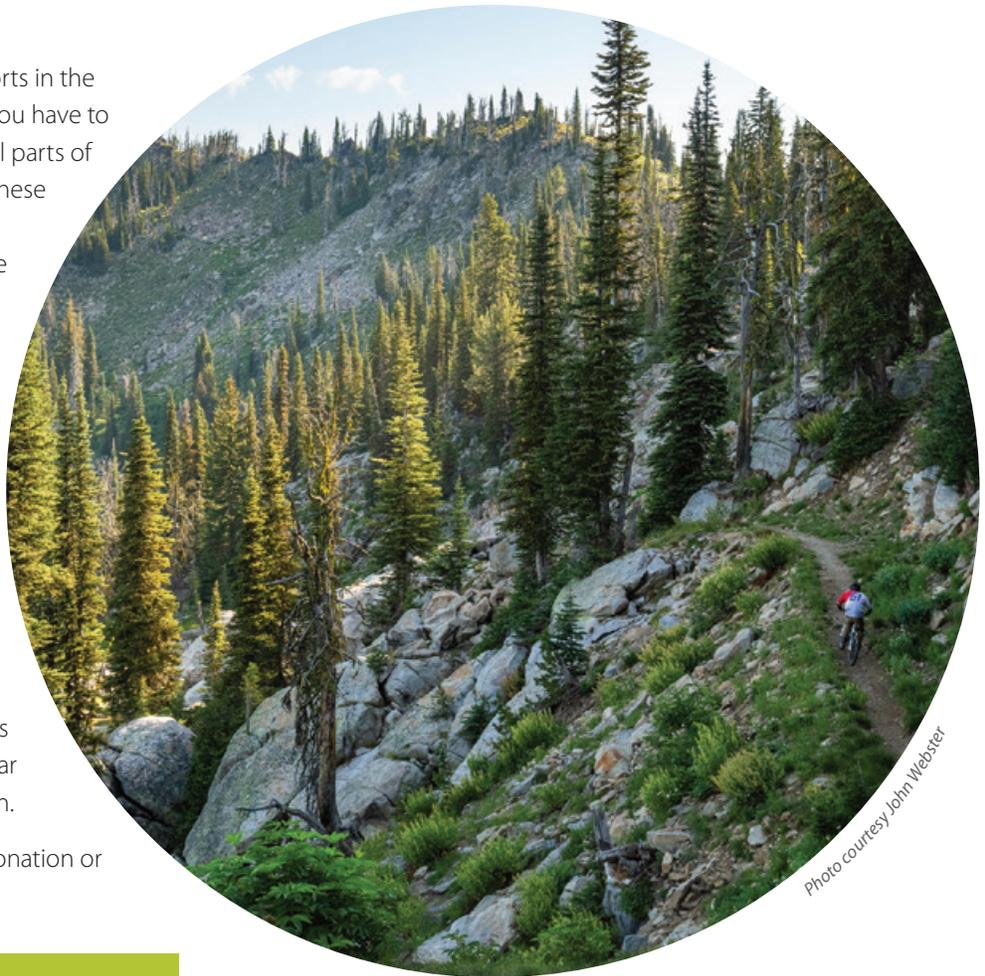


Photo courtesy John Webster

## RECOMMENDED RIDES:

### PAYETTE LAKE TRAIL | INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

There are several access points to ride the Payette Lake Trail's single track along the West side of the Payette Lake. Start from the Payette Rim Trail parking lot off of Brundage Lookout Road (Forest Service Road #451 just 2 miles outside of McCall) or at the Brush Creek Parking Lot off of Warren Wagon Road. From either starting point, enjoy views of Payette Lake and features including berms, drops, rock faces and rock gardens.

### EAST FORK OF LAKE FORK TRAIL | INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED

This 10-mile cross-country ride has technical rock features mixed with smooth single track riding. Most riders will turn around at Idler Creek, but the trail does continue on for another mile of challenging terrain. The return is fast, making this trail a fun out and back. To access the trail, take Lick Creek Road to the Lake Fork Campground. One mile past the campground, cross the bridge and turn right into the dispersed camping area to park.

## PARK RIDING

For most, mountain bike parks are the easiest way to get out and ride. "Park riding is really the future," says Berrecloth. "It is the way most people will be able to excel, and McCall has a good variety from beginner to expert." With four major parks in the area offering different experiences, you can come back to McCall again and again without getting bored.

## BRUNDAGE MOUNTAIN RESORT

Brundage was an early player in the mountain bike game. Their program began in the 1990s, but it wasn't until the last five years that the Resort really started ramping up their summer offerings, including a major focus on trail-building. "We realized that we had a lot of trails approved on our Master plan, but not yet built," says Ken Rider, Brundage General Manager. So they set out to remedy that.

One of the major projects Brundage first undertook was to add cross-country trails around the base area of the Resort. "A lot of people really like to get out and ride cross country trails, and Brundage didn't offer any opportunities" says Rider. That has now changed. Last summer, Brundage completed a new four-mile trail at the top of the mountain, Lakeview Vista, and a

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Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson



Photo courtesy Gary Peterson

base-area trail, Hammerhead. This summer they will be completing several new trails including the Thorn Creek connection and Wild Cat

off of the existing Elk trail. They will

also begin work on "Around the Mountain," a trail that will link Lakeview Vista on the south side with Grouse near Sargent's Peak on the north side and traverse the entire Bike Park area.

"We want to enhance mountain biking in the entire region," says Rider. "So we continue to look for new routes and new partners to expand the riding experience." That has included connecting the Grouse trail at Brundage with Goose Lake Road. "From there, you can connect to the Goose Lake trail and make it all the way to Last Chance Campground," says Rider. "That is a huge extension we were able to put together and an exciting new riding opportunity for the community." On top of that, Brundage is working with CIMBA to build a new eight-mile stretch of single track to connect Brundage's Lakeview Vista trail with Bear Basin's Ditch Witch trail.

In addition to the 26 miles of trails at Brundage, guests can also find a rental fleet of Kona and Rossignol bikes as well as a full-service restaurant and bar, and free disc golf. Cross-country trails are free and open seven days a week while lift-serviced trails can be accessed with a daily lift ticket or a Brundage Bike

## RECOMMENDED RIDES:

### GREENHORN & ELK | BEGINNER

Greenhorn is a leisurely out-and-back lollipop with nominal elevation change, some great berm turns and fun rollers as an introduction to riding single track. Greenhorn also connects to Thorn Creek and Hammerhead for a longer ride. For one step up, head to Elk trail, a six-mile downhill cruise with scenic vistas, aspen groves, wildflower meadows and creek crossings.

### GROWLER | INTERMEDIATE

This two-way trail can be accessed either from the base of the mountain and provide a heart-pumping climb to the top or a switchback ride down from the Lakeview Vista connection.

### HIDDEN VALLEY | ADVANCED

This technical trail offers fast chutes, big jumps, tight corners, drops and log rides as it descends 1,600 feet.

Park Pass (winter season passholders get a discounted price). Lifts turn Wednesday through Sunday from 10am to 4:30pm starting Father's Day Weekend. **Brundage.com**

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## JUG MOUNTAIN RANCH

The one word that defines the mountain bike trail system at Jug Mountain Ranch is “flow.” From top to bottom, the trails offer an intuitive progression of purpose-built single track to make it easy for riders to hone their skills and have fun doing it. “We are always working on giving people options and a way to learn,” says Joe Weede, Outdoor Recreation Manager at Jug Mountain Ranch. “If you ride a green trail off the top and get that dialed, we want to provide you with a blue trail as a next step and a black trail after that, each with progressive challenge.”

On top of terrain differences that give each trail a unique feel, the crew at Jug Mountain Ranch integrates variable features so the ride is always fresh. “You can ride a trail at different speeds and with optional lines over and around features and that makes it really fun,” says Heather Thiry, Mountain Bike Manager at Jug Mountain Ranch.

In addition to dedicated downhill routes, Jug Mountain Ranch offers cross country trails that traverse the meadows at the base of the mountain and around Upper Jug Creek Reservoir. There is also a skills park to practice technique before hitting the downhill trails and a jump line, Exfoliator, for expert riders that includes big doubles and long tabletops. Hikers and dogs are welcome on multi-directional cross-country trails, but not on the one-way downhill routes for safety reasons.

Riders can get to the top by manpower along wider dirt roads or take a shuttle offered on weekends by reservation (\$25 for three hours). And this is no ordinary shuttle. Guests can catch a ride to the top on a six-wheeled Swiss Pinzgauer or an Army Humvee, both equipped with bike racks and plenty of seating.

Trails at Jug Mountain Ranch are free to the public and open from mid-May to mid-October based on weather. A fleet of Pivot mountain bikes and Trek fat bikes are available to rent for a full or half day in the Pro Shop. After a day of riding, a bike wash station is available, and the full-service Clubhouse Restaurant offers indoor and patio dining and a full bar for an afternoon cocktail.

[jugmountainranch.com](http://jugmountainranch.com)

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*Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson*

*Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson*

# WHERE BEER LOVERS MIGRATE!

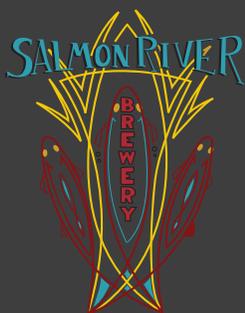
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## RECOMMENDED RIDES:

### DOEJOE | BEGINNER

DoeJoe is a beginner's dream descent from the top of Jug Mountain. This trail offers a fun intro into the world of flow with optional small jumps and berms that guide you right where you want to go.

### BERM 'N ERNIE | INTERMEDIATE

Berm 'N Ernie is a 1-mile flow trail with personality. A mixture of rock sections, jumps and big berms keeps you on your toes while descending effortlessly from the ranch's highest point.

### DOUBLE SHOT | EXPERT

One and a half miles of pure downhill bliss. A mixture of rocks, wood features, tables and tacky berms create the perfect trail to get your flow on. The lower section of this trail is brand new and expands this trail's appeal with big rock rolls and a road gap.



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## TAMARACK RESORT

With 25 miles of dedicated lift-serviced trails spanning 1,700 feet of vertical and 25 miles of cross-country trails at the base, Tamarack Resort continues to be a prime riding destination for locals and visitors alike. "The trail system was originally designed and built by IMBA," says Wolfe Ashcraft, Director of Base Operations at Tamarack Resort. "Since then we continue to add new trails and features bringing us to about 50 trail miles that is perfect for both seasoned riders and families to enjoy." And family is always at the forefront of Tamarack's planning.

Ashcraft says the Tamarack Bike Park was designed to offer a wide range of options. The Meadow trails are single track, multi-use and multi-directional trails with a mellow vibe perfect for a family ride or for beginners to get familiar with single track riding. From there, the level of intensity increases as you move up the mountain. Tamarack's lift-serviced trails offer options for intermediate to advanced riders with varying levels of technicality and terrain.

Tamarack installed a new Skills Park near the base area in 2019, which includes smaller progressive features like tabletops, berms, a rock garden and skinny bridges to practice technique in a lower risk environment. In 2020, Tamarack continues to expand the trail system with a dedicated Bike Park staff working to

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maintain current trails and put the finishing touches on new trail projects for the summer season. In addition, Tamarack will be offering group clinics and private mountain biking lessons from PMBIA-certified instructors (Professional Mountain Bike Instructors Association).

There are several ways to ride Tamarack. The Meadows trails are free of charge and open all hours, seven days a week. Lift-serviced trails can be accessed by purchasing a day pass or Tamarack's "Boundless Pass," a year-round season pass that gives passholders unlimited access to both mountain biking in the summer and skiing in the winter. Boundless Passholders also receive complimentary cross-country and mountain bike rentals, a weekly yoga class and complimentary SUP and kayak rentals from the Tamarack Waterfront. Lift-serviced terrain will be open Thursdays through Sundays, plus holidays, from Memorial to Labor Day

## RECOMMENDED RIDES:

### SANDHILL TO PELICAN | BEGINNER

Get comfortable riding single-track with this scenic loop in the meadow cross-country trails. To connect these trails, start at Discovery Square and jump on the Cottage Trail to Sandhill. From there, connect with Pelican which will take you along the lakefront then back to Discovery Square.

### SUPER G | INTERMEDIATE

With its sweeping turns and g-force producing corners, Super G is a must-ride at Tamarack Resort. The trail is 2.5 miles and features a stunning viewpoint of the lake below about halfway down the mountain.

### SMOKEJUMPER | ADVANCED

Named after the fearless men and women who jump out of planes to fight wildfires, Smokejumper gives you a shot of adrenaline as you traverse 1.5 miles of features including drops and jumps.



Photo courtesy Tarek Richey



Photo courtesy Grant Gunderson

weekends. A new fleet of Kona rental bikes will also be available for the 2020 summer season. [tamarackidaho.com](http://tamarackidaho.com)

## BEAR BASIN

Bear Basin is a ride center managed by the Payette National Forest featuring 15 miles of single track. This area can be easily accessed from downtown McCall by bike with the recent completion of the Bear Basin Connector trail that runs along Highway 55. Despite its proximity to town, the trails here wind through meadows, mature forest and offer scenic views reminiscent of a secluded backcountry setting.

From a short pump track to the flowy drain trails and more technical traverses, Bear Basin is designed for all skill levels to enjoy. Trails are free to ride and are open during daylight hours from mid-May through mid-October as trail conditions and weather allow. Restrooms are available at the trailhead, but no other services are offered at this ride center. ■

## RECOMMENDED RIDES:

### SLEEPY HOLLOW | BEGINNER

A great little side trail off of the main drag that can be tied together with the main access route for a nice loop. Sleepy Hollow winds through a dense wooded area with an easy grade, some twists and turns and a few fun bridge and rock features to keep it fun.

### BLUE RIDGE LOOP | INTERMEDIATE

With twists and turns, rocks and roots and an optional skinny bridge to keep things interesting, Blue Ridge Loop is a great intermediate single track trail.

### DITCH WITCH | ADVANCED

Access Ditch Witch off of Grand Traverse and hit some fast downhill switchbacks with technical terrain features and a 200-foot elevation climb on this one-mile single track trail. The name comes from a section of the trail that was an old, abandoned irrigation ditch.

# E-BIKE *Etiquette*

**BRUNDAGE MOUNTAIN RESORT:** Allowed on trails constructed on privately owned land including Greenhorn, Hammerhead and Thorn Creek. All other trails are built on Forest Service land and e-bikes are not permitted.

**JUG MOUNTAIN RANCH:** Limited e-bike access is allowed at Jug Mountain Ranch.

**TAMARACK RESORT:** E-bikes are allowed on both the Meadows trails and lift-serviced downhill. Meadows trails are multi-use and multi-directional while lift-serviced trails are limited to downhill travel only.

**BEAR BASIN:** E-bikes are not permitted on the non-motorized Forest Service trails Bear Basin.



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