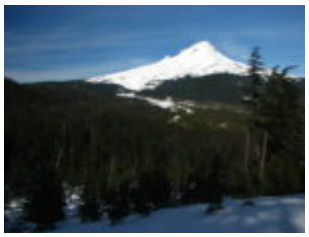
Barlow Butte, OR



Vicinity Location:
The trailhead is about 50 miles east of Portland, Oregon in the Mt. Hood National Forest.

Directions:
From Portland take I-84 East to the Wood Village, exit (16A). Head south and turn left onto NE Burnside Rd. Heading East, Burnside will merge into Highway 26. Follow Hwy 26 past Government Camp and exit on Highway 35 to Hood River. Follow Hwy 35 for about 2.7 miles. Turn right into the Barlow Pass Snow Park.

A Snow Park permit is required during the snow season. No permit is needed in the summer months.

No outhouses are available at the parking lot. The closest bathrooms are at White River West parking lot or Government Camp.

You can see avalanche forecasts here: Northwest Avalanche Center

National Weather Service Snow Level forecast: Northern Oregon Cascades

Length and Elevation:
5.9 Miles roundtrip, Elevation gain totals 1,800 Feet. Elevation at the trailhead is 4,150 feet. Highest point is at 5,070 feet. Lowest elevation is 3,900 feet.

Trail:
Barlow Road, Barlow Butte Trail, Mineral Jane Trail, with connections to the Pacific Crest Trail #2000.

Trail Maps: Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpxfile

Review: February 1, 2013, March 3, 2013, December 3, 2016
Walk east across the parking lot and to the Pacific Crest Trail and the Barlow Road. Walk northeast a bit until you reach the Barlow Road, which heads downhill. Walk about 150 feet farther, looking for the Mineral Jane Ski Trail, the Barlow Creek Trail, and the Barlow Butte Trail#670 off to the left. Follow this trail downhill, looking for blue diamond signs marking the trail.

Follow along this trail as it drops down to a tail junction sign for the Mineral Jane Ski Trail and Barlow Butte Trail. Turn left at the signpost. Continuing straight takes you the wrong way, descending towards Devils Half Acre.

From the signpost, the trail climbs a bit, crosses a small creek, and then steadily gains elevation for about .25 mile and reaches a sign for the Mineral Jane Ski Trail and Barlow Butte Trail. Continue straight ahead on the Mineral Jane Ski Trail through the moss-draped Hemlock forest. The trail should be easy to find, though you may not always be able to see blue diamond markers.

Now you've gotten far enough from Hwy 35 so that you can barely hear the traffic. The sound of your snowshoes crunching through the snow masks out the low-level traffic noise. The trail crosses a low saddle then drops down and joins a Forest Service road. Walk along the sweeping turns of the Forest Service road as it gently loses elevation. Right at a mile from the trailhead, a nice view of Mt. Hood is off to the left.

Walk a bit farther to a T-junction at a Forest Road There is a blue diamond with a black arrow pointing to the left. Turn right at the junction and begin walking very gently uphill. The trail here is mostly level for about the first.25 mile, then steepens as you climb up the lower shoulders of Barlow Butte.

Continue steadily gaining elevation as you head east. Walking along the road you pass many spectacular views of Mt. Hood, looking across the White River Valley. About 1.6 miles from the trailhead, you pass a small mountain stream tumbling down the mountainside, going under the road, and continuing downhill to join the White River.

The trees are beginning to change from Hemlocks to Noble Fir. This section appears to be protected from the east winds by a nearby ridge, thus allowing moss to drape down from the tree branches.

You might think that trails lose elevation as you walk away from Mt. Hood, but Barlow Butte Trail steadily gains elevation going away from Mt. Hood.

The trail continues to climb for a couple of miles, rounds a bend, and begins to descend. A few hundred feet farther and you reach a point about 2.6 miles from the trailhead. Look for a break in the trees, angling up and to the right. This is a tree-lined snow-covered forest road which you walk on for a few hundred feet. Head towards a large meadow that is ahead on your left. After reaching a big meadow, navigate along the top of the meadow, gently turning to the left and side-hill for about .3 mile, crossing over a very gentle saddle so that the uphill side is on your right before the saddle, and the uphill side is on your left after the saddle.

Be sure not to lose elevation as you side-hill towards Barlow Ridge. You will reach a pointed rock butte jutting from the ridgetop. The easiest way to get around this first butte is to skirt it on the left, following the snow around the rock.

Continue along the ridge to the second butte. You will need to switchback down through the forest on the right side, losing about 50 to 100 feet in elevation. Once you've gotten past the butte, there is a nice place to take a well-deserved break, with a view of Mt. Hood as a reward. Barlow Butte is not far from here.

Start climbing along the ridge, with views of Mt. Jefferson to the south and Mt. Hood to the west. The ridge is exposed and can have large cornices on the right side. Stay to the left side of the ridge to avoid walking on any cornices and continue up the slope, entering the woods just below the butte. Looking back, you can see the two promontories you passed earlier, one up high on a rocky slope, and the closer one jutting up out of the forest.

Near the top of the butte, look for any clearings off to the right and head in that direction. You will find nice views of the Forest road you came up on, the route you followed along the ridge, and the White River Valley.

You will want to head back into the woods, looking for the highest point of the ridge. After a bit of a walk, you should be able to find Barlow Butte, which is a snow-covered rock dome which stands just a bit higher than the rest of the ridge.

Now that you've reached the apex, the next goal is to get back to the car safely. Continue following the ridge for about 500 feet, and it begins to drop down with increasing steepness. Pick a good point to leave the ridge, cut left across the face of Barlow Butte. The woods here are fairly open and you can choose where to switchback and mostly avoid any brushy areas.

As the slope decreases, it becomes more difficult to pick out any ridgeline to follow. A compass heading of North by Northwest (about 330°) will allow you to bushwhack through the open forest, back down to the Mineral Jane ski Trail. Turn left here, retracing your steps past the junction with the Barlow Butte trail and back down the bridge over the small stream.

The last quarter mile feels like a mile because the trail climbs steadily the whole way back to the parking lot. Eventually you reach the sign for the Mineral Ski Trail and the Barlow Butte Trail #670. From here, snowshoe up the Barlow Road Trail for about 150 feet and take the junction to the left. The junction is easy to spot if you keep a lookout for it and it leads up and away from the Barlow Road. Soon you'll reach the junction for Barlow Road and the Pacific Crest Trail from where it is just a short walk west back to the parking lot.

The sno-park fills on weekends but this trail is moderately used, which is surprising because of the very low avalanche danger and the great views. If you don't want to go bushwhacking and route-finding then turn this into an out-and-back trip by turning around at the alpine meadow and retracing your steps along the forest service road.

Happy Trails,
Switchback Steve
Gallery Pics