

# Train hoppers saddle up for ride on Iron Horse

All aboard! It isn't quite what Art Couture heard when he began his 2,500 mile train trek last year from Bakersfield, Calif., to New Orleans, La.

Nor did he have the usual reclining chair to relax in or the complimentary pillow for nighttime travel. That's because Couture and Church joined the hobo ranks and "hitchhiked the rails," as the sport is called among the regulars.

They hopped them.

For five days and five nights, Couture and Church joined the hobo ranks and "hitchhiked the rails," as the sport is called among the regulars.

The two hadn't planned it that way, however. The original plan was to hitchhike from Eugene to Florida, and they in fact started out that way.

But along about Bakersfield, Couture and Church were told train hopping was the only way to travel such a distance, so they headed toward the Bakersfield train yard, found a train headed for Los Angeles, and climbed aboard.

Five days later, they found themselves in the New Orleans train yard.

The trip was a first for both Couture and Church, but Couture said they soon got the hang of train hopping and had a blast the whole 2,500 miles.

Technically train hopping is considered an illegal act of trespassing, according to the Lane County sheriff's office. According to Couture, however, most railroad workers are fairly friendly to hobos.

"The regular workers will usually tell you which train to take and when they're leaving," Couture says. "But stay away from any train officials or detectives. The main thing to do is play it low key and stay out of the way in the train yards."

Couture warns, however, that sometimes a railroad worker will offer a bum steer.

"Keep your eyes open when you leave a city to make sure you're headed the right way. When we were in Los Angeles we were told a certain train would take us south. In fact, however it was headed north back to Bakersfield."

Couture also warns train hoppers to stay away from cars carrying beer and to avoid breaking into any cargo. "That's when you can get in trouble," he says.

Other no-no's, according to Gary Fentiman, a former Southern Pacific railroad worker, are riding between cars and riding in cars carrying automobiles. Any "passenger" sighted in either of these locations, Fentiman says, are sure to be reported to security.

Changing trains is usually easy, Couture says, although express trains make quick stops. He recalls how he and Church missed one express train heading out of Houston, Texas, by five minutes and had to wait 24 hours for the next one.

If there's time, however, train hoppers should scout the train out to find the best car to ride in. A car with lots of cardboard is best, Couture says, because the cardboard comes in great for making pillows.

Food is another essential item for the ride. Couture recalls their ride out of Los Angeles when they forgot to stock up on food and went hungry until the train chugged into Tucson, Ariz., 36 hours later.

The main thing to remember, however, is to travel with a sense of adventure. Train hopping may not be the fastest way to travel, Couture says, but if time's no problem, it can be the most economical and carefree way to go.

## Keeping Track

Photo by Gregg Weed

### Railroads act as travel compromise

Lots of people taking long-distance jaunts can't afford airfares but also cringe at the thought of sitting bolt upright for 39 hours in a disinfectant-smelling bus.

That's where trains come in.

Trains are somewhere in the middle between expensive airlines and leg-cramped bus rides. Amtrak, the only passenger train service in the United States, operates a Eugene depot and can be a welcome middle-of-the-road alternative.

In price, Amtrak fluctuates widely between air and bus travel. Short runs can prove costly and not worth the extra as opposed to busing it, and long runs can sometimes be so long it's worth the splurge on an airfare.

From Eugene to Portland, for example, a one-way Amtrak coach ticket costs \$10 and travel time is about three hours, compared to a Greyhound or Continental Trailways ride to \$6.95 and lasting slightly more than two hours.

At the other end of the scale, a one-way Amtrak coach journey from Eugene to Los Angeles equals \$59 and 25 hours, compared to air travel costing \$84 and three hours.

Amtrak rates will increase from two to five per cent Nov. 1, however, so that a one-way run between Eugene and Los Angeles will increase to \$61.

For the most economical ride, many Amtrak riders skip eating in the diner and tote their own food along. Train food prices, as with all prices when traveling mass transit, are a few rungs higher than grocery store prices.

A common complaint of Amtrak travelers is the trains' frequent tardiness. Regulars have learned that calling the depot ahead of any proposed arrival or departure time is a vital move in the whole train travel game.

On a recent Skylight run from Seattle, Wash., to Los Angeles, Calif., the train chugged into Eugene one hour late, into Oakland three hours late, San Luis Obispo, four hours late and Los Angeles, four and a half hours late.

Art Lloyd, Amtrak spokesman for the western region, however, says Amtrak trains in the western region kept to their schedules 94 per cent of the time during the month of September. He says mechanical foulups account for up to one half of the trains' lateness.

Beginning Oct. 30, Amtrak will add Albany to its stopping schedule. Southbound trains stopping there will depart at 5:05 p.m. daily and northbound trains will pass through at 11:30 a.m. daily. A one-way coach ticket from Eugene to Albany will be \$4.10.

The Alternative Transportation supplement was coordinated and, in large part, written by Martha Bliss. The Emerald hopes to publish similar supplements each month during the school year.

### STU'S BIKE SHOP

Top-Value 10-Speeds!

GITANE of France  
FUJI of Japan  
VISCOUNT of England

Lowest prices on expert repairs  
Large stock of quality parts  
and accessories.

771 Blair (at Monroe)  
344-2175



### Hey joggers, it's getting cold...

#### TENNIS & JOGGING WARMUPS

Fall closeout on our warmup suits  
..... ALL 40% OFF

SNOW LION 65/35 RAIN & SNOW  
PARKAS  
Regular \$59.00 ..... NOW \$39.95

SIERRA DESIGNS 60/40 RAIN &  
SNOW PARKAS  
Regular \$72.00 ..... NOW \$44.95

WOOLRICH CHAMOIS SHIRTS  
Perfect shirts for campus, casual wear,  
or wilderness treks.

Regular \$17.95 ..... NOW \$14.50

#### GORE-TEX RAINWEAR

Probably the best rainwear available anywhere. Breathes from the inside out, waterproof from the outside in. Perfect for biking, skiing, campus wear and for around town. On Sale for a very limited time only.

PARKA. Regular \$70.00 ..... NOW \$56.00

ANORAK. Regular \$65.00 ..... NOW \$52.00

PANTS. Regular \$45.00 ..... NOW \$36.00

#### GORE-TEX RAINWEAR FABRIC

For the do-it-yourselfers, we now have Gore-tex rainwear fabric in stock!

Regular \$11.50 per yard ..... NOW \$8.75

### ALSO SPECIALS ON...

#### RUGBY JERSEYS

Fall closeout, while stock lasts. .... ALL 40% OFF

#### TENNIS CLOTHING

Fall closeout on tops, shirts, and shorts. .... ALL 40% OFF

#### WILSON TENNIS BALLS

Optic yellow or optic orange. Can of three.

(Limit — 2 cans per customer)

Regular \$2.50 per can ..... NOW \$1.87

#### RACQUETBALL BALLS

"The Only Ball." (Limit — 2 per customer)

Regular \$1.35 each ..... NOW \$.95

### AND SPECIALS FOR THE SKIER...

#### SKILOM CROSS-COUNTRY SKI BINDINGS

Cable-type "Hiker" model

Regular \$14.00 ..... NOW \$5.00

#### ROSSIGNOL CROSS-COUNTRY SKIS

Popular step no-wax model.

Regular \$80.00 ..... NOW \$49.95

#### FABIANO Model 90 lightweight trail shoe.

Great for around campus too!

Regular \$38.95 ..... NOW \$25.30

All of these sale items are featured at Berg's East — our 11th & Mill Store. All items are limited to stock on hand, on a first-come, first served basis.

Shop Friday Night 'til 9:00 p.m. at our 11th and Mill St. Store

# Berg's Sport Shop