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WALKING DISTANCE

Rhythm & Reviews' weekly feature on art, entertainment or cuisine near campus

Beautiful scenery resides blocks from campus

The nearby Hendricks Park can give desperately needed respite to students during the end-of-the-year crunch

Kendra Smith
Freelance Reporter

Ferns and tree branches colored a brilliant green drape over the pathways of Hendricks Park, a 77-acre refuge of peace and quiet less than eight blocks from campus. If you aren't turned away by the steep hills leading up to Eugene's first city park, you'll be greeted with a rain forest-like atmosphere that could be the calm in a storm of papers finals.

Hendricks Park was established 91 years ago when land along the tree-lined ridge of the hill behind the University was given to the city by Martha and Thomas Hendricks. The city purchased an adjoining plot of land and dedicated the entire property as Hendricks Park.

In 1951, Rhododendron Garden was created in the upper section of the park that now includes almost 15 acres, according to the Eugene Department of Public Works.

The forested lower section of the park is incredibly green, with ferns and other lush ground cover bumping up against Douglas Fir trees that are more than 200 years old. From this area of the park, you can barely see the sky for all the tall timbers.

A number of small trails crisscross the hill in this lower section of the park. This area is a great place to walk a dog, and you'll see many residents of the neighborhood out with their pets. Pets are not allowed in the Rhododendron Garden section of the park.

Many of the trails in the forested section of the park are steep and muddy (surprise), so it's a good idea to



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald



CHAD PATTESON/Emerald

Hendricks Park contains several benches where visitors can sit and admire the flowers.

wear hiking boots or tennis shoes with good traction. Some paths look more like they were created by park users than by the city, so watch out for posted signs warning of erosion and avoid those unofficial trails.

Bikes are allowed in this area of the park, but only on the paved roads, which are closed to motor vehicle traffic.

Most of the trails meander but don't lead anywhere specific. Because homes butt right up against the park, many of the trails lead from the center of the park out into neighborhoods. The views of Eugene and the surrounding area from the park are pretty enough that visitors wonder how much residents must have paid to have those views available every day. Other trails lead toward the main entrance of the park and the Rhododendron Garden, where the flowers are still in season despite their peak months being in April and May.

The best time to visit Hendricks

Park is probably the morning when birds are singing and playing in the bushes along the trails and the area around the park is fairly quiet. At this time of the day, visitors can feel far away from civilization, as if they aren't just a short walk from the hubbub of campus.

To reach the lower road into the forested section of the park, turn left on 19th Avenue from Agate Street and turn right on Columbia Street. From Columbia, go right on Fairmount Boulevard and turn left at the top of the hill, continuing on Fairmount until you see the closed road that leads into the park.

To arrive at the park's main entrance and the Rhododendron Garden, take 19th Avenue from campus and turn right on Orchard Street. Continue on Orchard until you come to an intersection with signs pointing up the hill toward the park. There are covered picnic tables, swings and bathrooms available in this section of the park.

REVIEW

Hendricks Park and Rhododendron Garden

★★
(steep climb, pretty hikes but not much to do)

■ **WHERE:** 1800 Skyline Blvd.

■ **COST:** Free

■ **CONTACT:** To arrange a tour or rent the picnic area, call the Eugene Public Works Parks Information at 687-5220

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