



Inge Scheve For the Emerald

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Nearby terrain is hikers' paradise

■ Eugene and surrounding areas offer plenty of trails to keep hikers busy

By Inge Scheve
 For the Emerald

So, sticking around town for the holidays? And nothing to do? Think again.

For those who don't mind getting dirty, the Eugene area offers some outstanding hiking trails. Closest to the University are the Ridgeline Trail, Spencer Butte and Alton Baker Park, all within 10 minutes from campus.

The Ridgeline Trail outlines the base of Spencer Butte and covers several miles of lush rolling terrain. Trail users include runners, hikers and dog-walkers, but occasionally mountain bikers and horses venture onto the trail.

Mountain bikers are technically confined to the easternmost portions of the trail, stretching from Fox Hollow to Baldy Peak.

Ridgeline's taxing terrain provides a fairly challenging run or a good hike for a total of about 12 miles round trip. Beware of extremely muddy conditions after rainy weather.

Just up the road from the Ridgeline Trail and off Willamette Street is the main Spencer Butte parking lot. This hike (or run) is a 1.5 mile loop that offers 360-degree views of the Willamette Valley from the Coast Range to Mount Bachelor.

On a good day, trail users can see Mount Hood to the north, the entire Coast Range to the west with Mary's Peak towering over the horizon, Diamond Peak, Willamette Pass, Mount Bachelor and more. On an overcast day, it's difficult to see even downtown Eugene through the fog.

Venturing out the other direction from school, Alton Baker Park is a short jog across the Autzen footbridge. The park is chock full

of barkdust running trails that form a 10-mile-plus trail system, also known as Pre's Trail. This is named after Eugene running legend Steve Prefontaine.

He brought back the idea of barkdust trails after a trip to Finland in the early 1970s. The park is pretty much flat, but it treats users to the beauty of the Willamette River with lush vegetation along the banks. Some trails are paved, making inline skating and bicycling other trail-use alternatives.

For those with transportation, Mount Pisgah is a steep but beautiful trip. The parking area is adjacent to the Mount Pisgah Arboretum, which features native plants and herbs through a 0.7-mile interpretive walk. The hike to the top is three miles round trip. A word of caution regarding poison oak: It's thick around the trail!

To get there, take I-5 south and take the 30th Avenue exit (#189), then double back across the highway and turn right onto Franklin Boulevard. Turn left onto Seavy Loop Road across the Coast Fork Willamette River bridge, then turn left again for 0.4 miles to the parking area.

Farther off, the Goodman Trail at milepost 21 on Highway 58, just beyond the town of Lowell and the Lookout Point Reservoir, is a beautiful hike.

Hikers can choose to continue beyond Goodman Creek toward Eagle's Rest. That hike is 13.4 miles out and back all the way to Eagle's Rest, while it's four miles round trip to Goodman Creek. Don't worry, there is no shame involved in turning back earlier.

Again, when the rains have been plentiful, this hike is rather soggy. The terrain is changing but mostly uphill on the way out, which makes for an easy return.

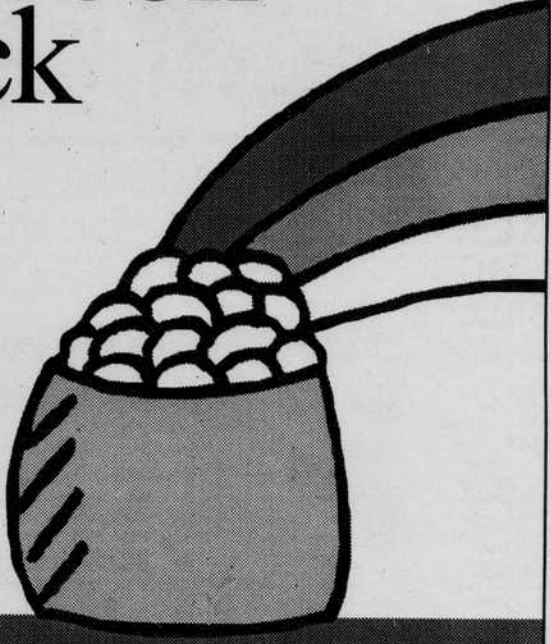
Another favorite of the Lowell area is Fall Creek, a 5.8-mile, fairly

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