

Hot on the trail

*Spandex shorts
aren't required to
have a good time
biking in Eugene*

By Joshua Rose
Freelance Reporter



As the weather heats up, the days grow longer, piles of soggy leaves disappear from Eugene's streets and paths and cyclists take to the streets. Mild weather, an abundance of bicycle facilities and active and environmentally conscious residents contribute to making Eugene a popular place to ride.

"There's an environmental mentality here that draws people who don't want to drive a car," said Noah Jack, Outdoor Program bike resource coordinator and environmental studies major. "It draws serious cyclists, and it's just a beautiful area with a lot of beautiful country roads and not that many cars."

Eugene offers more than 30 miles of bike paths, 68 miles of on-street bike lanes and 21 miles of designated bike routes.

"Whenever we build a street, we build it to accommodate biking and walking," Eugene bicycle and pedestrian coordinator Diane Bishop said.

Eugene's extensive bike program began in 1970 when the City Council formed a bike committee composed of city staff and Eugene residents to plan and develop bike paths, Bishop said.

Three popular rides offer cyclists varied terrain and beautiful scenery.

The Fern Ridge Bike Path follows Amazon Creek from 15th Avenue for about seven miles west through the West Eugene Wetlands. The ride is flat and not too difficult, offering a mix of scenery, traveling through residential and scenic wetlands areas. Interpretative signs along the path detail birds

one might see, including great blue herons, western meadowlarks and belted kingfishers. Plants such as the camas, fragrant popcorn flower and the Nootka rose can also be spotted during the spring or summer.

The path ends at Meadowlark Prairie Overlook. The overlook area is complete with sheltered benches and port-a-potties.

"I like being out in the beautiful wetlands area," said Springfield Faith Center youth worker Aaron Stevens, who usually rides the Fern Ridge Bike Path three times a week. "It's cool to get away from the business of traffic and cars."

To ride the Fern Ridge Path, simply follow East 15th Avenue west from campus. The path briefly connects with 16th Avenue before following Amazon Creek past North Westmoreland Park and Garfield Park. From there, the path continues west for about six miles to the West Eugene Wetlands.

Another popular but more challenging ride is the Spencer Butte loop. The 16-mile ride begins in Amazon Park and travels south, connecting with Fox Hollow Road. The ride is steep in parts and is not separated from the road by a bike path. Traffic is usually light, however.

Riders travel in the shade of tall trees surrounding Spencer Butte before being rewarded with expansive views of pastures and the Lorane Valley.

To ride the Spencer Butte loop, follow Hilyard Street south to Amazon

Park. There, bike paths continue south before meeting with West Amazon Drive. Follow West Amazon Drive to Fox Hollow Road. The ride follows Fox Hollow Road for about six miles before traveling north along McBeth Road. Continue on McBeth Road for three miles and make a right onto the Lorane Highway. The ride follows the Lorane Highway through scenic pastures for about six miles before returning to Eugene and connecting with 29th Avenue. Follow 29th Avenue east toward Amazon Park and the Spencer Butte loop is complete.

Finally, the Ruth Bascom Riverbank Trail, named after Eugene's former mayor and bicycle supporter, is a great place for a leisurely ride on a warm spring day. The north and south bank paths allow riders to choose their own route as they cycle past Alton Baker Park on the north bank and Skinner Butte Park on the south bank.

Several bridges connect the north and south bank paths across the Willamette River, letting riders travel as far as a 12-mile loop from the Owasso Bike Bridge, the northernmost bridge, to the Knickerbocker Bike Bridge, southeast of the Autzen Footbridge. Getting to the paths from the University is easy. Simply follow Agate Street north across Franklin Boulevard toward the Autzen Footbridge.

For those interested in cycling with a group, the Greater Eugene Area Riders bicycle club, or GEARS, offers training rides on Saturdays during the spring. Ride schedules

Ruth Bascom Riverbank Trail

Courtesy Joshua Rose

The Ruth Bascom Riverbank Trail allows riders to cycle past Alton Baker Park on the north bank of the Willamette River and Skinner Butte Park on the south bank.

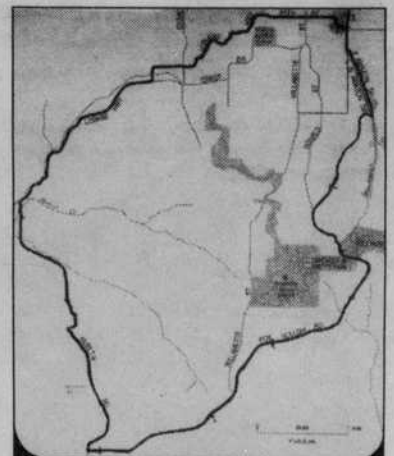
Courtesy Joshua Rose

The 16-mile Spencer Butte loop begins in Amazon Park and travels south, connecting with Fox Hollow Road. The tree-shaded ride is not separated from the road, but traffic is usually light.

and meeting places are posted Thursdays in The Register-Guard's sports section. The rides are free but require a road-worthy bike and a helmet, water and snacks.

Mountain bikers looking to hit the trails this spring may want to check out the University's Outdoor Program, which is offering a mountain bike maintenance clinic May 22 at 9 a.m. Participants will ride and learn to fix common trailside breakdowns. Riders can pre-register at the Outdoor Program office in Suite 37 of the EMU. The clinic costs \$7.

Joshua Rose is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



Amazon Park: Spencer Butte Loop

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An environmentally conscious atmosphere and the beauty of the Cascade Mountains come together on 86 acres of lush wilderness at the Breitenbush Hot Springs Retreat and Conference Center in western Oregon.

"You are rejuvenated and cleansed by the waters there," said junior Ashley Whitty, who has been traveling to the springs for 10 years. "It is a place where you can truly be removed from the everyday stresses of life, and I can't imagine a more incredible place to get away to."

Located off Hwy. 46 North near the Breitenbush River, the natural rock-lined meadow pools, medicine wheel tubs, natural steam sauna and sacred sweat lodge are close enough for a fairly inexpensive day trip. Prices start as low as \$8 per day, with opportunities for hiking, kayaking, camping and biking.

Boiling Point

Clothing is optional at the
Breitenbush Hot Springs

By Jamie Nash
Freelance Reporter

A hike that begins from Breitenbush's base camp leads to Devil's Peak and through the ancient cedars along the southern portion of the Breitenbush River toward Opal Creek.

People of all ages can enjoy a Breitenbush retreat because of its accessibility and welcoming community.

Breitenbush offers what it calls a Personal Retreat, which includes a stay in one of the 42 geothermally heated guest cabins, three organic, vegetarian meals and use of all facilities. The Villa, or kitchen, is stocked with fresh produce, breads, hot entrees and herbal teas. Meals are an

additional \$8 with a day use pass.

"It is incredible, very wholesome and nurturing," Whitty said about the food.

For a lodge, room prices start at \$41 per night, while cabins start at \$66 per night Friday through Saturday — reservations required. Peak rates run May 28 through Oct. 31, when the option of bringing a tent is available, starting at \$51 per night. Daily well-being programs are included in the fees. Programs consist of classes in yoga and meditation and tutorials about the hydroelectric systems that carry heat and water to the cabins and the electricity used by the retreat generated by the Breitenbush River.

To make a reservation or to get directions, call (503) 854-3314, or visit the Web site at <http://www.breitenbush.com>.

Jamie Nash is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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