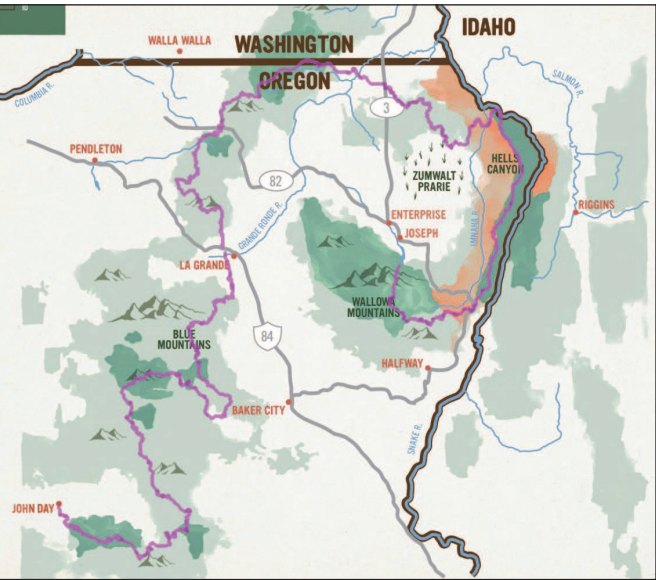




This widescale map is from the Greater Hells Canyon Council’s website for the Blue Mountains Trail. The site is www.hellscanyon.org/blue-mountains-trail



Renee Patrick/Contributed Photo

The Elkhorn Mountains on the horizon from Crown Point, northwest of Sumpter.

TRAIL

Continued from Page 1B
“People need to be realistic about the challenges,” Patrick said. “It’s a great trail for section hiking, as a way to build your skills.”

Higgins, who helped La Ruffa, Hudetz and Unger during their thru-hike by meeting them at trailheads with boxes of food and other supplies, pointed out that the Blue Mountains Trail, because it is made up of so many existing trails and roads, has a multitude of access points.

And it features some sections that are easier to hike than others, such as the Elkhorn Crest National Recreation Trail west of Baker City.

“You can select sections that match your skill level,” Higgins said.

Regardless of where you hike, though, you’ll be surrounded by some of Oregon’s most spectacular scenery, Patrick said.

Among the sections that especially entranced her is through the Eagle Cap Wilderness south of Wallawa Lake. That’s where she started her second and final stint on the trail, in early October.

The Blue Mountains Trail

follows the West Fork of the Wallowa River to Frazier Lake, then crosses Hawkins Pass and descends to the headwaters of the South Fork of the Imnaha River.

“I absolutely loved hiking in the Eagle Cap,” Patrick said. “That’s really an awesome section.”

She also appreciated that the route allowed her to trace a major river — the Imnaha — nearly from its headwaters below Hawkins Pass to its mouth at the Snake River in Hells Canyon.

The Blue Mountains Trail affords the hiker a similar experience with the Grande Ronde River.

“When you see it from the start to where it ends you almost have a relationship with the river,” Patrick said. “I really enjoyed that.”

The Blue Mountains Trail is also enticing for both its geology, which includes rocks more than 200 million years old, as well as considerably more recent cultural history.

Patrick said that while she hiked through the ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce tribe, including a section of the Nee-Me-Poo National Historic Trail, she listened to an audio version of “Thunder in the Mountains,” a historical

account chronicling the Nez Perce being driven from the area in 1877 as white settlers moved into Wallowa County.

Patrick said the hike into and out of Joseph Canyon, named for Nez Perce Chief Joseph, was probably the hardest section of the Blue Mountains Trail.

Among the other difficult sections were those where wildfires have burned in the past decade or so. That includes what was otherwise one of Patrick’s favorite areas, the Wenaha River Canyon, which she describes as “amazing” and “beautiful.”

“Fire has affected a lot of the trails,” she said. “Every year more trees fall. It’s on ongoing maintenance issue.”

Nor is fire the only threat to some of the trail sections that make up the Blue Mountains Trail, Kennedy said.

“There are many, many sections of trail that are way behind in terms of maintenance,” he said.

Not long before Patrick finished her thru-hike in late October, she hiked the Elkhorn Crest Trail during an early preview of winter when temperatures plummeted into the single digits.

She wasn’t deterred — “I do a lot of cold weather and winter camping,” she said — but Patrick said the range of experiences, from her sweltering start to the frigid conclusion, was appropriate for a trail with so many moods.

Patrick, along with Kennedy and Higgins, hopes this newest addition to the West’s long-distance treks will not only enchant hikers, but also bring an economic benefit to the region.

The route comes close to several towns, including Baker City, La Grande and Enterprise, and Kennedy said local residents and businesses could earn extra money shuttling hikers between trailheads and providing other supplies and services that hikers would need.

Ultimately, though, she said the Blue Mountains Trail is a treasure for people who want to follow in her footsteps.

“It’s a great opportunity for hikers,” Patrick said.

About The Route

A MIXTURE

The 566-mile Blue Mountains Trail includes both existing trails, Forest Service roads and some short sections that require cross-country travel. It is not a single route; there are alternates for certain sections so inexperienced hikers can avoid cross-country travel.

WILDERNESS WANDERING

The route passes through each of Northeast Oregon’s seven wilderness areas.

FIRST THRU-HIKERS

Four people hiked the entire Blue Mountains Trail in 2020. Renee Patrick completed the first solo thru-hike. Whitney La Ruffa, Naomi Hudetz and Mike Unger hiked the route together.

THE FUTURE

The Greater Hells Canyon Council in La Grande is working on detailed maps and route-finding guides. More information is available at www.hellscanyon.org/blue-mountains-trail

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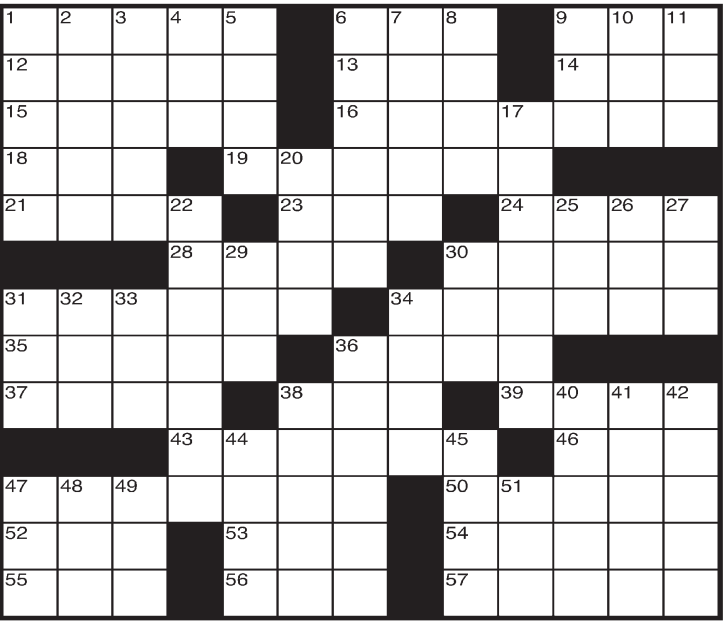
CROSSWORD PUZZLER

- ACROSS
- 1 Tack
- 6 Yellow vehicle
- 9 Smattering
- 12 — and aahed
- 13 Sugarloaf locale
- 14 Impress deeply
- 15 New on the job
- 16 Flew the shuttle
- 18 Hot time in Paris
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- 39 Hair goos
- 43 Arm joints
- 46 Large New Zealand parrot
- 47 Account
- 50 Thai or Vietnamese
- 52 El Dorado loot
- 53 Floor tile material
- 54 Stressed out
- 55 Crumple up
- 56 Witness
- 57 Kind of beaver
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- 2 Heart outlet
- 3 Rams and lambs
- 4 Tie-dyed garment
- 5 Ms. Ferber

Answer to Previous Puzzle



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- 6 Earthen jars
- 7 Buenos —, Argentina
- 8 Short hairdos
- 9 Blubbery
- 10 Wool producer
- 11 Marry
- 17 Flowing out
- 20 Type of dorm
- 22 Parlor pieces
- 25 Dogpatch’s — Abner
- 26 Fruit cooler
- 27 — -and-breakfast
- 29 Notch shape
- 30 — — step further
- 31 Dog or cat
- 32 Irving or Grant
- 33 Bribe
- 34 Emulate Etna
- 36 Candle holder
- 38 In the sky
- 40 Being very thrifty
- 41 Auto option
- 42 More balanced
- 44 Cup edges
- 45 Overindulge
- 47 Solemn promise
- 48 Age
- 49 Pole
- 51 Deep water

110 Announcements

110 Announcements

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