

## BIKE CAMPING

Forget burning a stinking tank of expensive gas for a long, dull drive to go car camping. Jump on your bike for an easy, 40-mile round-trip weekend adventure on one of the country's best car-free, rail-to-trail bike paths with camping at one of the nicest hidden campgrounds in Oregon.

First, take a half-hour bus or car ride down to Cottage Grove to the Row River Trail. The paved trail starts downtown, but drivers can skip three miles and start at the Mosby Creek trailhead.

Bike across the old rail bridge and look upstream for a view of the Mosby Creek covered bridge. Built in 1920, this bridge is the oldest of Lane County's 20 covered spans.

In another mile and a half of floating along the smooth path through tree tunnels and flowery meadows, you'll cross another rail bridge over the Row River, named after a deadly "row" among early pioneers.

Shortly after the bridge, the rail grade begins a gentle climb. A hundred years ago, the railroad fed logs to 20 mills. The logging destroyed almost all of the area's old-growth forest before closing down after the big trees were gone. The BLM built the bike trail on the abandoned grade in 1994.

In a couple miles, you'll reach Dorena Lake. Get a running start and bike up a short hill onto the dam for a sweeping view of the huge concrete spillway, four-mile lake and the valley 150 feet below. From the dam, the trail levels out along the lake with many great views.

Past the end of the lake, Dorena offers another covered bridge and a store where you can eat ice cream out front while sitting on an old church pew.

The trail ends four miles later in Culp Creek. From there continue on busier Row River Road for about a mile before turning left onto quieter Lower Brice Creek Road just before the bridge.

After another mile you'll pass Wildwood Falls, a very popular swimming spot. The quiet country road then winds through forest and farmland past water tanks to the marked turnoff for the Forest Service's excellent Rujada campground in about four more miles.

Take a creek swim, a sword-fern hike and then roast those marshmallows. In the morning, hop on your bike and gently glide the 20 miles back down the Row River Trail. — Alan Pittman



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