

BROWDER RIDGE RAMBLE

Wildflowers, strange hemlock and stunning Cascadia views



BROWDER RIDGE

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMS

Old-growth Western hemlock, Douglas fir and Alaska cedar blanket all slopes of the Browder Ridge near the junction of Hwy. 126 and Hwy. 20. You can hike this trail from west to east, east to west or arrange a shuttle. In my opinion, this hike is best done from the eastern trailhead at Gate Creek.

As we set out up the trail I was quickly reminded how steep this section of the trail is, covering nearly 1,400 feet in just less than 2 miles. The impressive and ever-changing forest gives you the sense of being far from any roads and helps dull the pain in your calves.

As you reach the first clearing the forest gives way to an impressive view of the Cascades. During the early summer

months there is a series of breathtaking wildflower displays that rivals the more famous and nearby Iron Mountain. In the second meadow there is an epic campsite that would provide an incredible sunrise.

There are only two drawbacks to camping here: One is that there is no water; the other is that the area is a sensitive meadow. Avoiding trampling vegetation as you make your way to the camp is definitely a challenge, though not impossible. This campsite is approximately 3.2 miles from the Gate Creek trailhead.

Beautiful vistas do not dramatically increase as you continue towards the Heart Lake Trail junction. But it is well worth the time to hike up the Heart Lake Trail because

of a unique rock formation, impressive views and a very strange mountain hemlock.

Unfortunately the Heart Lake Trail didn't appear to lead to its namesake, but at this point in the season the trail could still have been obscured by snow. According to the Forest Service, this unmaintained trail leads to a ridge overlooking the lake.

As you make your way north on Heart Lake Trail there is an impressive and strange mountain hemlock that is split into four trunks near the base. This type of splitting is common on the coast redwood, but rarely seen on mountain hemlock. At the end of the Heart Lake Trail there is another campsite, with far less impressive views, but it is on a more durable surface. There is a rocky outcropping nearby that is blanketed by hairy manzanita. We wanted to make our way to Three Creeks Brewery in Sisters before happy hour ended, so we turned around and made our way back to Gate Creek.

Browder Ridge is a great alternative to Iron Mountain if you want to see beautiful wildflowers with an incredible view of the Cascades. As you make your way back Hwy. 20 there is a large campsite just south of the bridge on Hackleman Creek — this area is perfect for a post hike swim. ■

DIRECTIONS FROM SWEET HOME TO GATE CREEK

TRAILHEAD: Follow Hwy. 20 east for approximately 40 miles, turn right onto Hackleman Creek Rd. Follow for 1.7 miles, turn right onto Forest Rd. 1598, and follow for 2.8 miles to the signed trailhead.

HIKE DISTANCE: 8.2 miles round trip

HIKE TYPE: Out and back

ELEVATION GAIN: 1,800 Feet

TRAILHEAD ELEVATION: 3,600 Feet

USAGE: Light **DIFFICULTY:** 4 out of 5 **FEES:** None

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EVENTS

SUMMER READING BOOK SALE to support Eugene Library. All books \$1. Saturday, July 13, 10-4 in the downtown library

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FOR SALE

Clothing

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Computers

NEXT STEP REUSE STORE Mon-Sat 10-6pm, Sun 11-4pm. Refurbished electronics, office furniture and more. ReUse is the New Recycle. 541-868-0904. 980 McKinley Street

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Lost & Found

FOUND: PHOTOGRAPHS on Lincoln St./West 3rd. Family photos, many from Calif, Cordelia, Dixon Ca. Contact Eugene Weekly office to claim: 541-484-0519, 1251 Lincoln St

Pets

DOG ADOPTION EVENT! Sat, July 12, noon-3pm at Petsmart on Chad Dr. Come meet the sweet little dogs available thru Wiggly Tails Dog Rescue. Find us on Facebook!

GREENHILL HUMANE SOCIETY Everybody Deserves a Good Home. Fri-Tues 11am-6pm, Closed Weds & Thurs. 88530 Greenhill Rd, 541-689-1503 green-hill.org Look for our Pet of the Week!

SHELTER ANIMAL RESOURCE ALLIANCE S.A.R.A.'s Treasures Gift & Thrift Shop. Volunteer, Donate, Shop, **ADOPT!** 871 River Road, Open Daily 10am-6pm. 541-607-8892 sarastreasures.org **LOOK FOR THIS WEEK'S RESCUED CAT.**

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