

Paragliding on the shores

Discover Paragliding offers a soaring experience on the coast

BY ZOE BUCHLI

For stunning aerial views of land and sea, a wind-powered sport has just begun its summer season on the North Coast. Paragliding, with a view high above the land in a personal gliding system, offers the opportunity to soar above miles of shoreline.

For Brad Hill, who co-owns Discover Paragliding with his wife, Maren Ludwig, the sport is a taste of freedom. Hill and Ludwig started the gliding school 25 years ago, and will celebrate its Warrenton location's 20th anniversary this season.

The area is the perfect combination of terrain, wind and ocean, according to Hill. "This is a unique geographic environment," Hill said. "The North Coast's extensive shores, the winds and smooth air off the beach and locals' welcoming of the sport combine to make the area ideal," he added.

June 6 will mark the business' 20th anniversary of launching from Sunset and Del Rey beaches. While Hill isn't sure what the event will look like yet, he imagines the day as a reunion event for gliders who have trained with the group.

Welcoming first time gliders through experienced thrill seekers, Discover Paragliding aims to guide all skill levels to a great experience. Tandem flights give first time gliders the chance to soar through the air with the reassurance of being attached to an expert. "They usually fly up to about 3,000 feet," Hill said of the tandem sessions. Discover Paragliding also gives ambitious beginners the chance to get acquainted to the sport through a two day



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

ABOVE: Paragliders, seen in the distance near Manzanita. LEFT: A paraglider sets off from a sand dune along the North Coast.



Discover Paragliding

Sunset Beach, Warrenton

Offering solo and tandem training sessions

Students should bring helmet, mask and mechanic style gloves

www.discoverparagliding.com

solo flight training course. To share the experience of paragliding with others, Discover Paragliding also trains instructors.

As a U.S. Powered Paragliding Association authorized training location, Discover Paragliding is certified to instruct both solo and tandem courses. Most of Hill and Ludwig's customers hail from the Portland area, but the business has guided paragliders from all corners of the globe.

"We've had people from the southern end of Africa, people from France, Germany and Spain," Hill said, adding those relationships with travelers are strong and sometimes even make for lifelong connections.

For Hill, the sport is a unique experience. "We can launch at 3,000 feet and climb up to higher than you can usually fly a private plane," he said. "It's pretty amazing. You get to go anywhere you want to go."

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