

# Prineville man sets out to walk entire Oregon Trail

By CLAYTON FRANKE  
Baker City Herald

**BAKER CITY** — Hundreds of thousands of people traveled the Oregon Trail in the 19th century, and Don “Dundee” Martin is honoring their journey.

Like his pioneer counterparts, Martin travels with a wagon and an ox.

He eats Oregon Trail foods — steel cut oats, rice, nuts and dried meats and fruits.

He wears traditional pioneer white canvas pants with suspenders, camps in thunderstorms and carries enough water to last him a week.

But unlike those of his forebears, Martin’s wagon is a single-wheeled cart — aesthetically similar to a pioneer wagon, covered in canvas supported by curved oak beams.

And instead of pulling the cart, his ox is a stuffed toy that rides on top of the wagon.

Martin passed through Baker City on Wednesday, July 6, as he attempts to walk the entire historic Oregon Trail.

He stayed overnight at the home of friends Carla and Wayne Inman, and then took a rest day July 7.

Besides his cart and his stuffed ox, Martin, of Prineville, has different moti-



Don “Dundee” Martin of Prineville pushes his wagon Wednesday, July 6, 2022, along Pocatontas Road near Baker City as he works to complete his quest to walk the Oregon Trail.

Clayton Franke/Baker City Herald

ations than the 19th century travelers bent on settling in a new land. Martin said he’s walking the trail as a cultural and historical pilgrimage.

“A pilgrimage is an opportunity to get away from your day to day life, do something physically demanding that you would not otherwise be doing, share experiences with fellow travelers, get a different sense of perspective and do some self reflection,”

Martin said. “There’s a lot of good things that come out of it.”

Martin is on his third pair of shoes out of the four he brought. Now 2,075 miles and 81 days into the trip, he said he hopes the fourth pair will get him through the final 400 miles to Oregon City.

### A modern accessory

Attached to the front of the cart is a device Oregon

Trail pioneers could scarcely have imagined — a GPS unit, which tracks his mileage and provides a location tracker where people can follow along online.

Martin’s wagon like 19th century prairie schooners contains everything he needs to live for weeks on remote parts of the trail.

Unfortunately, though, the wagon, he said, has “zero capability in mud.”

He also carries camping gear. He usually can find public land to camp on, but if he can’t, he’ll just start knocking on doors.

“Most people that know what you’re doing are happy to share their yard for a night,” Martin said. “If you look, generally there’s a place where you can stay.”

Martin said one of the “high points” of his pilgrimage is meeting new people, “trading stories with them, just talking to them, hopefully inspiring a little more interest in the trail.”

### A trail (re)blazer

Martin’s journey started on April 16 in Independence, Missouri, a common jumping-off point for westbound immigrants. Since then he’s passed through Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming and Idaho.

It’s a long walk, but Martin said that’s not the reason so few people complete — or even attempt — the hike today. Martin said he knows of fewer than 10 who have walked the entire Oregon Trail since modern roads were constructed.

Its lack of foot traffic isn’t because of difficult terrain, Martin said. He said some sections with hills are more difficult than others, but for the most part, he’s just walking.

“Physically it’s very non demanding,” Martin said.

The reason the hike isn’t more popular today, Martin said, is because people have forgotten about it.

“After the trail went out of use, people almost immediately forgot about it,” Martin said. “It did not occur to people that this would be a really significant event that ought to be preserved in some way.”

### Preserving the past

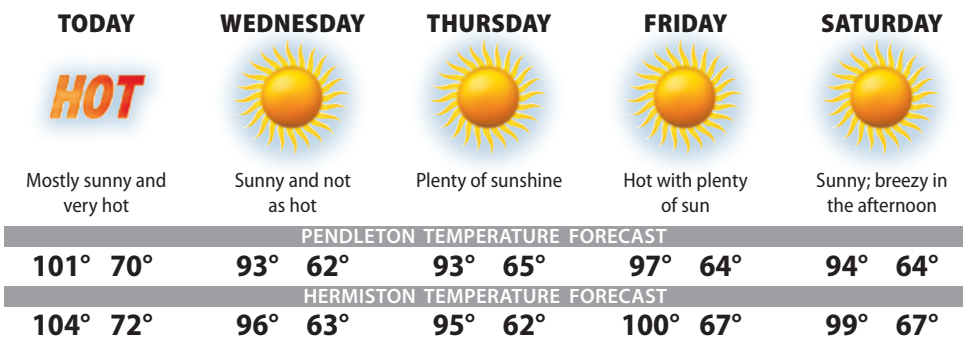
“It’s not well preserved everywhere,” Martin said. “The few parts that are on public land, because it’s never traveled, are all back to sagebrush. It’s not something that you’re going to be able to readily travel on foot.”

Picking a specific historical route is difficult, Martin said, because the trail was a “living, breathing thing.” Pioneers changed the route frequently based on weather conditions or environmental factors for that year.

That’s why Martin plans to write an Oregon Trail guide to help and inspire future hikers after he finishes the trail himself.

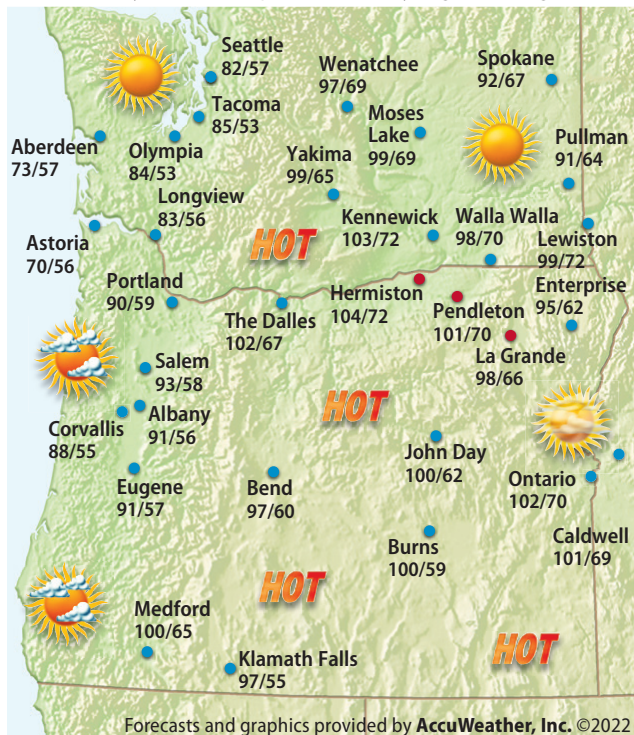
With Martin’s GPS mapping a route to the coast, he’s a pioneer of the modern Oregon Trail — re-blazing a trail with hopes others will follow.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. Mon.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Monday	93°	55°		
Normals	89°	58°		
Records	107° (1897)	40° (1911)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	0.31"			
Normal month to date	0.16"			
Year to date	11.13"			
Last year to date	4.32"			
Normal year to date	8.11"			
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. Mon.				
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW		
Monday	94°	54°		
Normals	92°	58°		
Records	107° (2002)	42° (2008)		
PRECIPITATION				
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"			
Month to date	0.03"			
Normal month to date	0.04"			
Year to date	7.48"			
Last year to date	2.46"			
Normal year to date	5.06"			
WINDS (in mph)				
	Today	Wed.		
<b>Boardman</b>	NE 4-8	WSW 8-16		
<b>Pendleton</b>	N 6-12	W 8-16		
SUN AND MOON				
Sunrise today	5:18 a.m.			
Sunset tonight	8:44 p.m.			
Moonrise today	8:29 p.m.			
Moonset today	3:32 a.m.			
	Full	Last	New	First
	July 13	July 20	July 28	Aug 5

## Alpenfest gets official alphorn

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

**WALLOWA LAKE** — It’s not new, but Oregon’s Alpenfest has a new, 50-year-old alphorn as the official instrument of the festival, held each fall in Oregon’s “Little Switzerland.”

The half-century-old horn was on display July 5, when University of Idaho student Grace Hanning donned a traditional Swiss dirndl dress to show how the horn is played.

She was at Wallowa State Park at the marina where the state Parks and Recreation Department plans to construct an events center. Plans are for the center to be the new permanent home of Alpenfest, said Alpenmeister Chuck Anderson.

He said the horn may be old, but it’s like new because it was hardly ever played.

The horn was donated to Alpenfest by Cathy Leitch, whose father, Gordon Leitch, bought it from an alphorn maker in Lucerne, Switzerland. It arrived in the United States in 1975 when it was shipped to Portland, Anderson said.

The 12-foot-long horn consists of a long tube that



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

**Grace Hanning of Centerville, Washington, demonstrates while clad in a traditional Swiss dirndl dress how the new official alphorn of Oregon’s Alpenfest is played July 5, 2022.**

goes down to a bell-shaped end is made largely of spruce with a birch rattan wrapping, Anderson said.

According to the Swiss Observer, which bills itself as the official organ of the Swiss colony in Great Britain, the alphorn is closely identified with Swiss culture. However, it’s not exclusively Swiss, as Alpine areas of Germany and Austria have long had the horns, as have Norway, Hungary, Romania and even some countries of Asia.

The earliest records of the alphorns used in that is now Switzerland date

from the 16th century.

Alpenfest was held at the old Edelweiss Inn for 43 years, but the building’s owners deemed it to be too dangerous for future public events after the 2018 festival. This year’s festival, scheduled for Sept. 29-Oct. 2, will be at the Harley Tucker Memorial Rodeo Grounds in Joseph.

Anderson, who has long headed the Alpenfest, was eager to bring the festival back after being canceled for two years because of the pandemic.

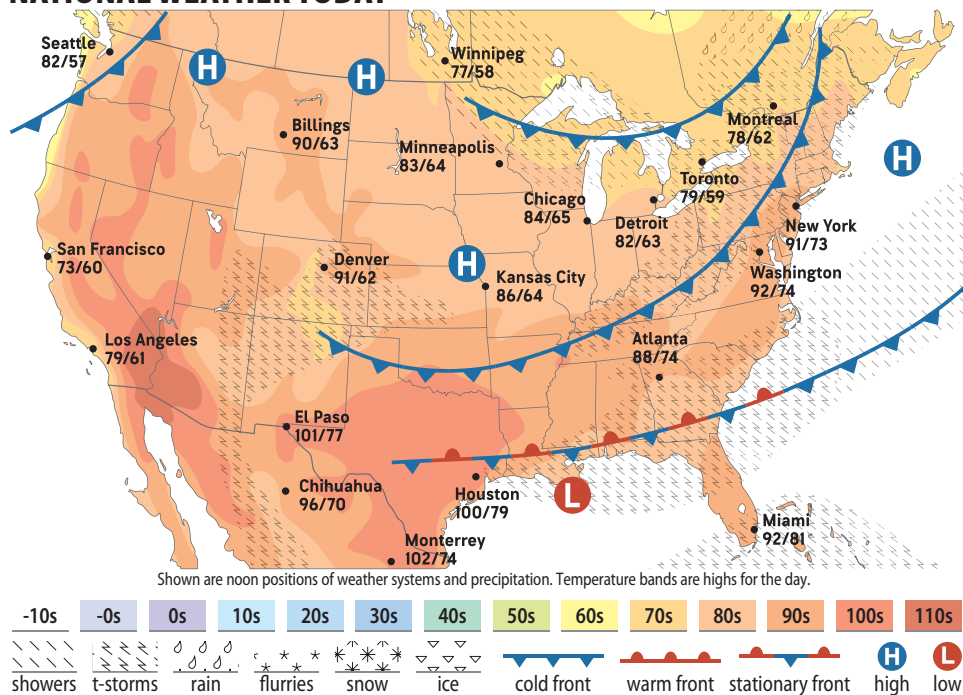
“We’re going to hold it this year no matter what,” he said.

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday’s National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 115° in Needles, Calif. Low 27° in Afton, Wyo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## IN BRIEF

### Human remains found east of Walla Walla, no details yet

**WALLA WALLA** — Human remains have been discovered east of Walla Walla, according to officials with the Walla Walla County Sheriff’s Office.

The remains were found Wednesday, July 6, and the sheriff’s office informed the public the afternoon of July 7.

No additional information was released, including the person’s gender, approximate age, cause of death or where exactly their remains were located.

“We understand this information is limited,” wrote Chief Deputy Richard Schram in an email. “However, for the consideration of those involved and the integrity of the investigation, this is all we can release at this time.”

More information will be released as the investigation progresses, according to law

enforcement officials.

It is not immediately clear if the remains are connected with an active case, such as the possible homicide investigation in Waitsburg announced by the sheriff’s office, with scant details, on June 22.

Waitsburg is northeast of Walla Walla. “We honestly don’t know at this time,” Undersheriff Joe Klundt told the Union-Bulletin. “We haven’t been able to identify the victim as of yet.”

Deputies were notified around 4:11 p.m. on July 6 that a resident had located the remains, according to the release. Sheriff’s detectives, deputies and members of the Walla Walla Regional Task Force responded to the scene and located the body.

The Washington State Patrol Crime Lab assisted the local agencies, and an autopsy was conducted July 7 in Spokane. No details have been released.

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

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