

Running Routes in Oregon

The goal of this column is to describe a route/location, and let you know in my opinion if it's all it's cracked up to be. So if you have a favorite running route, let me know by contacting ORRC at orrc@orrc.net and I'll give it a try.

Amazon Trail, Eugene, OR

Do you have a "happy place?" You know, a place you think of when you're stressed or anxious? For me, my happy place is Highway I-5 South on the way to California. Sure, it's boring, straight, and not pretty to look at...but you're on your way to Disneyland! Whenever I'm stressed, such as at work, or anxious due to my "healthy respect" for heights...I think of my happy place and feel better. Translating this to running...my "running happy place" is the Amazon Trail in Eugene, Oregon.

The official name is the "Adidas Oregon Trail" which connects to the "Rexius Trail," but it is located in Amazon Park off of the Amazon Parkway, so for most people it is simply known as the Amazon Trail. It's a one mile looped trail, marked every quarter mile, and every 100 meters for a shorter 1000 meter loop. The trail is bark dust, so soft to run on, but not a "hiking style trail" where I have to worry about turning an ankle.

This trail brings back memories of when I lived in Eugene and went to graduate school at the University of Oregon. I was in

the best shape of my life, setting PRs and winning races. I ran at Amazon several times a week, and was just having a good time running. Every time I come back to Eugene and run at Amazon, the memories come back, and I think I'm an elite athlete again, even while jogging at a 10:00 minute pace. So forgive me if I am a little unbiased about this running trail.

The start of the trail is located at the corner of Amazon Parkway and 24th Ave, across the street from the track and baseball fields of South Eugene High School, and next to Amazon Park. There is a small parking lot across the street from the trail, which includes a bathroom, so you have a very convenient place to park and meet people for a group run. Yes, the trail is only 1 mile around (with a shorter 1000 meter loop as well), but for some reason I never minded running loops here. The first section is tree-lined and shady, while the second half is a field of tall grass and flowers. If you are looking for beauty, you'll find it here.

However, if you are looking for solitude, you might need to look elsewhere. There are always people on the trail, including fast and slow runners, groups, and individuals. Since I was running here during the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials, every time I saw someone even halfway fit I thought, "Is that someone fast?" Of course anyone wearing a matching outfit and less body fat than me makes me think they are probably fast. Needless to say, I always feel safe and wouldn't think

twice about running here by myself. It was also nice because since it was a bark dust trail, I never had to worry about bikes, which can be a little annoying when on a bike trail. I have nothing against cyclists, but it's nice every once and while to run somewhere and not to have to think about if I'm in their way.

I was also running on this trail for the first time in several years, and in addition, getting over a "tweaked" quad muscle. When I started I wasn't sure if I'd only be able to walk a few loops while my running partner ran on her own. However, after one loop on the trail, my quad muscle loosened up (probably due to the softer surface) and I tried stretching it out a little. The quad kept feeling better, and I felt like a dog being let loose in a favorite park. "Can I go for a run?! Can I?!" Here I was in my "happy running place," and I was all set to keep going! However, smarter heads prevailed and we limited the run to only five times around.


If you don't want to run in circles, you can avoid doing loops by running about a half a mile south of Amazon and adding the Rexius trail loop. This is another bark dust trail that is a quick out and back on Amazon Parkway, alongside a small river

JULIA REISINGER ON THE AMAZON TRAIL



Julia Reisinger

and into the neighborhoods of South Eugene. This trail is a little narrower than Amazon, but just as nice to run on. Combining these two loops is a nice five-mile run/walk.

There are so many beautiful places to run in Eugene that it can be hard to pick just one route. However, for me, a trip to Eugene just isn't complete unless I have at least one run at Amazon. I may not be as fast as I used to be, and I might not race anymore, but this trail brings back so many pleasant memories, and is so much fun to run on that it makes me want to move back just to be close to it. Maybe when I retire... 

The Lowdown

Directions: Amazon is located in South Eugene at the corner of Amazon Parkway and 24th Ave. It's about a mile from the University of Oregon or downtown Eugene.

Bathroom: There is a bathroom across the street from the park, so no worries there.

Parking: There is a parking lot across the street from the park on the corner of Amazon Parkway and 24th Ave.

Surface: Bark dust trail along the entire path. It is soft and wide. Perfect for running.

Traffic: None. The trail is closed to traffic

Popularity: Very popular. I cannot recall a time when I've run on this trail that I didn't see other people on it. It can be almost crowded on the weekends, but at least there are no cyclists, so it's easy to maneuver without worrying about bikes zooming by.

Plusses: Soft trail, pleasant scenery, easy to get to, no bikes...It's just about perfect.

Minuses: If you don't like loops, it could get a little monotonous.

Rating: 5 out of 5 (for those who don't like running loops, 4.5). If only we had a trail like this in Portland!



4TH OF JULY 4 MILER PHOTO BY JULIA REISINGER