

# 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.*

## **Pilot Butte Trail, Bend, OR**

Some people know exactly how fast they can run a mile, some people pride themselves on their uphill running abilities and how they can storm up a hill in no time flat, while some people are able to endure the knee crunching, quad busting downhill. But if you ever want to really test your skill at all three, the place to do it is at Pilot Butte in Bend, Oregon. They have a mile-long trail up the Butte, followed of course by a downhill mile to get back down. When in Bend you can't miss the Butte since you can see it from anywhere in town. In fact this is where the city sets off their fourth of July fireworks each year.

I am no longer fast, I really don't enjoy uphill (who really does?) and after running the first leg of Hood to Coast – you know the one, from Timberline Lodge going steep downhill for forever, I know I am not a downhill runner either. However, I put all my reservations aside and walked (no I couldn't run the thing) up Pilot Butte and enjoyed the scenery if not the hilliness of the location.


In addition to the challenge of the climb, you can compare yourself to other runners/walkers over the course because they have a chart at the bottom of all the best times up the hill by age group. So you don't have to be the fastest overall; you can be the fastest in your age division. The times are updated each year after the annual mile race to the top at the end of September (run in waves by age group.)

But if you know you're not fast enough to compete by time, you can also challenge yourself by joining the "100 Club." This is a club you join by running or walking the Butte 50 times (1 mile up and 1 mile down.) There are mileage logs you can collect at the bottom and fill out as you complete each loop, and then

mail in to the State Parks Office in Bend (the address is on the back of the log.) Their motto is to "keep walking and stay fit."

The trail to the top is a dirt trail that is closed to cyclists, but there is also a road to the top, which cars and cyclists can use (although the road is closed in the winter to cars but still open to pedestrians and cyclists). There is a rest stop at the top with bathrooms and water fountains, and there are bathrooms and water fountains at the bottom as well as a picnic area, and a more level trail circling the bottom of the butte (4 times around = 1.15 miles,) so if you want, you can just watch all the crazy people climb while you remain safely at the bottom. But if you really want to test yourself and go to the top the hard way, do the lower loop as a warm-up and then start heading up. The elevation gain from bottom to top is 470 feet, and you basically achieve the mile distance by winding around the Butte as you climb (it's not switchbacks but actual circles). The hard part for me was of course my fear of heights that increased the more I circled. I admit, the views were tremendous, but a few times (where I would describe it as "cliffy") I was just thinking, "Don't look out, just concentration on getting to the top!"

And the 360 degree view at the top was definitely worth the effort. Although then you have to get down, and hence the test of the knees and quads. I have to admit if I had to choose I'd prefer the uphill to the downhill (memories of Hood to Coast came to mind as we neared the bottom and all I could think was "I need some level ground!")

Would I recommend this trail to other runners? Yes, with reservations. It's not something you'd want to do every day, especially if you have any issues with your knees. But it's a great run to do for a break in the routine, and a fun view. You'll see me running around the bottom and thinking you're all crazy. 



JULIA REISINGER ON PILOT BUTTE TRAIL

## The Lowdown

Directions: **Pilot Butte** is at the edge of downtown Bend, just East of Bend's city center. From downtown Bend, take NE Greenwood Ave East toward the Butte. The entrance to Pilot Butte State Park is actually on the other side of the Butte, so after about two miles, you'll drive around the Butte and take a left on Azure Way. Then a left on Savannah Dr., followed by a left on Linnea Drive and straight to the park.

Bathroom. There are bathrooms at the bottom of the Butte and again at the top so no worries there.

Parking: There is ample parking at the trailhead.

Surface: Single track trail, but not too technical.

Traffic: None. The trail is closed to traffic, including cyclists.

Popularity: Pretty popular, but more so with walkers/hikers than runners, so if you are running, you may need to be prepared to pass people. It's not that crowded, but probably more noticeable on a summer weekend.

Plusses: Soft surface, pleasant scenery, easy to get to, no traffic.

Minuses: It's all uphill, with no real breaks until you reach the top, and of course all downhill to get back to the start. A few sections were a little much for my fear of heights (a bit "cliffy") but not too bad, and as always, I'm not as partial to trail running, so I get tired of looking at my feet. However, since I was walking instead of running, it wasn't so bad.

Rating: 3.5 out of 5 (Nice views, but a challenge. It's probably a 4.5 or 5 if you like trails...and hills.)

Phil and I had just returned from a two-week trip to Virginia to visit our son. Our plane landed around 11 am on Sunday and the annual Up the Lazy River Run was the next morning, Memorial Day. That morning it was raining, the kind of rain you knew wasn't going to stop by the time the race started. No worry. We're Oregonians. Everyone knows how to dress. As I jogged around the parking lot to warm up for the run, it occurred to me that this was my welcome home from my beloved Oregon. That morning, it was more like "Pour-egon." The thought made me chuckle.

Along the way, I settled into my race pace – I started slow and tapered. I love this run. I ran it for the first time when I was 40. Back then, you had to be at least 40 to run in it. I will be 64 two weeks from now, so I've run it a few times. Even in the rain, I was enjoying myself. On one early stretch of Old River Road, a runner passed me and stepped in a puddle – they were hard to miss – and apologized for splashing me. I laughed and told him I couldn't be much wetter. He replied, "I know but it seemed kind of rude." I laughed again and told him it seemed like a fun thing to do – stomping in puddles along the way. I thanked him for the thought and told him I might use it in an article.

I was happy to be running that morning and I let my thoughts wander with me. I thought about the occasion, Memorial Day, and of all the men and women who lost their lives protecting us, who made the ultimate sacrifice for our liberty and the liberty of millions around the world. They are no longer with us. Some of them might have been runners and enjoyed a day like today, even in the rain. I was thankful for them all and for being able to celebrate them that morning.

As I ran on, I looked to my right at the rapidly flowing Willamette River – it didn't look at all lazy – and thought about the day before and our flight home. We had flown over the mighty Missouri River. A few days earlier, we had been walking along the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia, a course we have run many times over the years. Even with a touch of jet lag lingering, I was energized and glad to be running along our own river on this beautiful course. The end was near. As I passed the 5-mile marker I cheered, only 1.2-miles to go. My cadence picked up to the beat of a song in my head. I couldn't help it. This was my final race as a 63-year old. I was running to the beat of the Beatles' "When I'm 64." I played with the words along the way. "When I get older . . . many years from now . . . will I be running . . . when I'm 64?" Well, I'm soon to be 64 and I am still running.

Whether it's "many years from now" for you, or if you are well beyond that, I hope you are still running, jogging, walking, biking or swimming. It was 24 years ago today that I ran my first Up the Lazy River Run. In another 24 years, I hope I'm still showing up at the starting line. I'll be starting slower and tapering more, but I'll be there if I can! 