

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.

Ruth Bascom River Path, Eugene, OR

The Willamette River flows between Eugene and Springfield, and along its banks is the beautiful Ruth Bascom River Path. This paved bike trail circles both sides of the river, with mileage markers every quarter mile and multiple pedestrian bridges enabling runners and cyclists to go as short as two miles, or as long as 12.

You can start your run along the river just about anywhere, but I started my run at the Autzen footbridge just across from the University of Oregon. I then ran clockwise along the loop, following the path all the way out to the Owosso Bike Bridge on the south side of the river. On this side of the river you pass by Skinner Butte Park, a rose garden, and multiple community gardens. It is beautiful, and even includes models of the planets as part of a display that details their distance from the sun (located at Alton Baker Park). After crossing the Owosso Bike Bridge, I then returned on the North side of the river through the Delta Ponds (supposedly home of turtles, but I didn't see any), past the Valley River Center, and through Alton Baker Park before returning to my starting point. There is a restaurant by the Valley River Center, so you may pass alongside diners while on your run, feeling a bit superior as you run while they eat. Also along the way there were beautiful viewpoints, an abundance of birds to look at, multiple bathrooms, and even water fountains. There probably isn't a more convenient place to run in all of Eugene, if not in Oregon.



The trail is divided into four main sections. The first is the North Bank portion, about 4 ½ miles long, which is probably the most popular. This was the section that included the Valley River Center, Alton Baker Park, Autzen Stadium, with access to Pre's Trail (a barkdust trail north of the University of Oregon). The South Bank section (just across the river from the North Bank) is about 2 ½ miles long and is probably the second most popular section. This section included passing by the DeFazio Bike Bridge, and Skinner Butte Park, which I thought was probably the prettiest section of the trail. The West Bank section connects to the South Bank at the Greenway Bike Bridge, is about 2 miles long and had much less traffic than the North and South Banks. It included a short section through some neighborhoods before hitting the farthest point at the Owosso Bike Bridge. The final section was the East Bank section, just under 3 miles long, that starts at the Owosso Bike Bridge and continuing until it hits the North Bank at the Greenway Bridge. The East Bank is the section that goes through the Delta ponds, where you can get distracted looking for birds and the elusive turtles.

By running the two most popular sections, the South and North portions, you could run a very pleasant five miles, but by adding the West and East sections it's a good nine miles. You could also tag on Pre's Trail near Autzen Stadium and Alton Baker Park if you wanted to add a little distance, or a softer section on bark dust.

I felt very comfortable running this bike path in terms of safety, but it did feel a little more isolated on the West and East Bank portions, so I would probably recommend running with a friend on this section. I also can't imagine what the weekend traffic would be on a day with a football game. If students were walking to Autzen stadium from the University of Oregon, you might want to skip that section until the game started!

All in all it was an amazing place to run, and I consider the residents of Eugene extremely fortunate to have access to such a wonderful site. Portland has Forest Park and the Springwater Corridor, but I think the Ruth Bascom River Path has them beat in terms of convenience and beauty.

JULIA REISINGER ON RUTH BASCOM RIVER PATH

The Lowdown

Directions

Ruth Bascom path can be accessed from multiple points along the river, with probably the easiest access at the Valley River Center and Alton Baker Park near Autzen Stadium. The Valley River Center is located off the Delta Highway north of Eugene, while Alton Baker Park is off of Coburg Road.

Bathroom

There are multiple bathrooms along the route, but a few didn't open until 7:00am so if you start earlier they won't be accessible.

Parking

Depending on where you start the loop there is ample parking at Alton Baker Park, or Valley River Center. Or you can start at many other locations, but perhaps be prepared to run a little farther to get back to your car.

Surface

Paved bike path the entire way. Near the Owosso Bike Bridge there is a small detour through a neighborhood, but it is still paved. I loved it, but if you are used to softer surfaces, you might want to try elsewhere.

Traffic

None. The trail is closed to traffic

Popularity

Very popular. I ran both in the middle of the week, and again on a weekend, both times in the morning, and both times there were a lot of people. There were more runners on the North Bank section of the loop with probably the second busiest section the South Bank section passing by Skinner Butte Park.

Plusses

No traffic, plenty of bathrooms, and beautiful scenery. Plus the pedestrian-only bridges were a real treat.

Minuses

The East and West Bank Section felt a little isolated so you probably want to run with a friend on this section.

Rating

5 out of 5 (for those who prefer a softer surface, 4.5). The South Section was my favorite portion.

Dear ORRC Running Family,

On behalf of the ORRC Board of Directors, our volunteers and members, we wish to express our sympathies to the runners, family members and many friends and supporters affected by the tragic events at the Boston Marathon on Monday. What was supposed to be a celebration of life and joy and achievement turned into tragedy and horror where running and finishing didn't matter. We wish to thank everyone who stepped up to help those injured and affected by the events, including the many wonderful community members in Boston who volunteered their homes and assistance to runners who were unable to finish the race. But especially to all of the first responders who took action to assist the injured.

As RRCA has stated, we encourage our members and all runners to keep running and racing in the days, weeks, months and years to come. The running community is the most generous group of people in the country and around the world and the victims will need our support. However, we echo the RRCA in expressing caution to our members to be smart about giving money until an official charity is designated by race officials. If you prefer to give now, we again, echo the RRCA and encourage you to support locally established organizations, such as the American Red Cross of Eastern Massachusetts (www.redcross.org/ma/boston).

Our thoughts and wishes are with you and all of those affected by these events.

*Tracy Reisinger
President Oregon Road Runners Club*

Thanks to ORRC for seeing the importance of groups like Willie Fit. Your support is such a blessing to our students. We certainly appreciate your continued support of our program!

- Lyndi Tucker and Alyson Leatherman, Wilsonville HighSchool

Thanks for the cool (or should I say warm!) beanie from ORRC. I LOVE it and have been wearing it everywhere! :) 3 cheers for ORRC!!

- Pattie Hart

Was surprised & thrilled to receive my hat in the mail today. Especially with the cool weather still upon us. Funny thing was Saturday I went to AA sports expo & almost bought a hat which I have needed to replace. I didn't have any cash at the time. So this makes up for it even more.

- Thanks, Barbara Larrain

Dear Tracy and the whole ORRC crew ~

A super big Thank You for the new hat! I just love it. It's really warm, soft and comfortable and feels like Smartwool socks, only on my head, what could be better?! I'm excited to be part of the ORRC and hope to get out there for a Thursday night training run very soon, like this week! Looking forward to meeting you all. Thanks again for the Super snazzy black cap!

- Amy Baker