

HIGH DESERT TOUR



When you come across the word “desert,” do you first think of some vast wasteland of sand dunes and scrub? A Sahara or a Namib or even a Mojave? If you do, you may have to rethink that image when it comes to this, the High Desert Tour. For a first dose of rethinking, look at the photo above: that bit of country, along the Crooked River National Scenic Byway, comes up on Stage 5 of the tour. Doesn’t really look like a desert, does it?

And yet this region is known as the High Desert of Central Oregon. Indeed, we ride past the beautiful High Desert Museum on Stage 2. If you took part in the 2022 Northern Oregon Tour, you will perhaps recall our lesson on the local climate: how the massive bulk of the Cascade Mountain Range acts as a rain fence, blocking most of the moisture (that keeps Western Oregon so green) from dumping on this, the eastern side of the mountains. Locals will tell you they enjoy 300 days of sun each year in Bend. That may not mean full sun all day, Palm Springs style, but it does indicate a relatively arid environment; effectively, technically, a desert.

However, there is a happy asterisk attached to that desert designation. The Cascades, while blocking the rain from falling on the plain, are collecting all that moisture as snow, all through the long winter. These peaks accumulate some of the deepest snowpack in the country. The ski resort on Mt Bachelor will sometimes remain open into the summer. All that snow on the eastern flank of the mountains, when it eventually melts, drains down into Central Oregon. So while rain falling directly onto this region in the summer is rare, the land is not parched...far from it. You will see water everywhere, every day, in lakes and reservoirs and ponds, in rivers and streams and waterfalls, in aqueducts and irrigation ditches, in sloughs and wetlands, and of course spraying out of a thousand industrial-sized sprinklers, keeping the farm fields green and growing. If this is a desert, it’s the greenest one you’ll ever see. That said, there will be places along our stages that have not been turned to (irrigated) agriculture or that do not have rivers or streams or lakes nearby, and then we might see some dry, rather austere vistas—almost deserts—the sprawling wide open spaces of the American West.

Other landscapes that will pass in review: vast forests of fir and pine; high alpine peaks and meadows; spectacular rock formations that would look right at home in Southern Utah; chunky lava flows evoking the area’s volcanic history; meandering lanes and bike trails through several upscale resorts; visits to small towns and some interesting new neighborhoods around Bend’s suburban fringe. While a few miles will be blah—every tour has some of those—overall it will be a movable feast.

This tour is a first cousin to a couple of tours we did a few years ago: the Central Oregon Tour of 2015 and the original Northern Oregon Tour of 2007 (the southern part of that tour that was not included in the reinvented NOTR of 2022). There will be déjà vu miles every day, although in almost every case, we will be riding the same roads in the opposite direction, so any been-here-done-this feeling will be hazy at best.

The tour starts and ends at Tumalo State Park, just beyond the NW outskirts of Bend. (Tumalo: rhymes with Bum, not Boom.) We have reserved their two group sites for our visit in mid-July. There aren't enough spare parking spots in the park for our car pool fleet, but we have arranged to stash the cars at a private school a half-mile from the park.

How hard is this tour? Not that hard! (I know, you've heard that before.) 18,000' of elevation gain on the shorter routes is just about the lowest total we've ever logged for a 7-stage tour. Even the 23,000' of gain with all the long options is still among the least hilly tours ever. That's a good news-bad news deal. Not too many leg-breaker ascents but also not so many fun descents off the other sides...instead, a lot of flats and rollers. There are long but gradual climbs late in the day on Stages 1 and 2 and in the morning on Stage 4. And there are some fairly fierce uphill on the long route on Stage 6. There are longish miles on offer on Stages 5 and 6 but shorter options are available. There are longer and shorter options every day.

How's the weather? If you're still hung up on that desert thing and imagine it's going to be bake-oven hot out here in mid-summer, we can reassure you: the average daily high for Bend in July is a comfy 81°. That doesn't mean we might not have a hot spell while we're here. In fact, on the Central Oregon Tour, we had one day that hit 100. But based on the averages, it's not nuts to be cycling here in the summer.

This tour employs our traditional format of using campgrounds for our overnights. No motels at all. The tour moves to a new overnight site almost every day, except... We spend our first two nights at Tumalo SP and two more nights at Smith Rock State Park, so at least on those two-fers, you can leave your tents up. That means the chores of setting up or striking camp happen six times over nine days.

We'll be following the "cooperative touring" template from most past club tours: all participants sharing in the chores associated with keeping our little village moving from camp to camp. Veterans know the drill on this and we will assist any new participants in getting up to speed. Two small trucks will haul our luggage each day, as well as all the food, supplies, and cooking equipment.

In addition to our luggage and food/equipment trucks, we will be accompanied each day by one sag wagon. This will mean one rest stop around the mid-point of each relatively short stage. On the longer stages, we will do our best to set up two stops.

We provide (and cooperatively prepare) all the dinners and breakfasts on our camp days, as well as providing pocket food for the rides every day and snacks and drinks for after-ride relaxing. Our tours are always BYOB. With no motel nights, we end up with eight nights in camp to be preparing dinners. Seeing as how we'll be back in Tumalo SP for one night on Wednesday, right near Bend, we are going to do a night on the town to make a change from camp cooking. Bend is aglut with good eateries, especially brew pubs. But nothing is within walking distance of camp. We'll need to grab our cars and make sure everyone who wants to dine out gets a seat in a car.

Google says it takes eight hours to drive from Santa Rosa to Bend. Add an hour for a lunch break and call it nine hours. Leave at 7:30 and arrive at 4:30? (With family in Bend, I've made this trip a jillion times and it's a decent drive...up I-5 to Weed and then Hwy 97 all the way to Bend.)

Once our roster is set, participants will receive further e-mail updates about tour logistics, including sorting out the car pools and cook crews. We will provide additional information and more detailed maps for each of our overnight sites.

We'll do our best to provide maps, including detail insets, that make the routes clear and unambiguous. Whether or not you print out this entire preview book for the tour, please print those maps and have them with you on the tour! Or load all the data into your Garmin thingies. You will need it out on the roads.





Stage 1: Twisted Sisters

Basic route: 51 miles, 3100' up and down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38851664>

Long option #1: 59 miles, 3600' up and down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38851688>

Long option #2: 54 miles, 3200' up and down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38876165>

Both long options: 62 miles, 3800' up and down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38851753>

When first dreaming up this tour, it was a given that an out-&-back to the 5325' summit of McKenzie Pass would be included in Stage 1. The challenge was how to ride from our camp at Tumalo State Park to the town of Sisters, where the McKenzie Pass road begins. After working the mapping apps half to death and driving the most promising possibilities on scouting trips, it finally became clear: there is no reasonable, bike-friendly way to do it. The roads either have long stretches of rough gravel or are overly busy highways with next-to-no shoulders.

What to do? Answer: have a remote start/finish in Sisters. Drive the 16 miles from camp in our car pool fleet and start from a handy, pleasant park on the edge of town. It will be like driving from Santa Rosa to Healdsburg or Monte Rio for a weekend club ride. There will be a certain element of herding cats involved but we can make it work. We can expect there will be a dozen or so bikes traveling in the luggage truck, so the truck will make the short journey with the rest of us. We can throw a couple of coolers of iced drinks in the truck and an assortment of munchies and even a few spare camp chairs. Then, after the ride, we can set up a little party circle by one of the picnic tables in the park where people can kick back while they wait for other riders to roll in.

Eliminating the dud miles between Sisters and Bend means we can reconfigure the ride with some nice roads on the far side of Sisters, roads we would have had to leave undone otherwise. And some nice roads they are. Mixing and matching the available roads allows us to offer

no less than four options. They all include the long, mostly gradual ascent to McKenzie Pass and the return trip down the hill to Sisters.

Once everyone is ready to go at Creekside Park in Sisters, we head east onto Hwy 126, the McKenzie Highway. This is heading away from McKenzie Pass but we'll soon loop back around toward the mountains. Compared to nearby Hwy 20, Hwy 126 has much less traffic and much wider shoulders. We're only on it for about three miles and then turn left, to the northwest, on a series of smaller, quieter back roads. Camp Polk Road and Indian Ford Road will take us to around mile 13 on the basic route or mile 21 if you do the first long option, which comes up at mile 6.5.

The 8-mile long option is a "lariat" loop; that is, an out-&-back on one road with a little loop at the end. The first three miles going out and the last three coming back are all deep country. The two miles of loop in the middle pass through a thinly settled scatter of homes, a small development. It's all quiet and pleasant.

All of these early miles are much the same. They're not exactly flat but are not all that hilly...lots of little bumps and rollers. Scenery is a mix of pine and aspen woods, meadows and sage brush flats, with the Cascades off in the distance. (Photo at the top from midway along Indian Ford Road. I took that shot on a chilly, grey day in March. Ditto for the photo below. Should be a bit sunnier and greener in July.)

After these back road miles, we have to turn west and do two miles on the shoulder of busy Hwy 20. At least this section has shoulders. After making a careful left across traffic, we turn into Black Butte Ranch, an attractive resort community built around two golf courses (below). This is something they seem to do a lot around here, these resorts with meandering lanes and natural-looking homes (think Sea Ranch, only in the mountains). All very tasteful and environmentally sensitive. We'll ride through this one today, Sunriver tomorrow, Tetherow on Stage 4, Eagle Crest on Stage 7, meanwhile passing others: Crosswater, Caldera, Aspen Lakes. Most offer bike paths near the roads. In some cases we will use the paths but here at Black Butte it makes more sense to stay on the roads. The paths are just too confusing.



The bulk of the Black Butte property is gated. Bikes are allowed but non-resident cars are not. Our sag will make a detour here and meet us at a rest stop on the far side of the resort.

The basic route will be wandering through Black Butte for 5.6 miles. Eight miles if you choose to do the second long option, which is just an added loop of roads within the resort. If you're sticking with the basic route, it's simple: Hawks Beard Rd all the way. There's not much to say about it. All of the roads are quiet and pretty, either in deep forest or skirting along meadows or golf fairways, with the resort homes snuggled back in the trees.

At the far end of Hawks Beard, we encounter a different sort of road. There is no back way out of the resort, at least not a paved, public road. But there is a way out and it begins beyond this gate:



On the far side of the gate we tackle 3.5 miles of hard-packed dirt Forest Service roads. I know I balked at riding the gravel roads between Bend and Sisters but this is a little different: not loose gravel but solidly packed down dirt. It would be a stretch to say it's as good as a badly paved road but not too much of a stretch. If you're a hardcore gravel rider with the right bike, you might do this at a good clip. But I'm guessing most of us will slow down and cruise through at a sedate pace. I rode it on that same March day (40°) and it was very doable on a skinny-tired road bike. With the fatter, softer tires on most new bikes, it would be easy.

There are two dirt roads, with a right turn from one to the other about midway along this stretch. There is a good sign at the corner pointing toward Hwy 242... where we want to go. Our sag should be waiting for us when the dirt road tees into Hwy 242, at mile 24 on the basic route or 35 if you've done both long options.



Once you've rested up and stoked your boiler with rest stop chow, you should be ready for the main event: the long climb to McK-

enzie Pass. A long false flat leads up to the "real" climb, which sets in around mile 37 or 38 (long route). From there on up, 1750' of gain over about nine miles works out to less than 4% on average. There are a few steep bits that might hit 7% or 8% but there are also several flat or nearly flat sections, most of them near the top.

About five or six miles from the summit, the pine forest gives way to a moonscape of black lava. The Cascades are a range made up of volcanos. In geologic terms, these are young mountains, a bunch of rowdy teen-agers, still inclined to blow their tops occasionally and spew lava here and there. Hardy little trees are slowly colonizing these barrens of rock but the overall impression is of a harsh, rugged battleground.

There is a nice pay-off at the summit: Dee Wright Observatory, a funny little tower built out of the

surrounding rock. It offers great views of all the surrounding peaks, including the Three Sisters to the south and the Matterhorn-like Mt Washington to the northwest. More photos of this high country in the gallery at the back.

And then it's time for some gravity candy, heading back down out of the mountains, back to the flats by Black Butte and the last roll-out into Sisters, a moderately quaint town (if you want to explore). Or just head for our cars and the luggage truck and the social circle at the park. Hang out for a bit, then pile into the cars and skedaddle back to camp at the state park.





Stage 2: Tumalo State Park to East Lake

60 miles, 4600' up, 1400' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38970904>

63 miles, 5100' up, 1900' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38970700>

Today is going to be a challenge. First of all—or actually almost last of all—we have a substantial climb near the end, a bit bigger and harder than the McKenzie Pass climb yesterday. But it's also going to be a challenge for navigation. Perhaps, if your Garmin or Wahoo is up to the task, you will breeze through all the complexity without missing a turn. But if you're still old school, using the route slips and maps, or if your Garmin gets confused, it may be a muddle. On the plus side, it's interesting and mostly beautiful.

We'll be heading south, more or less along the valley of the Deschutes River, at least until we turn east and chug up into the hills on that big climb.

We begin by heading mildly uphill on Johnson Road, which turns seamlessly into Shevlin Park Road, which, just past mile 5, brings us to the suburban neighborhoods on the SW side of Bend. Suburbs are often rather dreary sprawls, with cookie-cutter homes backed up to tacky commercial clutter. There certainly are some of those neighborhoods in Bend but we won't see much of them on our 10-mile transit of the town. Some of what we'll see is fairly ordinary but much of it has had the benefit of enlightened urban planning and design. I spend quite a bit of time in Bend and I'm continuously surprised at how clever and creative they are being with their latest developments.

One of the hallmarks of their contemporary planning is the roundabout (or traffic circle). While some other city planners have dithered and fussed about how to incorporate them into their towns, the folks in Bend have embraced them happily. On Stage 1 of the Central Oregon Tour, we crossed Bend on a NE to SW diagonal and rode through at least seven circles. On this stage, on a NW to SE line, we'll ride through 11 of them in around five miles. All but two of the roundabouts are straight-throughs for us. That is, in at 6 o'clock and out at 12. However, the very first one is not; it's in at 6 and out at 3...a right turn from Shevlin Park onto Mt Washington Drive.

After that it's straight through the next five circles until we

descend to a pretty bridge over the Deschutes River on Reed Market Road (left).

Beyond the bridge we have three more straight-through circles on a gentle uphill next to Farewell Bend Park, all along the river...then we have our only other right-turn roundabout onto Brookswood, uphill, away from the river and out into more conventional but still pleasant neighborhoods.

We're about done with Bend by mile 15, as Baker Road runs us right up to the on-ramp onto Hwy 97, pretty much a freeway at this point. We're going to have to ride on the shoulder of the highway for a few miles but not quite yet. I have a little screwball bypass that keeps us off the big road for another couple of miles. This is one of those bikes-only dodges. You couldn't do it in a car. After

those couple of miles on quiet neighborhood streets, we turn onto a little emergency access path (below)...



The uphill, gravel path is only a tenth of a mile long and after crossing the main north-south railroad line, it tees into Hwy 97. Now we have to ride south on the highway for 4.6 miles. Sorry... no alternative. But it is legal to do so and relatively safe, with a wide shoulder and a rumble strip. Many cyclists, even the thousands on Cycle Oregon, have used this stretch of highway.

Once we bail off the highway, we have arrived at one of the better sections on this stage. We're riding into the Newberry Volcanic National Monument, which is here to celebrate the region's volcanic legacy. This means a few things for us. There is the Lava Lands Visitor Center with all the usual displays...a mini-museum...but perhaps more important for us at mile 21: restrooms.

This is also the departure point for our little bonus-miles out-&-back spiraling up to the summit of Lava Butte Cinder Cone (photo in the gallery at the back). The round trip, up and back, is three miles. The heart of the climb is one mile at 8%. It may look little on the map or the profile but it packs a punch. All around the cinder cone are more of those same black lava fields we saw around the summit of McKenzie Pass...a raw, brutal landscape.

Finally, this is the point where we pick up the SunLava Trail, which will be our home for the next eight miles. We hit the trailhead (top photo) at mile 22. When we leave Hwy 97, we flow onto Crawford Road. If you're not doing the bonus miles and not going to the Visitor Center, you can ride a few yards along Crawford and then drop into the far end of the parking lot and skirt right around to this trailhead. If you've done either of those



other things you can just noodle down to this point through the parking lot.

This is an excellent trail...slightly downhill for us, well engineered, nicely paved, and very pretty (all in the same forest you see in the photo). But it's also excellent because of where it takes us: all the way to the big Sunriver resort complex, bypassing Hwy 97. At mile 25, the trail merges back into Crawford Road briefly to cross the railroad line. Half a mile later, we return to the trail for the last segment that runs down to Sunriver.

Begun in the early '70s, Sunriver is the oldest and biggest and most ambitious of these resorts built around golf courses. Two courses in this case (Robert Trent Jones designed, if you know your golf course architects). A huge lodge, an entire downtown village, sports centers, churches, stables, even an airport. And bike paths. Many, many miles of bike paths. There is one significant detail about the paths at Sunriver that I don't believe is in play at any of the other resorts (as far as I know): here, cyclists must ride only on the paths. They are not allowed on the roads and the powers that be will get rather cranky if they catch you doing so. They can enforce this because the entire community is private and the state vehicle code does not apply. So bike paths it will be for us, except for one little snip of a road...more about that later.

Our challenge here is to ride all the way through the Sunriver resort, from north to south, following what we hope will be a simple-enough route for all of us to follow along the twisting, turning paths. I rode it in 2022 and made it through without any map and with only one minor wrong turn, quickly corrected. I'd never done exactly this route before and hadn't ridden in Sunriver at all for several years. So that tells me it can be done!



The middle photo shows the spot where the SunLava Trail ends at Cascade Drive and becomes part of the extensive Sunriver trail system. Just on the far side of the road, we make a right turn on the trail and that should be at mile 27.3 on our route slip. Regardless of what your own cyclometer says at this turn, start counting your miles from this point to each of the next turns. The next turn direction is at 28.1, for instance. So when you've gone .8 beyond 27.3, your next turn should be nearby. The transit of the resort runs from 27.3 to 32.9 or about five and a half miles, with ten turns listed over that span...about one every half-mile. We've provided a large and quite detailed map of our path through Sunriver, which we hope will help to keep you tracking along.



The best couple of turns are right at the end. This is a slick little trick I discovered when scouting it. The red arrow in the bottom photo shows a right turn off the paved trail onto a little dirt path at mile 32.8. In just a few yards the path hits Meadow Road and here we're going to flaunt their rules and ride on a real road for one-tenth of a mile until we get to an emergency fire exit from the resort, out through the gate onto Spring River Road, where we'll have our rest stop. This little path is not my invention. It's well worn. Others must use it often. It's fortuitous that it's here, so near the emergency fire exit, because it saves us from a terribly complicated meander deeper into Sunriver. It's our escape route back to the real world.



Aside from the complex routing along the trails, the trip through Sunriver is delightful. Some of it is forested, as you can see in the photos on the previous page, and some is out across broad meadows or along the banks of the Deschutes River or sloughs next to the river (above). It's all quite nice, if you can spare a little bandwidth from the navigation challenges to appreciate the passing scenery.

Out of Sunriver, a half-mile heading east on Spring River Road brings us to a right turn onto South Century Drive. We'll be on this road, running more-or-less due south, for the next 18 miles. Midway along that stretch, Century Drive turns west but we keep rolling south on what becomes Huntington Road... same road, new name. This long run is as close to flat as any road you can think of, making it a good spot for a rotating pace line if you're so inclined. Some local traffic but probably not too much. Anyone going much of anywhere will be out on Hwy 97, parallel to our road but just to the east. The landscape to begin with is more golf resorts off both sides of the road: Crosswater on the right and Caldera on the left. Then it's a mix of fir and pine forest and open fields with some sense of water nearby; the Deschutes and Little Deschutes Rivers are mostly out of sight but never far away. Scattered rural residential homes but not much else.

This long, flat, southerly run ends around mile 41 when we turn left on Prairie Drive, cross Hwy 97, and get going on Paulina Lake Road. (pow-LINE-ah...not paul-EE-nah.) By mile 43 the flats are over and we begin that big climb: approximately 2100' up over 11 miles (under 4%). So essentially the same gradient as the McKenzie Pass ascent yesterday but a couple of miles longer...a long, steady slog up through the forest.

What's up there and why are we going there? This is the road to Newberry Caldera and the twin lakes nestled in the crater of the old volcano, Paulina Lake and East Lake (right). East Lake—our destination—is in the foreground. The little cinder cone between the lakes is not Newberry Caldera. It's just a little, later burp from within the much larger crater. Think of Crater Lake, just a few miles south of here, with its lovely blue lake inside the crater of the former Mount Mazama. Here

there are two lakes within the much larger and more varied caldera left behind when this enormous volcano blew up. Newberry is the largest of all the volcanos along the Cascades. The area covered by its lava flows—including all that stuff over by Lava Butte and Lava Lands—covers more square miles than any other volcano in the Northwest. It must have been an immense mountain before it blew itself apart. This is not all millions of years ago either: it last erupted about 1200 years ago.

These two pretty lakes have the same origins as Crater Lake and they too are filled primarily by rainfall and some springs and are just as pristine as their more famous cousin down the road. They're not as deep as Crater Lake (the deepest lake in America) but they're not exactly puddles. Paulina is 250' deep and the smaller East Lake is 180' deep.

Cinder Hill Campground (below) is a USFS camp on the eastern side of East Lake, all the way to the end of the road. It's a typical Forest Service camp, meaning it's primitive and does not have showers. However, just outside the entrance to Cinder Hill is another campground that caters primarily to RVs, and while we would not choose to camp there, they do have showers and we can use them, for a fee.



Stage 3: East Lake to Crane Prairie Lake

Basic route: 51 miles, 1200' up, 3100' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/31693412>

Long route: 59 miles, 1400' up, 3300' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/31693293>

This is the shortest, the easiest, and probably the least interesting of all the stages on the tour. Shortest because the roads simply do not exist to make it any longer, at least not in any plausible way. I scratched and scrambled to find even these miles. Easiest comes with the territory: we did that humping big climb at the end of Stage 2—the first half of an out-&-back—and now we begin with the second half, the humping big descent back to the valley. After that, the rest of the stage is dang near level, although with a very slight uphill tendency toward the end.



As for “least interesting,” it may not match up with the other stages for scenic dazzle and other fun, but it is not without its charms. For one thing, we still have the high country around the Newberry Caldera to explore. Yesterday, with at least a few of us feeling shagged out after the long climb, we made a bee-line to camp. No late-in-the-day fiddling around. But this morning, bright and fresh, and with a short and easy day ahead of us, we are throwing in some *divertimenti* around the two lakes to not only pad our miles but perk up our smiles as well.

I have to say that when I first scouted this area, I was a little disappointed that the vistas along our route, the road south of both lakes, are not all that knock-out. They're nice but not amazing, mostly because both lakes are not on view, most of the time. Too much forest blocking the sightlines. To see them and appreciate them—and they really are nice—we have to do a couple of little detours off the main road, one an out-&-back and one a loop, that will get us right down onto the lakeshores. Obviously, you could just blow past these detours but why would you? As I like to say at least once in each of these preview books: enjoy this today...you may never come here again.

Last but far from least, we have Paulina Falls to visit. This comes up after the two other side trips and just as the big downhill is tilting into full flight. It might be tempting to just keep honkin' down the mountain but I hope you don't succumb to that temptation. The mountain will still be there in a few minutes. Your gravitational gratification will only be deferred by as long as it takes you to turn into the roadside parking lot for the falls and walk about a hundred yards to the vista point where the view you see here will be front and center. The wife and I did this last year and even in the depths of the drought, the falls were still spectacular and well worth the modest effort it takes to get to them. This is just downstream on Paulina Creek from its outfall from Paulina Lake. The hike is so easy you can do it in almost any bike shoes or even barefoot. Or we can throw a tub of Texas in the sag wagon.

Now, after the falls, you can at last go into free fall on the big descent (below). At 4%, it is neither steep nor technical. No one

would ever call it hairball. But it is most of 11 miles long and with a few hearty cranks on the pedals, you can get it going and enjoy a long session of low-level flying. You worked a bit to get up here yesterday afternoon; now you get a little return on that investment.

Once we're down off the mountain and back into the lowlands around mile 20, most of the excitement on this day is over. Not that the balance of the stage is bad. It's just not off-the-chart thrilling.

We turn south on another section of Huntington Road (which we were on yesterday) only this bit has a funny interruption in the middle. On the map it looks like it could be Huntington all the way to the town of La Pine, but when you see it in the real world, the middle section is gravel and the paved part veers over onto





road, it's pretty much one mile of roadside services...gas-food-lodging. Nothing special. But just a block or two off the highway, there is a real town, where the locals do their town stuff. It's pleasant. We could have cut across to our destination north of here but I brought the route this far south to bulk up the miles but also to visit the town.

Beyond LaPine, we are mostly on long, straight, flat roads through the forest. Really, there's not much to say about any of them. The last one—Crane Prairie Road—is the best of the bunch (middle photo). And then we're at our camp on Crane Prairie Lake (bottom photo). We stayed here on the Central Oregon Tour. It's a nice camp and as the photo shows, the lake is beautiful. There are showers.

Riverview Drive for about three miles, then merges back into Huntington for the duration. You won't be in any doubt as to which way to go when you're there: just stay on the paved road.

The long option comes up right after the road name changes from Huntington to Riverview. Clearly, this long option is here simply to pad the miles. These are good miles but not great miles. But with the total—bonus miles included—still not quite reaching 60 miles, why not add these in?

The photo above, along Sprague Loop, is typical of the whole add-on. This is yet another rural-residential development, although not nearly as large nor as fancy as a Black Butte or Sunriver. The parcels are big, like maybe two acres or more, and the homes are nice but not fancy. There are some spots, such as in the photo, where you can't see any homes at all. These are year-round homes. No sense of vacation rental or resort about this.. the roads are good. Paving is good. No traffic. It's almost dead level...an easy way to add some miles and see some new country.

It's essentially an out-&-back because after looping around on the little neighborhood roads, we eventually come right back to Riverview Drive at the spot where we turned off, only with another eight-plus miles on the clock. Now we're back to rolling south on Riverview and Huntington to the town of La Pine. Same scenery as yesterday: pine and fir forest and broad meadows. Country homes on big parcels. At around mile 35 (long route), the parcels begin to shrink and the homes become more frequent and then we're into the town. We will have driven through LaPine on our way north on Hwy 97. Out there on the main





also signed as State Hwy 372, County Route 46 and the Oregon Scenic Byway. After this turn, we have no more turn directions for the next 38 miles.

Our elevation profile may look a little daunting but remember how compressed the aspect ratio is: any uphill line at less than about a 45-degree angle on the grid is little more than a false flat. But we do have some climbing to do. At about mile 18, just after passing Elk Lake, we begin the first of two climbs: a little over 500' up in 3.5 miles (under 4%). After another 3.5 miles of flats or even mild downhill, the second climb begins: about 950' over five miles (also under 4%). This one is more like three stairstep climbs with little flats or near flats in between. One very brief pitch might hit 10% but there are many more sections in the 2% range. It's definitely work but not brutal.

Stage 4: Crane Prairie Lake to Tumalo SP

Basic route: 59 miles, 3000' up, 4300' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/42989175>

Long route: 67 miles, 3300' up, 4600' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/43071903>

Today's stage is almost exactly the same as Stage 1 of the 2015 Central Oregon Tour, except running in the opposite direction. That one had a crossing of the city of Bend at the start; this one has a different run around the city at the finish. That stage had some fun descents in its later miles, once over the high point by the Mt. Bachelor Ski Resort; this time around, those fun descents become fairly challenging climbs in the morning. In both cases, the bulk of the miles run along the spectacular Cascade Lakes National Scenic Byway (both photos). When they slap that "National Scenic Byway" tag on a road, you can figure it's going to be a nice place to ride a bike. This way or that way, uphill or down, it's a wonderful stage.

And speaking of down, this stage has far more of it than up. Hold that thought while you're working through those early ascents. You'll get your downhills later.

We begin by returning to Crane Prairie Road and heading north. In a bit over three miles we turn left and cruise slightly downhill for three more miles and then right onto the Cascade Lakes Hwy,

The road is called Cascade Lakes for a reason: there are six pretty alpine lakes along these early miles. They're not all visible from the road but some are, all off the right side of the road. Passing Elk Lake lets us know the first climb is about to begin. When that climb ends and we roll through the three-plus miles of flats before the second climb, we have lovely vistas over Devils Lake and Sparks Lake.

When we crest the summit after the second climb at 6400', we are very near the entrance to the Mt Bachelor Ski Resort. Our one sag stop will be near here. This is not the high point of the tour, although it's close. There is a little bump near East Lake on Stage





2 (or 3) that is about 75' higher. Nevertheless, this feels like real mountain country and that makes this a good spot to mention the mountains. Obviously, we don't ride over the highest peaks—well over 10,000'—but they loom large on almost every day of the tour. Any time we have open sightlines—not buried in the forest or down in a gorge—the majestic peaks of the Cascades are on the horizon. You can't help but notice them. The Three Sisters, Broken Top, Mt Bachelor, Mt Washington, Mt Jefferson and many other rugged ramparts...usually with at least some snow sparkling on their shoulders. Folks who live here year-round might come to take these vistas for granted but for the occasional visitor, they never fail to capture our attention and evoke at least a little spark of awe and delight.

And as the old bear of campfire sing-alongs reminds us, when you climb over the mountain, you see the other side of the mountain. And that's where we are now, after our rest stop, looking at a bushel basket of downhill: over 2500' down over about 14 miles (between miles 30 and 44). It's not quite that simple though. First we have two miles of real downhill, up over 6%...then two miles that combine flats and a half-mile uphill...then six miles in the 4-6% range...and finally another four miles that are down but not too steeply...2%, 3%, etc. Brisk roll-out. We'll be pedaling more than grabbing a tuck and coasting. Nothing too technical or wild about any of it but a pretty nice way to cover ground.

When the downhill finally peters out, it's time to leave the highway and get on a bike trail leading into Bend. The trailhead is on the left side of the road a little bit after mile 44. It wasn't marked the last time I scouted it but we can be alerted to coming up on it because it's one-tenth of a mile past the big sign for the Widgi Creek Golf

Club. The sign is on the right side of the road and when you see it, start looking for the turn-off to the trailhead on the left.

The trail runs for a couple of miles, including diving under the highway and coming up on the other side. It's entirely possible and okay to just keep riding on the highway for those miles but I elected to run the route on the trail just to make a change after all those miles on the same highway. The highway is scenic but it is also a fairly big, modern, well-engineered highway...not some cute, dinky back road, especially as we approach Bend. The little trail, with its twists and turns and bike-scaled engineering, mixes things up a little.

At mile 46.7, the trail tees back into the highway and we cross it (the highway) to head uphill on Skyline Ranch Road (below). This new road will take us through the Tetherow District, a fairly recent development on the western edge of town. This is another new project that seems to me to have been well planned and executed. It's not a stand-alone resort in the manner of Black Butte

Ranch or Sunriver, but rather just a new neighborhood in the city. However, it does have its golf course and the home designs and landscaping are tastefully "green" in the manner of the country resorts. It also has a nice paved trail near the road. While our route is along the road, the trail is right next to it and looks quite appealing, wide and well paved and well thought out. You can see all this in the photo below: the nice houses on the left on large, naturally landscaped parcels, the zippy new road, the wide bike path on the right, and the golf fairway beyond that. So...ride on the road or on the path? Or a little of both? You can decide.

We'll be on Skyline Ranch Road for a bit under three miles. At mile 49.6, we turn left on Skyliners Road and then pick up some brand new roads only opened within the past year: Tree Farm Drive, Ridgeline Drive, and part of McClain Drive. These nice roads loop us out and away from more congested suburban neighborhoods. Counting from the beginning of the Tetherow





tract to the point where Shevlin Park emerges into country, our urban miles add up to about six, although it's almost a misnomer to call these pleasant miles urban. Photo of Tree Farm Drive in the gallery at the back.

We're now retracing the early miles of Stage 2 back to another overnight at Tumalo State Park: Shevlin Park Road and Johnson Road. Only not quite... To keep it from being the same old same old, we are throwing in one little bypass off Johnson: a two-mile detour on Stag Drive (above) and Buck Drive. Mostly it all looks like what you see here, with country homes nestled back in the trees here and there. Then it's back to Johnson and a little bit of downhill to camp.

But wait: there's more! We haven't done the long route bonus miles yet. Almost at the end of Johnson, almost all the way to the finish, the long option peels off on a loop that will add up to a net gain of a little over seven miles on the day...65.3 instead of 58. We appreciate that suggesting you log more miles so near the end of the ride might be a big ask, what with beer and chips just two miles away. But if you can overcome that urge to be done and kickin' back in your camp chair, consider this nice add-on.

It's mostly level, with itty bitty ups and downs and then a snappy one-mile descent at the end, right down to camp. Scenery is as you see it in the middle photo taken along Tyler Road: rocks and trees and some wildness but also some farms fields and rural-residential homes. As you can see on the map, there is a little square loop out at the far end of this section. You could skip that part and end up with about 63 miles. But if you're up for some of it, why not do all of it? It's all good.

So...short route or long, eventually we all straggle into camp, pitch our tents (again!), take our showers, and plow a furrow through the

munchies buffet. More thoughts about the rest of the day...

In the intro we mentioned going out to dinner on this night. It's a little over halfway through the tour so a nice time for a break. We are back near town and back near our cars. It can be done. We've done something similar on many past tours.

Second thought: see the bottom photo. That's Tumalo Falls, a 100' spill of water 19 miles from camp. You've got your cars—at least some of you do—and if you have enough afternoon left and want to add another sort of adventure to your day, consider a visit to the falls. If you look at the inset on the Stage 4 map, you will see Skyliners Road. That's the road to the falls. From the trailhead there is a short uphill hike to a viewing platform next to the falls. You might combine a trip to the falls with your restaurant evening in town.

Final thought: there is a nice hike in Tumalo State Park, easily done from our campsites, running along the river. I've done it and it's worthwhile, on this or any other day we're here. We'll put a photo from the hike in the gallery at the back.





Crooked River National Scenic Byway (below), another National Scenic Byway, two days in a row...woohoo!

Don't fuss too much about the miles. Instead, look at the elevation ups and downs: 2300' up over 77 miles? And 2700' down? It's nothing! A walk in the park.

Once again, we are almost exactly replicating a stage from the Central Oregon Tour but going the opposite way. Only our early miles are different, thanks to our different campground. We have provided a detailed inset of those early miles because they are a complex maze zigzagging around the NE fringe of Bend. Most of those roads run along straight, flat east-west or north-south section lines, although there is one fun section of meandering lanes (left).

Stage 5: Tumalo SP to Smith Rock SP

77 miles, 2300' up, 2700' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/31691360>

63 miles, 1500' up, 1800' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/37307243>

Normally we list the basic (shorter) route first and the longer route second. Not today. That's because we think of the longer, 77-mile route as the default setting; the route we want to encourage everyone to do. The shorter route is okay if you just can't manage the extra miles. But we hope you will manage them because it's what's out there on the far side of the loop—what the short route bypasses—that makes this day special. It's the

The ride begins with perhaps the hardest climb of the day on O.B. Riley Road: 250' up in a mile (which isn't much), then a little more after that. When the hill flattens out, we turn east and do two miles on Cooley Road, sneaking along behind the back walls of big box stores, just missing the commercial clutter. After that it's just country homes and farms along mostly rural roads.

All that busy complexity ends when we turn left, east, onto Alfalfa Market Road at mile 14. This road, heading due east, changes names twice—to Willard Road and then Reservoir Road—but is essentially the same road for 21 miles...miles of open, empty country. These are the wide open spaces of the West that we alluded to in the introduction, without irrigation and without rivers or lakes. Austere is the word.





The shortcut on Millican turns off at mile 28 and we will have had a rest stop before that split at around mile 26. All of the miles along Alfalfa Market, Willard, and Reservoir Roads are tilting ever-so-slightly uphill. It's mostly false flats, although briefly around mile 34 it flirts with 4%. However, that rising road is ending soon. Just before mile 36, we turn left on Hwy 27 and descend for 2.5 miles into the canyon of the Crooked River...the National Scenic Byway (above). This really is a special place: great scenery and roads tailor-made for cycle-touring. We're heading downstream along the river so our route is mostly downhill, albeit very gently after that first big drop into the canyon.

When we bottom out after that first descent, we cross the top of the dam at the Prineville Reservoir and do a little climb up the other side, then a longer, steeper descent back to the river. A couple of miles later, there is a longer but very gradual climb over the shoulder of one of the basalt buttes, bundled with another downhill back to the river. After that, with the exception of a few little rollers, it's lazy, false-flat downhill all the way to the town of Prineville...22 miles in the canyon, keeping company with this delightful river. It is unfailingly gorgeous, from start to finish, sometimes in quiet ways and sometimes showing off with spectacular, dramatic exclamation points.

Around mile 53, 17 miles along the river, it becomes more valley than canyon and we start to see irrigated farm fields, fences, and sometimes cattle. The town of Prineville comes up around mile 58. We work our way through the town on one of our usual neighborhood bypasses but finally have to be on the main cross-town highway for a few blocks before bailing onto little roads on

the north side of town. Once we turn onto O'Neill Hwy just past mile 59 (mile 46 on the shortcut), we'll have a second rest stop. It's not the most scenic spot but it's the first place the two routes are together again. While our riders are resting up and refueling here, let's go back and see what the shortcut has to offer.

We really hope you won't do this shortcut but if the first four days of the tour have chewed up your legs, you may feel it's the prudent choice. It's not that it's a bad route; it's just that the longer route is so much better. Anyway...Millican Road is almost totally flat, barring a few bumps and rollers. It offers more of the same empty country we were riding through on Alfalfa Market Road: scrubby little pines dotted around a flat plain of scruffy grass and

sage brush. Almost no homes to be seen and even most of the big ranch compounds out of sight. Just a whole lot of nothing for almost 14 miles, including no traffic. At its northern end it tees into Hwy 26, a fairly busy highway heading east-west, from Redmond to Prineville and on out into Eastern Oregon. Although busy, it does have decent shoulders. Less than a mile after we've turned onto it, the highway tilts downhill for almost two miles. At the bottom of that run, we turn left across the highway onto our back road, the O'Neill Hwy, and then pull into our rest stop. Now the routes are back together.

After having swung way out to the east to take in the Crooked River Highway, we now turn back to the west along O'Neill Highway (aka Hwy 370). This is a nice road (below). The photo is a fair sample of what it looks like over its 13 miles. Mostly flat or close to it; lots of wide open valley floor given over to hay or similar. (Alfalfa and wheat and other "grass" crops make up the largest share of farm acreage in these counties. Cattle is a distant sec-





ond.) Scree slopes below the buttes, with pines growing among the rocks, sometimes crowd the road on the left. The Crooked River heads west with us, just off to the right of the road but mostly screened from view by tall grasses and shrubs. We see it now and then but not often. We'll be seeing a lot more of it soon.

At about mile 72, we turn north and begin climbing—very gently—along a last handful of little lanes that will deliver us to our destination at Smith Rock State Park (above). That little bit of climbing lifts us from the level of the river up onto a butte overlooking it. What you can't see in the photo above is that, just beyond the three cyclists, the land drops away into the dramatic gorge we see in the photo on page 2. Talk about exclamation points...wow!

Smith Rock State Park is popular with any hikers who simply want to revel in the beauty of the site but its real claim to fame is as one of the premier rock-climbing venues in the world. Some say it's the birthplace of modern sport-climbing and its many routes up the cliffs range from easy to the most difficult.

So climbers are as thick as fleas on an old dog here. There is a walk-in, tents-only campground called the bivouac camp where many of the climbers stay. But it's open to any tent campers. There are no reservations but plenty of room. We stayed here on the Central Oregon Tour and had no problem finding places to pitch our tents. There are nice, free showers, picnic tables and cooking areas.

We'll be here two nights, as tomorrow's stage is a loop. While we hope you will do that stage—because it's worth doing—a possible alternative would be to put your bike in one of the trucks and spend the day hiking some of the many trails through this big rock wonderland. Or do the short route tomorrow and tack on a hike in the afternoon.

Stage 6: The Gorges Loop

58 miles, 2600' up and down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/31691945>

78 miles, 4200' up and down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/31692000>

Today we're back to our standard protocol of listing the shorter route first. The long route is definitely optional. Not that it's not a good ride. We wouldn't offer it if it weren't. But it's no National Scenic Byway. We wish the short route were a little longer and the long route a little shorter. But these are the roads we have to work with.

So, off we go! We're heading a little west but mostly north to begin with along a nice little road west of the park. Then we ride north on Hwy 97, briefly, crossing a high bridge over the Crooked River Gorge. No need to spend too much time rubber-necking over the view into the gorge here. We will be back this way later in the

day in a spot where scoping out the vistas will be much easier and also more dramatic. For now, we have another of Mr Bill's rogue detours to do: just past the bridge, look for this gate on the right side of the road (middle photo). Hoist your bike and yourself over the gate and continue north on Culver Highway (bottom photo). I was tipped off to this gonzo routing by a local rider when scouting the original Northern Oregon Tour. We used it on that tour and it works great.



The photo of the Culver Highway is an accurate representation of what we're going to be seeing over the next miles as we continue north. This is, for a while at least, farm country: less wilderness and woods and more commercial agriculture. Flats and rollers. The rollers have a decidedly upward trend until mile 11 and then downhill, mildly, mostly, from there on. Decent pavement. Light traffic except when we have to jump on Hwy 97 a couple of times. Lots of farm buildings, some fairly handsome and some rather run down. Views to the distant Cascades...this far north, majestic Mt Jefferson takes center stage (below).



There's just one turn on this run north that needs mentioning (at least on the short route: there are many more things to discuss about the long route). Just before mile 20, our quiet back road tees into Hwy 97 and we have to jog a few yards north on the highway and then peel off on the other side to continue on the back roads. However, recently that road on the far side was blocked with a gate. If it is still blocked when we tour here, it may

still be accessible for bikes...go around it and continue. You will see the road ahead and can tell if it's okay. If it is not okay, return to the highway and continue north for a little over a mile to the next left, Dover Lane. That will get you back on the route. This would make the route a little longer but not much.

At mile 23, we tee into Belmont Lane. This is where the long and short routes part company. We will probably put our sag here. We're going to have another rest stop very soon after this for the short route folks at mile 31. More about that one presently. The main point of this stop at Belmont is to catch the long-route gang

before they continue further north. By the time they work their way through all their bonus miles and get back to that second rest stop, they'll be past mile 50. So they need this stop now.

Let's follow the short route over to that second rest stop first. We turn left, west, on Belmont, beginning with one almost level mile, then a mile of real downhill into a little canyon, then another mile climbing out of the canyon, and two more miles of mostly uphill stairs. After the last of those uphill bumps, there is another one-mile descent and then some more up-and-down rollers. Very little is really flat.

In the midst of all those little ups and downs, we turn left from Belmont onto Mountain View Drive

at mile 29 and begin our mostly south-bound return trip. At mile 30.7, we make a right onto Riverview Road, following the sign to Round Butte Overlook Park. It's downhill for about three-quarters of a mile to the vista point and park at the end of this out-&-back. (Yes, an out-&-back: we have to climb back out of here after our rest stop.) This is where the rest stop will be, overlooking Round Butte Dam and Lake Billy Chinook (below).





Lake Billy Chinook is a reservoir in a deep canyon. It reminds me a bit of Lake Powell in Glen Canyon. It impounds the flows of the Crooked River (from the southeast), the Deschutes River (from the south), and the Metolius River (from the west). The surface area is around 4000 acres. It's big and it's impressive. There are restrooms at the Overlook Park. There are at least two more overlooks along the rim of the canyon to the south of there, along Mountain View Drive. They're short spur roads and mostly level but they've unpaved. If you like big vistas, you will want to check these out.

Now then, back to the long route. It turns right on Belmont and soon dips into the western fringe of the town of Madras on another little bit of the Culver Hwy. The locals have recently built an interesting bike path off Culver that climbs quite vigorously to an overlook above the town (photo of the trailhead above and another photo of the path in the gallery at the back).

It's less than half a mile to the summit but it can be as steep as 10%. Nice panoramas in all directions at the top. There is a big brass compass set in the deck—called the Madras Mountain Identifier—which points to all the nearby mountain peaks. It's a neat little embellishment on the route. But if you don't fancy that steep climb, the inset map will show you how you can stay on the city streets and avoid it: Culver Hwy > L on 1st Street > L on C Street.

Down the far side of the path, we turn left and head uphill on Canyon Road, a rather dramatic ascent out of a rugged gorge (one mile at 5%), crossing under a high railroad trestle. Up out of the canyon, we have about seven miles of mostly straight, flat roads tacking back and forth along the section lines across the empty mesa. That brings us to a left onto Hwy 26. This is a fairly busy highway but it has wide shoulders. We're on it for five miles. The first mile is level and then the final four are one big downhill flier...4% to 6% all the way. It might not be all that much fun with traffic whizzing by but at least it will get us through this stretch quickly.

While barelling madly down this grade, stay awake for our upcoming left turn. There are loads of signs saying things like, "Camping, next left" and finally, "Pelton Dam, Lake Simtustus." And there is a long left-turn lane to make crossing the highway easier. After the turn, we double back on Pelton Dam Road (middle photo) and begin the journey back to the south. (We've reached the northernmost point of the tour.)

This is a nice road. For about five miles, Pelton Dam Road bumps up and down above the river, with chunky cliffs muscling up on the left. The turn off the highway is around mile 37 and Pelton Dam comes up at mile 40. We ride right past the dam—up close—and from then on, for a while, we're riding along Lake Simtustus (bot-

tom photo). While Lake Billy Chinook is big and sprawling and grand, Lake Simtustus, just downstream, looks more like a fat, lazy river than a lake.

The road is almost never level and the bigger bumps are tough. One is almost a mile and over 10% in spots. But that one is just





the teaser before the real hill. At mile 42.5, the road dips down to a bridge over a little arm of the lake and then starts to climb. This may be the hardest ascent of the tour, or at any rate the steepest (above). It's only a mile and a half so perhaps does not compare with the big climbs to McKenzie Pass or Paulina Lake. But it has them beat for gradient. It averages over 10% and much of it is in the 12% to 15% range, all out in the sun.

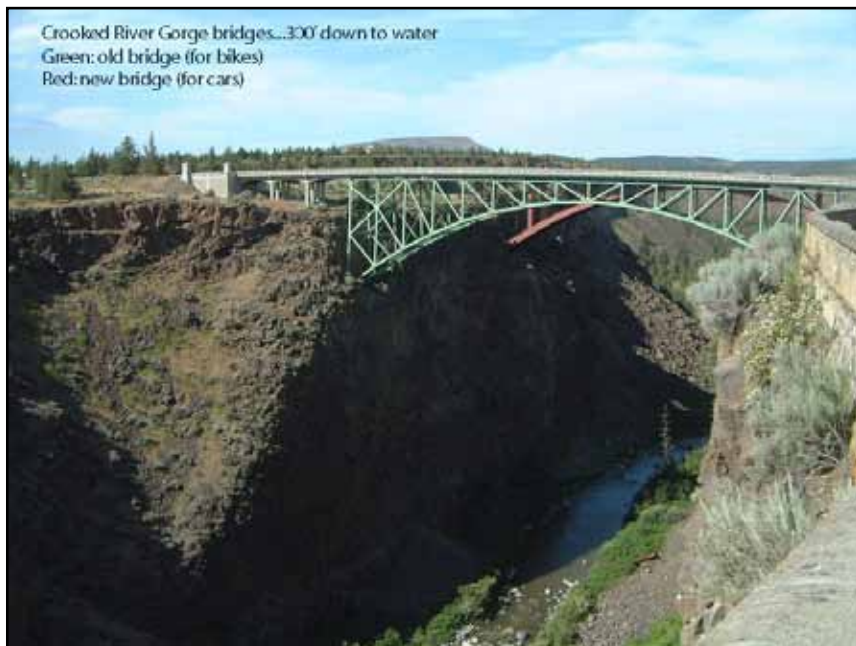
This little beastie ends abruptly when it clambers up onto the flat top of the butte. Then the road, now Elk Drive, runs exactly due south, exactly straight, for almost three miles. After the first flat mile, it tilts up into another climb, not so steep this time: usually 4% or less but with a few bits over 6%. At mile 46.7, the road tees into Belmont and rejoins the short route, plus about 19 miles. There is still a little more climbing to do, then a downhill and some assorted lumps before the turn-off heading down to the rest stop at Round Butte Overlook Park, where the sag should be.

After we climb back out of the rest stop, we continue south on Mountain View Drive for another five miles, passing those little gravel spur roads that lead to more vistas over Lake Billy Chinook. All of these miles—along Belmont and Mountain View and along Elk Drive on the long route—have been passing through more of that empty landscape of sage brush and scruffy grass and the occasional stunted pines. But once we leave Mountain View and depart from the rim of the mesa above the lake, we return to farm lands...to green fields of alfalfa and peas and whatever it is they grow here.

We also return to section line roads: left-right-left, almost always straight. For about nine miles, the roads are, if not exactly level, then close to it. A few rollers but not much. That changes, a little, when we turn east and start climbing, gently, back toward Hwy 97.

We head south on the wide shoulder of the highway for five miles, almost all of them tilting slightly downhill. At about mile 53 on the short route and 72 on the long route, we arrive at the trailhead shown in the middle photo. This is just before we would roll out over the Crooked River Gorge on the Hwy 97 bridge. But we have a better option. The path leads to the old bridge which can be seen at upper left in that photo. Turn it around and look back, as we do in the bottom photo, and you can see the old bridge in the foreground and

the Hwy 97 bridge behind it. That view is from the Peter Skene Ogden State Scenic Viewpoint, with a little of the stone railing overlooking the gorge on the right side of the photo. You can stop on the old bridge and admire the view—they do bungee jumping here—or you can walk or ride along the stone balustrade and do the same. It is an amazing vista. Another visit to the Highlight Zone. There are restrooms here.



Crooked River Gorge bridges...300' down to water
Green: old bridge (for bikes)
Red: new bridge (for cars)



When you're done with this wonderful vista point, we have another screwball, off-road gimmick for you...another wiggle to keep us off the highway a little longer. Check out the view above: this was taken further west, looking back at the scenic overlook.



The old bridge is back in the distance and in the foreground now is the railroad trestle. When the paved path along the edge of the gorge ends, a little dirt path continues, passing under the trestle and connecting, after a few yards of riding through the sage brush, to the end of a road with the charming name of Wimp Way. This quiet little road heads south, more-or-less parallel to the highway, for a little over a mile and a half. When it tees into the highway, there will probably be a closed gate...one more thing to hop over! Note: Ride With GPS had a hard time figuring out what I was doing here. It refused to believe this is possible. So your Garmins and Wahoos might get a little confused as well.

But it's all in a good cause: now we have only a quarter of a mile to ride on Hwy 97 before crossing over to Austin Road (middle photo) and rolling out the last few miles back to the park.



Stage 7: Smith Rock SP to Tumalo SP

55 miles, 2400' up, 2000' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/40984281>

62 miles, 2800' up, 2400' down

<https://ridewithgps.com/routes/38852362>

One more stage to go and it's a nice one. If you look at the map for this stage, you can see the route does not take the shortest path from A to B, from start to finish. Not the short route and certainly not the long route. The very shortest route—it does exist; it can be done—would yield a ride of only 30-some miles. But that's too short, and there are all sorts of nice roads and interesting places still to explore. Besides, this stage, even the long route, is one of the easier—as in least hilly—of the tour.

However, in case you find yourself thoroughly done in by the week of riding and want something relatively quick and easy to get you home today, that shortest route is there. We're not listing it as an official option but we'll at least give you a hint: we've shown the shortcut section as a dashed line on the map. If you want that alternate as a bail-out, you'll have to do your own mapping ahead of time to figure it out. Store it on your Garmin or print a little cheat sheet and keep it handy. But that's as much encouragement as we're going to offer for shorting today's stage. We want you out there, logging these nice miles.

Our first task today is to work our way around the town of Terrebonne's suburban clutter, directly west of Smith Rock. That can be seen on the map as a chunky, U-shaped dodge around the south edge of town...down to the bottom of the bypass by mile 7 and up the western side by mile 12, with Terrebonne now in the rear-view mirror. Most of those miles are nice, either farm fields or woods or meadows, with some rural-residential housing here and there. One moderately steep climb of half a mile and the rest—up to mile 7—a mix of gentle ups and downs. After mile 7, things tilt downhill for most of the next ten miles. A few uppity rollers in there but mostly easy downs, still in that mix of rural homes and farms.

Just beyond mile 12, we turn left and head west on Lower Bridge Road (below). After 10 roads in the first 12 miles, we now have only two roads for the next 17 miles...this one and Holmes Road.



At mile 37, we bail off the highway and into another of those upscale golf resorts: Eagle Crest (both photos below). This development is more recent than either Sunriver or Black Butte and is on a smaller scale. There are the requisite two golf courses and a few lodge-type buildings but nothing that really amounts to a community or a “town.” Just fancy houses arrayed along the fairways.

One thing that feels nice for us is that they’ve left a good deal of their land undeveloped. I don’t know if more building is planned but for now the open space has the look of being intentional and permanent. Our route has fairly minimal interaction with residential neighborhoods. It looks and feels more like country than like

suburbs, as the photos attest. We’re in the Eagle Crest world for about five miles, three on roads and two on a paved trail. There is a sharp little climb, up to 7%, after we enter the resort, and then a longer descent off the far side. I hope the navigation for the path is simple enough. It doesn’t seem too confusing.

These are both quality cycling roads (Holmes Road above). Good paving, light traffic, nice scenery. You might not be able to tell, in the photo of Lower Bridge Road on the previous page, but that’s one of the bigger descents, curling down to a crossing of the Deschutes River. That’s the low point on the stage. For the next ten miles, the roads mostly tilt up. There are a few downhill dips and lumpy flats but the main theme is up, mildly so...about 600' of gain over those ten miles.

When this nice run along Lower Bridge and Holmes finally ends, we turn back east on Hwy 126. We were on the same road, just two miles to the west, at the beginning of Stage 1. It’s not an ideal cycling road, being a numbered state highway, but it’s okay. Wide shoulders and only moderate traffic. We’re on it for six miles. The road is approximately level for the first mile but then slopes off into a fast descent of a bit less than a mile (6%) followed by a longer but more gradual climb out the other side of this canyon...what will likely feel like a long, tedious chug back up to the same level where we were before we dropped into the hole. That takes care of the first three miles on the highway. The second three are up and down in big waves in the manner of modern, over-engineered highways. The opposite of a cute little back road: boring. No one will say these were the best miles of the day but we need to do them to string the good bits together.





When we put Eagle Crest and its meandering lanes and paths behind us, around mile 42, we turn right, south, on Cline Falls Road (above) for five miles. The photo tells the story: long, mostly straight runs amidst the scrubby pines and brush we've seen every day. (This isn't the only environment out here but it's a fairly common one.) After four miles of false-flat uphill, the last mile tips down to a left turn onto White Rock Loop, a quiet byway.

We go around three sides of this square "loop" before turning south onto Twin Bridges Road where, all of a sudden, we're zipping downhill at a spanking pace to yet another crossing of the Deschutes River (middle photo). Then we have to climb back out of that low spot by the river, a climb a little longer than the descent that preceded it, with the steepest bits around 6%. The whole dippity-do down to the river and back up amounts to about a mile, and when we finish the little climb, we are at a junction with Swalley Road at about mile 50. This is where the two routes diverge, the short route turning right and the long route turning left.

The short route is easy to describe. South on Swalley, right on Tumalo Road, into and through the village of Tumalo, cross Hwy 20 and follow O.B. Riley Road to Tumalo State Park...all of that over the course of about five miles. A little downhill on Tumalo but mostly close to level. That's it: end of the tour. Put up your tent one more time and grab a beer!

The long route takes a bit more explaining. There are 11 roads over the final 12 miles of the stage, eight of them packed into a four-mile maze between miles 52 and 56. Not much point in describing them all. That section passes through another development of sorts. It's not like the fancy golf resorts but looks as if it had all been laid out to some developer's master plan, albeit a rather sketchy one. About half the roads are gravel, so we have to twist and turn to make our way through on the paved ones. The photo at right of Gift Road is typical of this rural "neighborhood"...not many houses to be seen; just these quiet lanes lumping up and down over small hills.

It is a bit hilly, including one short but rather steep pitch on Hereford Avenue. Gift Road is at the top of one hill, then there's a fun, one-mile descent, a one-mile climb, and finally another one-mile descent to Tumalo Road, where we leave this curious tangle of little lanes and roll home along more conventional country roads.

Tumalo Road heads straight west for a mile and a half and then, at a new roundabout, we turn south on Old Bend-Redmond Hwy for three miles. Both these roads offer up the same scenery we've seen before on the outskirts of Bend: some sprawling farm acreage but more rural-residential development...not tracts; just palatial country homes on large parcels. Nothing too dramatic but pleasant. Most of this section—five miles—is a little bit uphill.

At the far end of Old Bend-Redmond, we cross Hwy 20 and turn right onto O.B. Riley Road (the section we did to start Stage 5). We finish up with a mile-plus of downhill to the turn into camp. Time to kick back and bask in the glow of a good week of touring. Good roads, good scenery, good friends...life is good!





Tumalo State Park

A nice walk along the river in the park





The Sisters from Black Butte Ranch

Stage 1

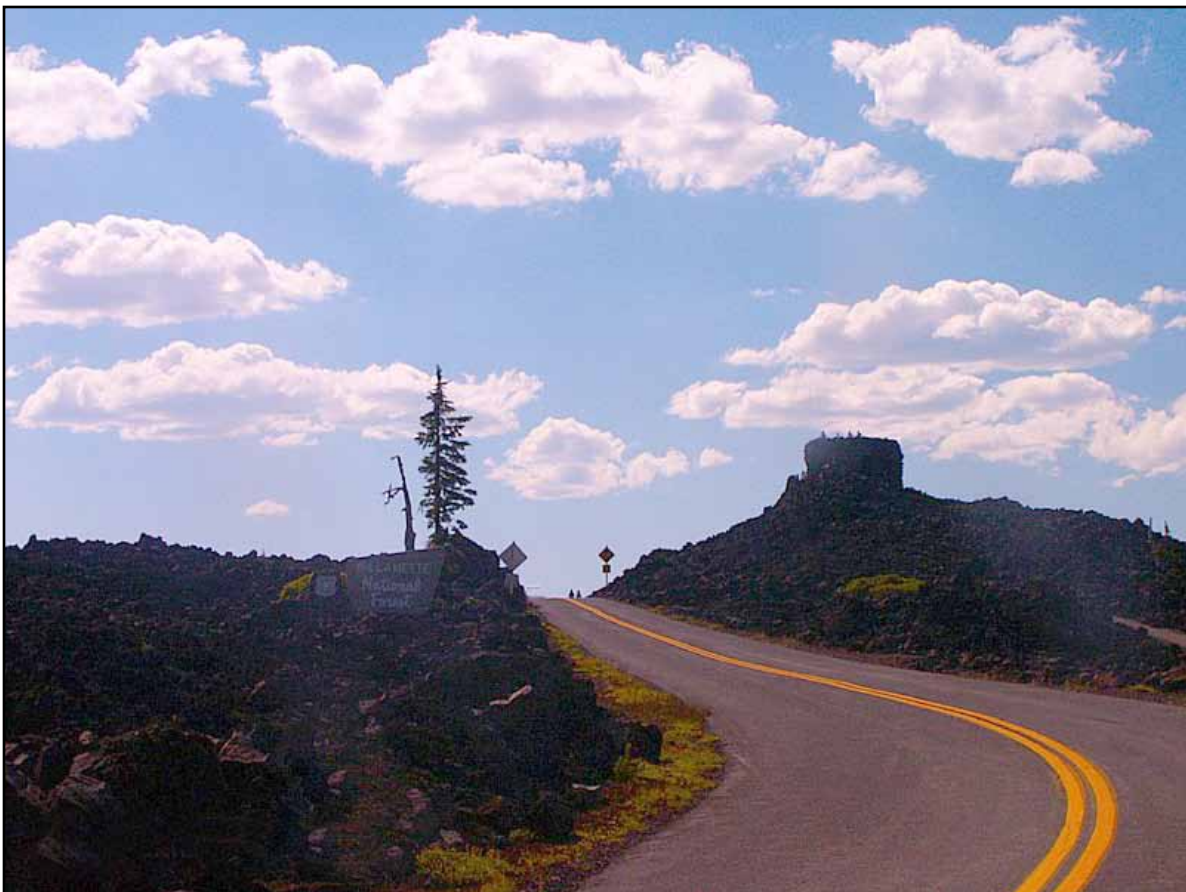
Mt Washington



Stage 1



Dee Wright Observatory at McKenzie Pass





Lava Butte Cinder Cone

Stage 2

Bike Path through Sunriver





Newberry Caldera National Monument

Stage 2

Cinder Hill Campground





East Lake

Stage 3

South toward LaPine





Crossing the Little Deschutes River

Approaching Crane Prairie Lake

Stage 3

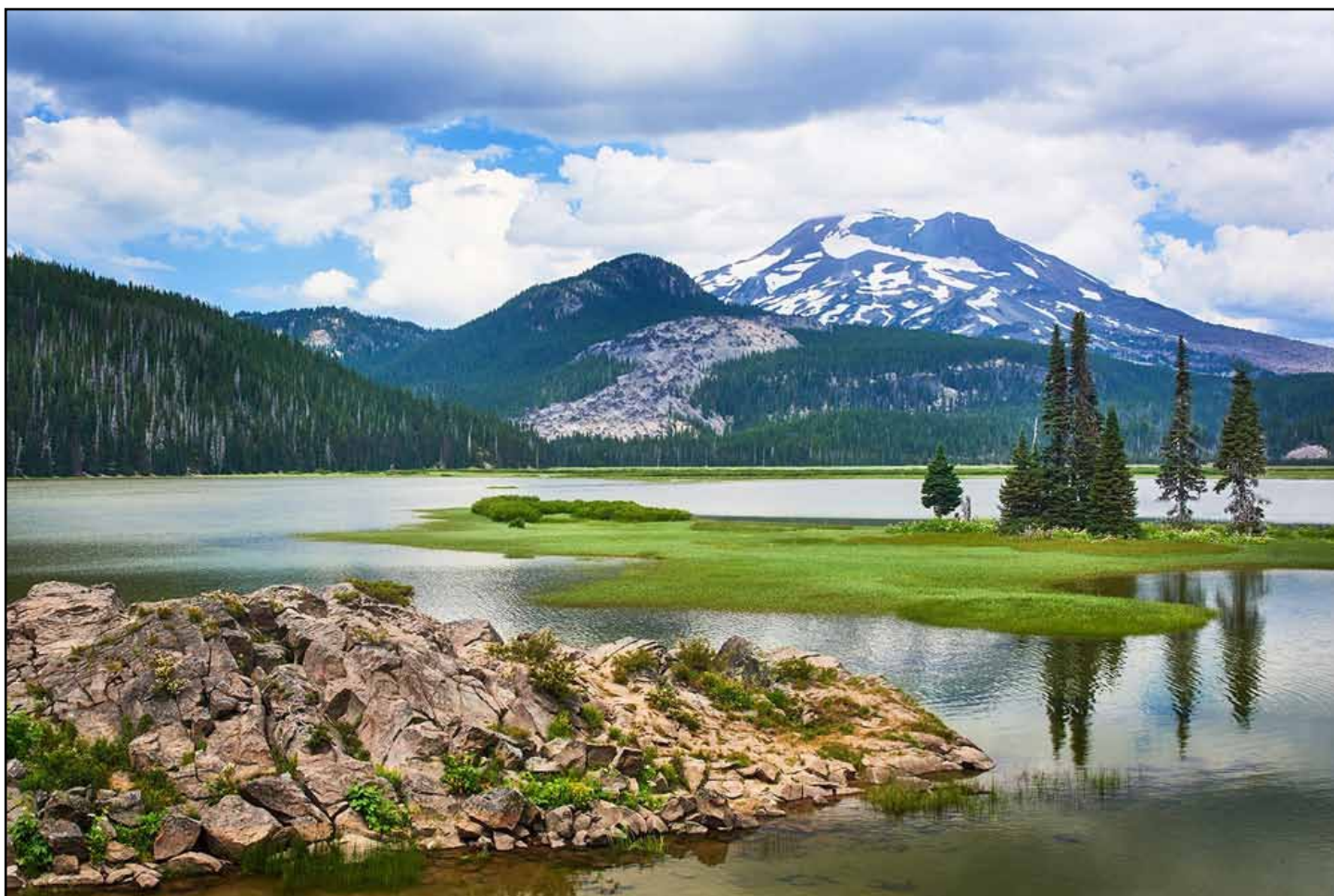




Elk Lake

Stage 4

Sparks Lake





Tree Farm Drive in the Tetherow district of Bend

Stage 4

On the long option





First ascent on O.B. Riley Road

Stage 5

Crooked River National Scenic Byway





Stage 5: Crooked River National Scenic Byway

Stage 5 or 6: Hiking in Smith Rock State Park





Bike path to Madras Mountain Identifier (long option)

Stage 6

Climbing out of Madras on Canyon Road (long option)





Lake Billy Chinook

Stage 6

Crooked River Gorge





Smith Rock Way

Stage 7

Lower Bridge Road





Stage 7

Twin Bridges Road



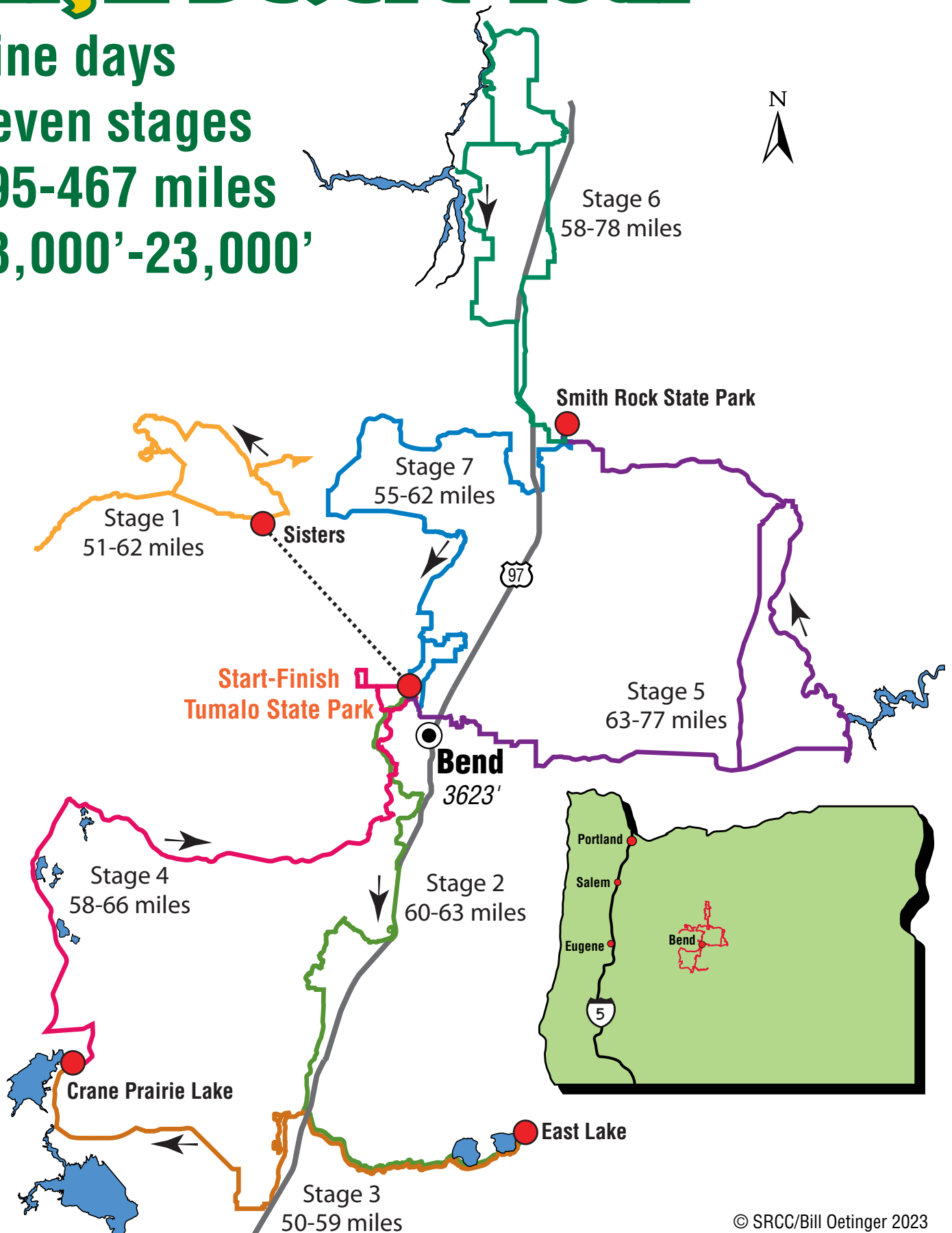
High Desert Tour

Nine days

Seven stages

395-467 miles

18,000'-23,000'



© SRCC/Bill Oetinger 2023

Stage 1: Twisted Sisters

Basic route: 50 miles, 3000' up and down

Long route: 61 miles, 3700' up and down

Drive from Tumalo State Park to town of Sisters (16 miles); park at Creekside Park.

Retrace Hwy 242 toward Sisters	34.9
In Sisters, R on Hood Avenue	49.4
R on Cottonwood Street.....	49.6
L on Jefferson Avenue	49.7
Finish at Creekside Park.....	50.4

Basic route:

R on Hwy 20 E	0.0
L on Hwy 126 E.....	0.1
L on Camp Polk Road	2.9
L to stay on Camp Polk Road.....	6.5

Long option #1 turns right here.

R on Indian Ford Road	6.8
L on NF-11 (aka Green Ridge Road)	12.9
R on Hwy 20 W	13.0
L on Hawks Beard	15.1

Enter Black Butte Resort. Road ahead is gated: bikes okay but not cars.

Long option #2 turns right..... 19.3

Bike shop near road 19.4

L to stay on Hawks Beard Road 20.0

Long option #2 rejoins basic route.

R on Powerline Road (aka NF-300)..... 20.7

3.5 miles of hard-packed dirt/gravel road.

R on NF-1012..... 22.2

R on Hwy 242 (back to paved road)..... 24.2

McKenzie Pass (5325') 34.9

Dee Wright Observatory.

Long option #1:

From Camp Polk Road, R on Wilt Road	6.5
R on Buffalo Road	9.0
R on Appaloosa Drive	9.6
L on Mountain View Road	9.9
L on Buffalo Road	10.8
L on Wilt Road	12.2
Straight on Camp Polk Road	14.6

Rejoin basic route, plus 8.1 miles.

Long option #2:

(Mileage assumes also doing long option #1.)

From Hawks Beard, R on Ponderosa Ln 27.5

R on Linnaea Borealis 28.3

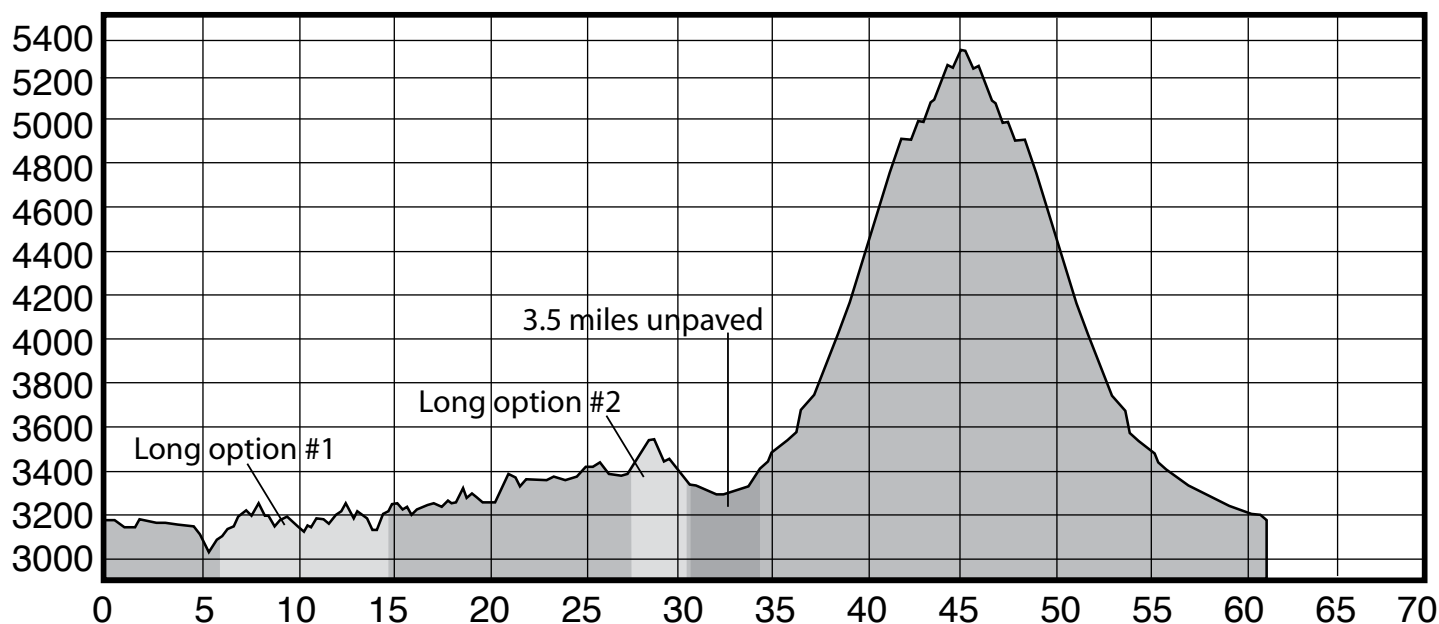
R on Anapholis..... 28.6

Bear R on Mahonia 29.9

Bear R on Hawks Beard 30.8

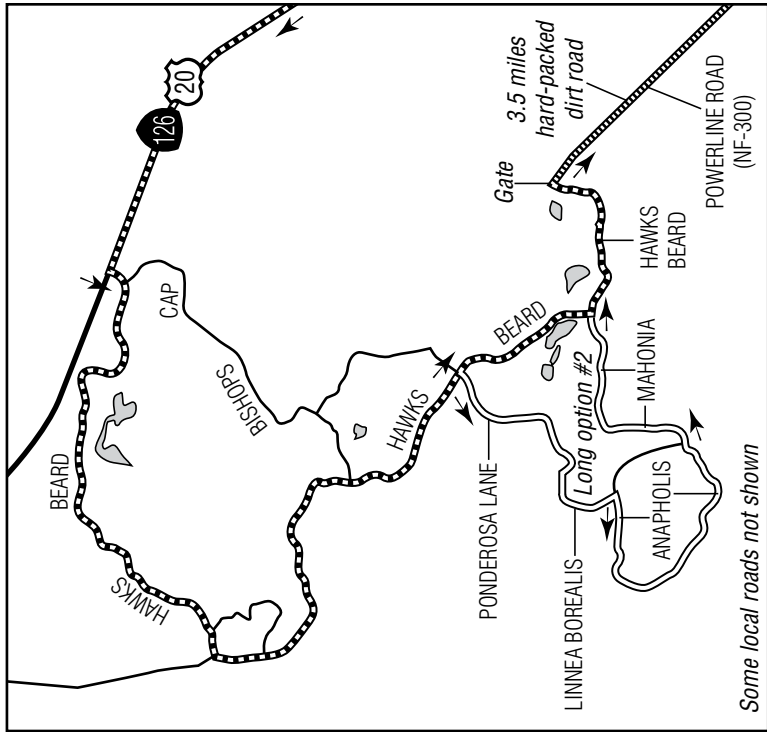
Rejoin basic route, plus 2.6 miles.

Both long options: plus 10.7 miles.

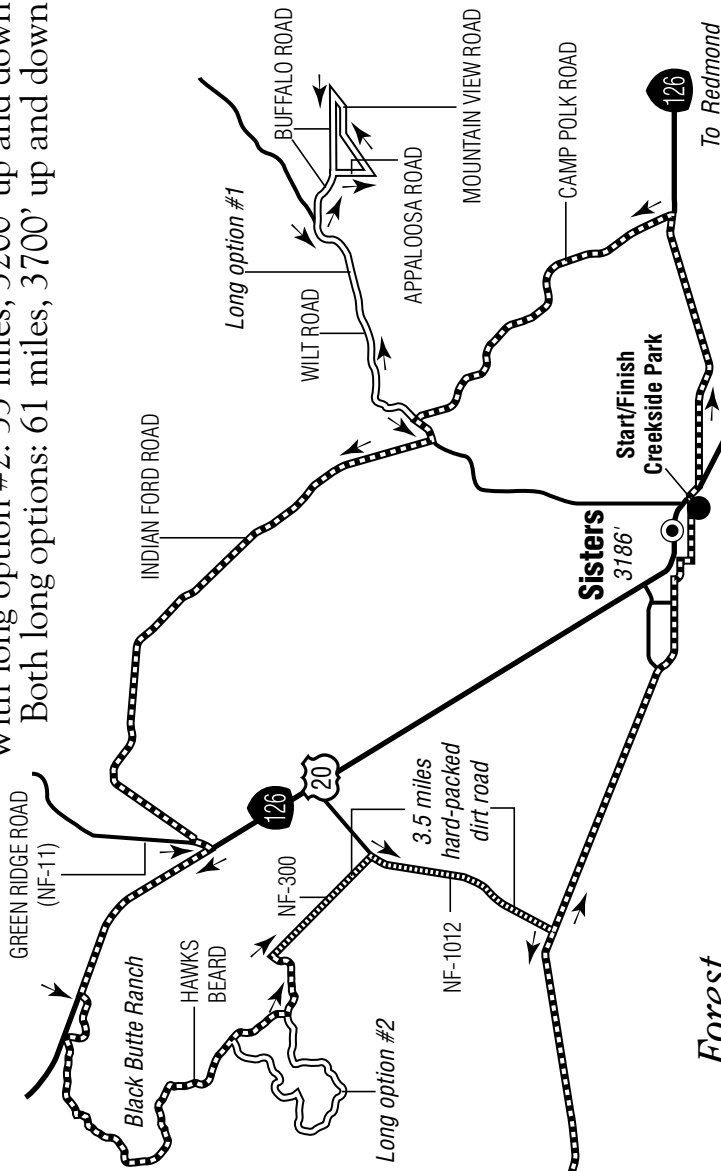


High Desert Tour

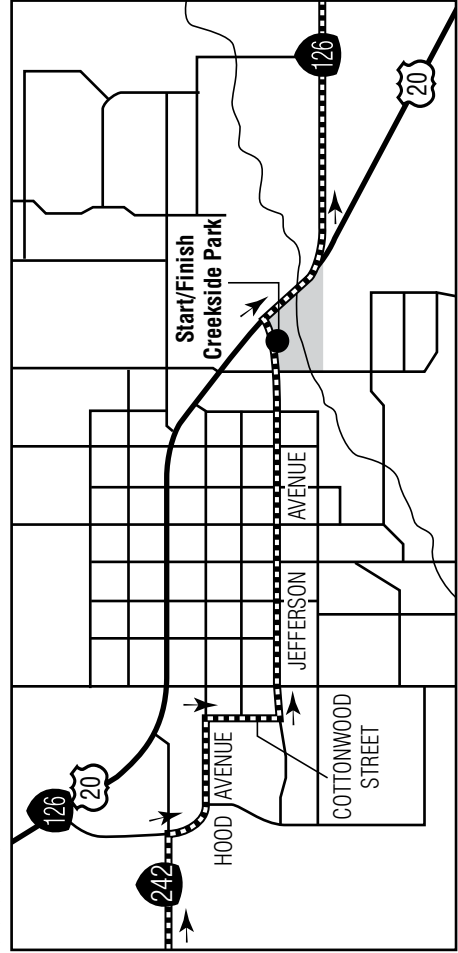
Stage 1: Twisted Sisters
 Basic route: 50 miles, 3000' up and down
 With long option #1: 59 miles, 3500' up and down
 With long option #2: 53 miles, 3200' up and down
 Both long options: 61 miles, 3700' up and down



Black Butte Ranch detail



Forest



Sisters detail

Deschutes

National

Dee Wright Observatory
 McKenzie Pass 5324'
 Black Crater 7251'

Millican Crater 6444'

Stage 2: Tumalow SP to Newberry Caldera

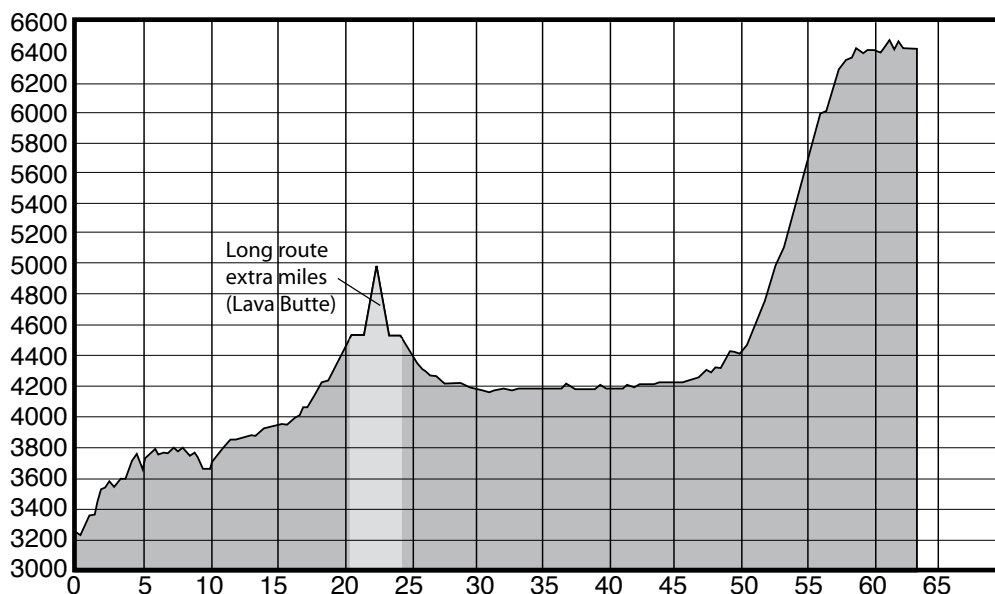
60 miles, 4600' up, 1400' down

Leave Tumalo SP group sites.....	0.0
R on O. B. Riley Road	0.3
L on Tumalo Reservoir Road.....	0.4
L on Johnson Road.....	0.4
Becomes Shevlin Park Road	4.7
Into suburbs of Bend	5.6
At first traffic circle, take first exit onto Mount Washington Drive.....	6.7
Straight thru three more traffic circles at miles 7.3, 7.7, and 8.5 to continue on Mount Washington Drive.	
Straight thru traffic circle...becomes Reed Market Road	9.4
Straight thru three more traffic circles at miles 9.5, 9.9, and 10.2 to continue on Reed Market.	
At next traffic circle, take first exit onto Brookswood Blvd.....	10.5
Straight thru two more traffic circles at miles 11.3 and 12.0 to continue on Brookswood Blvd.	
L on Baker Road	14.6
R on Cinder Butte Road	15.2
L on Cheyenne Road	15.3
L on gated emergency access road (gravel)..	16.8
<i>Cross railroad line.</i>	
R on Hwy 97 S	16.9
Exit Hwy 97 onto Crawford Rd (FS-9702).....	21.5

<i>Long option turns R...follow signs to Lava Butte.</i>	
R into Lava Lands parking lot	21.9
Skirt edge of parking lot to SunLava Trail.....	22.0
R on NF-9702 (leave trail, cross RR tracks)..	25.2
L to return to SunLava Trail.....	25.6
R on trail after crossing Cascade Road	27.3
<i>Enter Sunriver Resort.</i>	
L on trail.....	28.1
R on trail after crossing Abbot Drive	28.8
Bear R to cross Cascade Dr, then L on trail...	29.0
R on trail	29.4
L thru tunnel under River Road.....	30.0
R on trail after tunnel	30.0
Cross River Road, then turn L on trail.....	30.5
R on short dirt path to R on Meadow Road...	32.8
R on emergency exit, L on Spring River Rd..	32.9
R on Century Drive.....	33.4
Becomes Huntington Road	36.4
L on Prairie Drive	41.3
Cross Hwy 97 to Paulina Lake Road	41.6
Top of climb; Paulina Lake	54.2
Finish at Cinder Hill Campground.....	60.2
On shore of East Lake.	

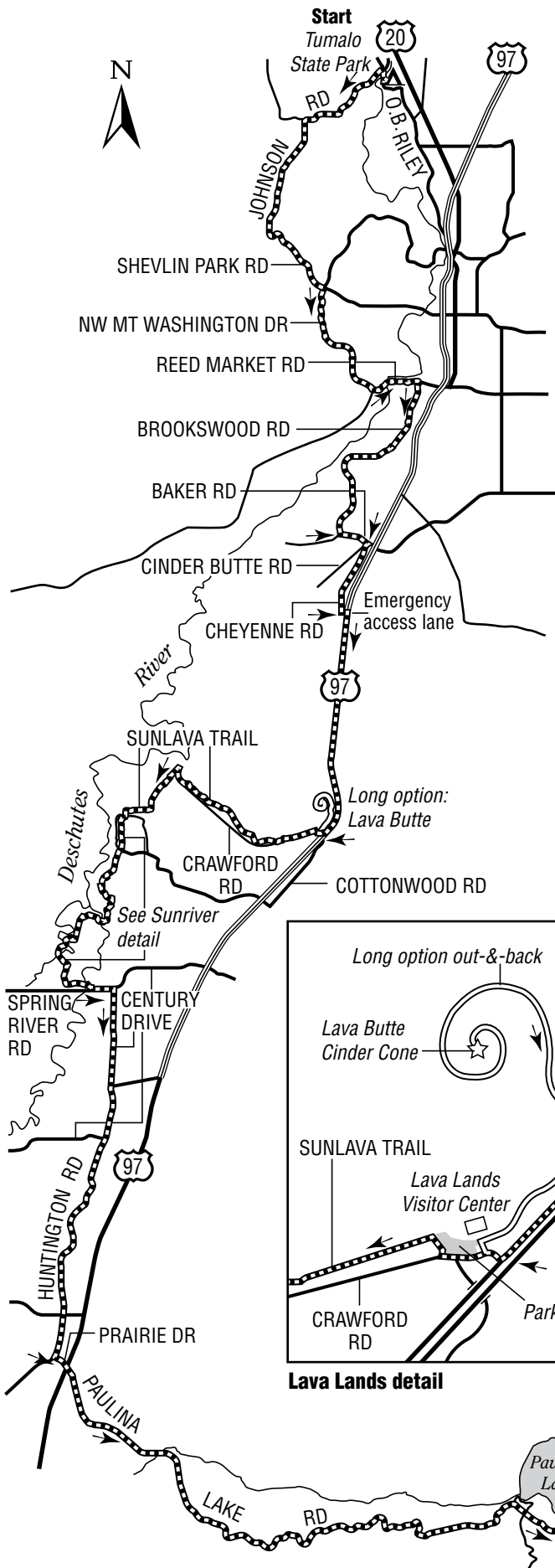
Long option:

From Crawford, R on NF-100	21.5
Follow Lava Butte signs to summit.	
Retrace to R on Crawford.....	24.8
Rejoin basic route, plus 3.3 miles.	



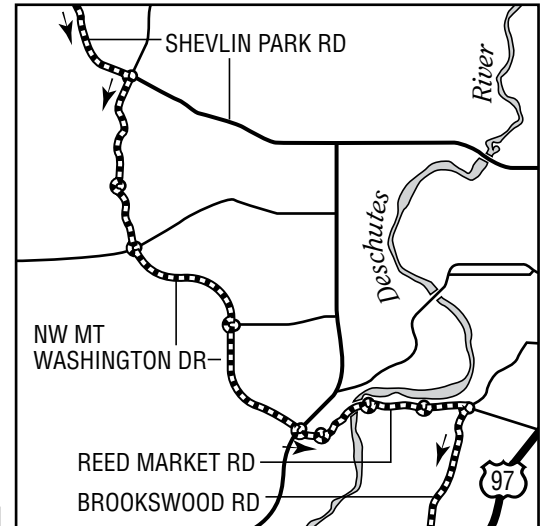
High Desert Tour

Stage 2: Tumalo State Park to East Lake
60 miles, 4600' up, 1400' down
63 miles, 5100' up, 1900' down

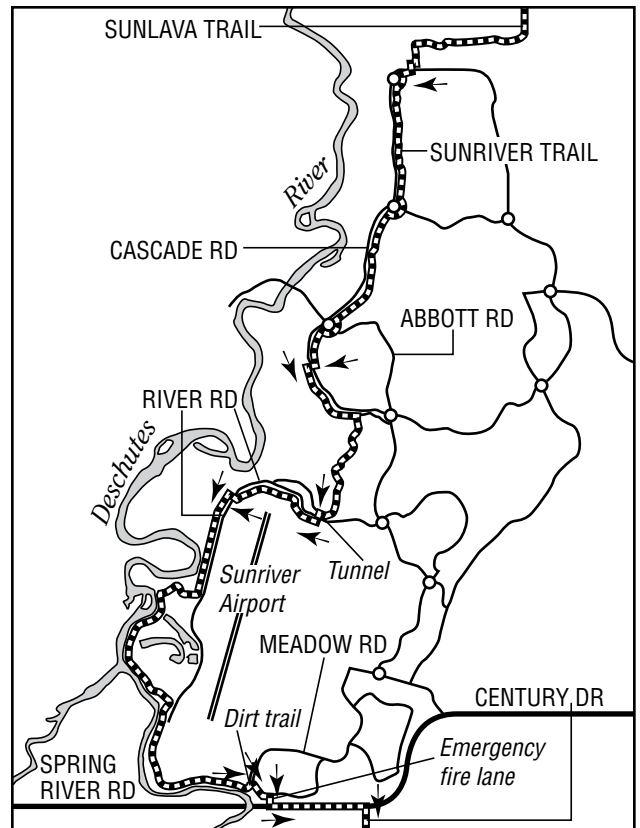


Lava Lands detail

Bend detail



Sunriver detail



Stage 3: East Lake to Crane Prairie Lake

50 miles, 1200' up, 3100' down

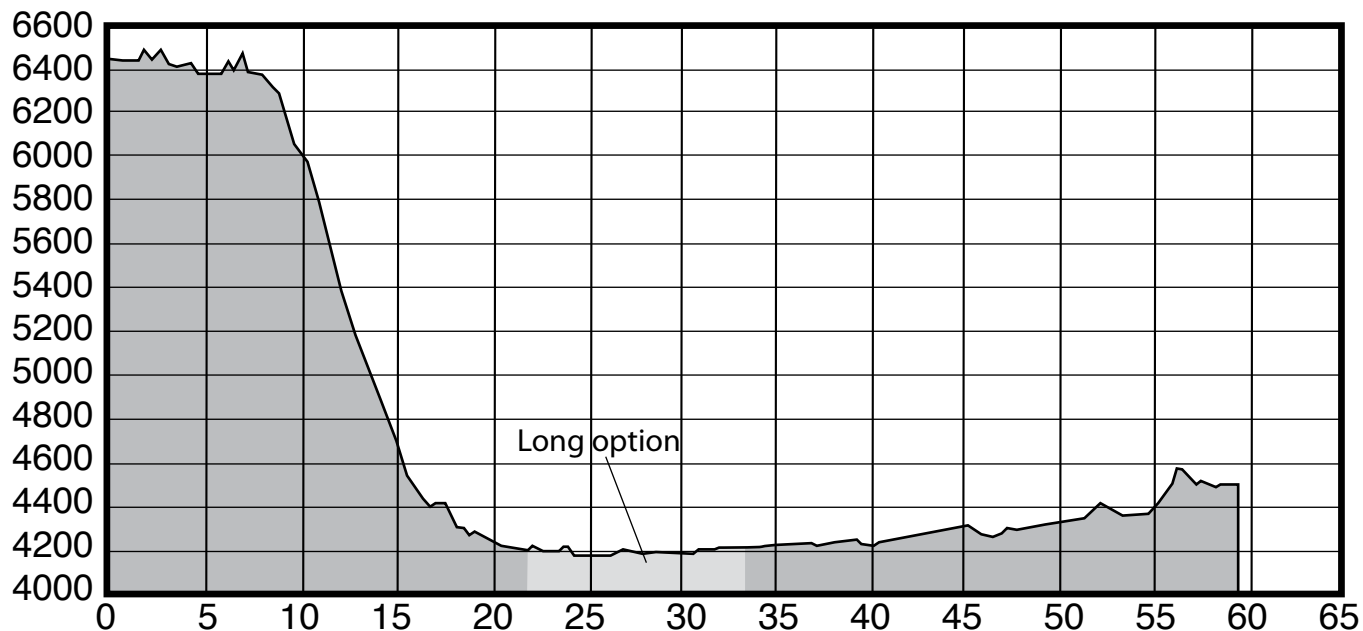
59 miles, 1400' up, 3300' down

Leave Cinder Hill Campground.....	0.0
Continue on NF-21	1.2
R to Little Crater Campground	4.3
<i>Out-&-back along Paulina Lake.</i>	
Retrace to R on NF-21	6.1
R on NF-500.....	7.7
R onto Paulina Lake Campground loop.....	7.8
R on Newberry Crater Road	8.3
R into Paulina Falls parking lot.....	8.7
<i>Short walk to Paulina Falls.</i>	
Return to R on Newberry Crater Road	8.9
Becomes Paulina Lake Road	9.8
Cross Hwy 97 to Prairie Drive	21.1
L on Huntington Road.....	21.5
Long option diverges	22.0
Town of La Pine	27.2
R on 3rd Street	27.9
L on Walker Street	28.2
R on Pierce Road	28.4
L on Pengra Avenue	28.5
R on 6th Street.....	28.6
R on Dorrance Meadow Road	30.3

L on Burgess Road	32.9
Becomes Pringle Falls Loop.....	36.8
L on South Century Drive.....	40.4
R on East Crane Prairie Road	45.8
L toward Crane Prairie Campground	50.0
L into Crane Prairie Campground.....	50.1

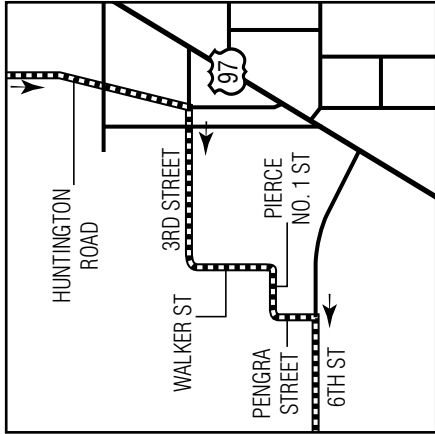
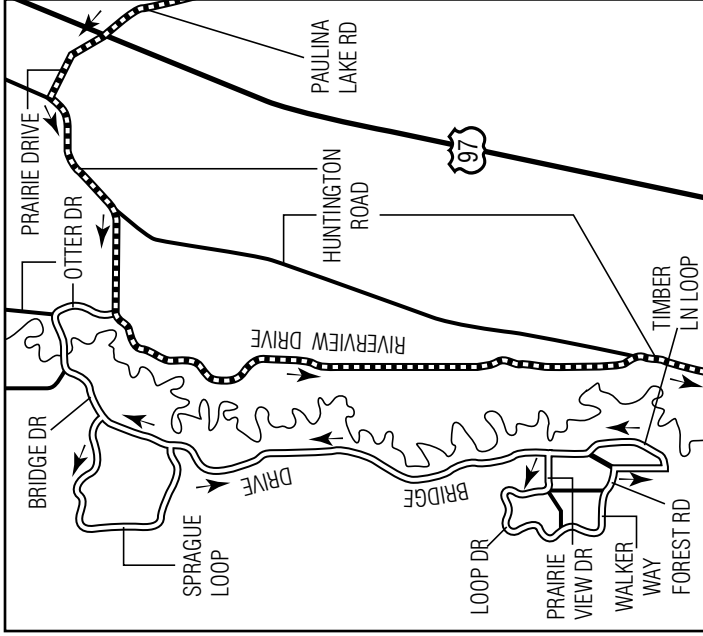
Long option:

From Riverview Dr, R on Otter Drive	22.5
Bear L on Bridge Drive	22.8
R on Sprague Loop	23.3
R on Bridge Drive.....	24.5
R on Prairie View Drive	26.2
R on Loop Drive	26.4
R on Walker Way	27.0
R on Forest Road	27.3
R on Bridge Drive.....	27.5
L on Timber Lane Loop	27.7
R on Bridge Drive.....	28.1
R on Otter Drive	30.7
R on Riverview Drive	31.0
Rejoin basic route, plus 9 miles.	

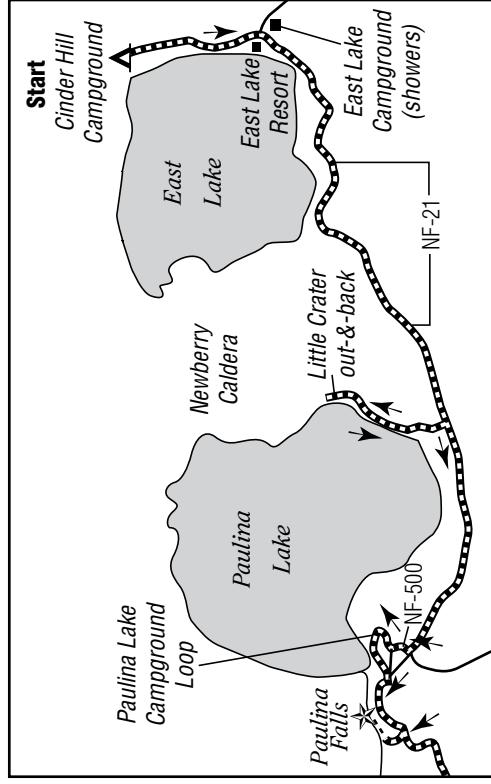


High Desert Tour

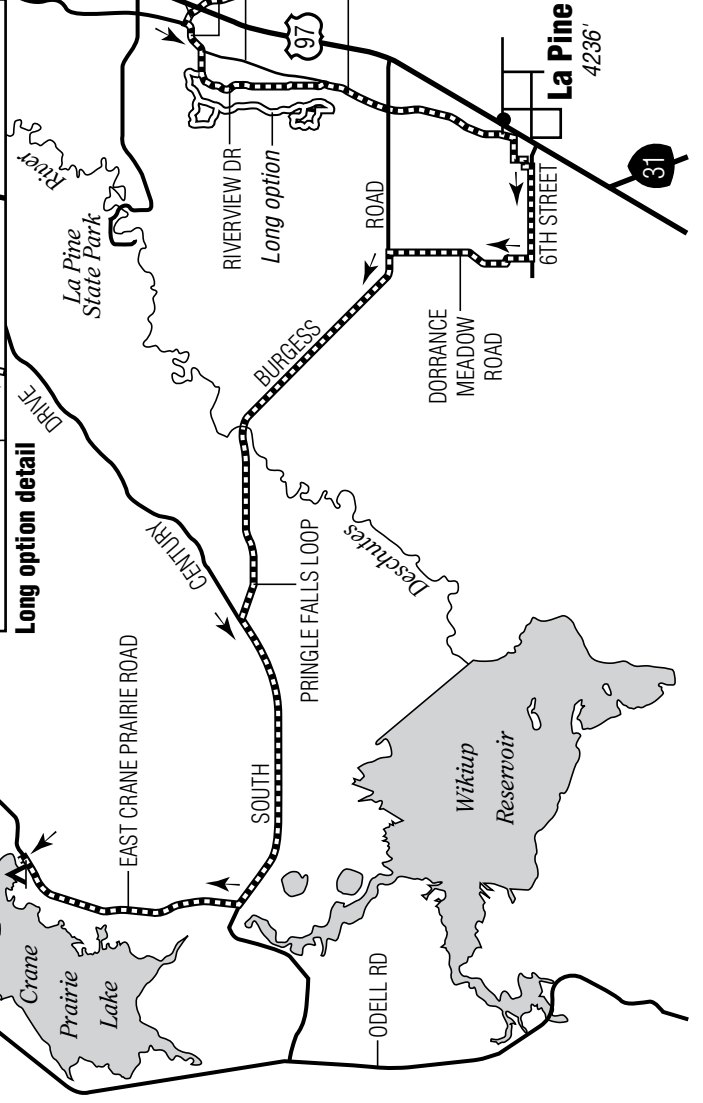
Stage 3: East Lake to Crane Prairie Lake
 Basic route: 50 miles, 1200' up, 3100' down
 Long route: 59 miles, 1400' up, 3300' down



La Pine detail



Paulina Lake-East Lake detail



Finish

Stage 4: Crane Prairie Lake to Tumalo SP

59 miles, 3000' up, 4300' down

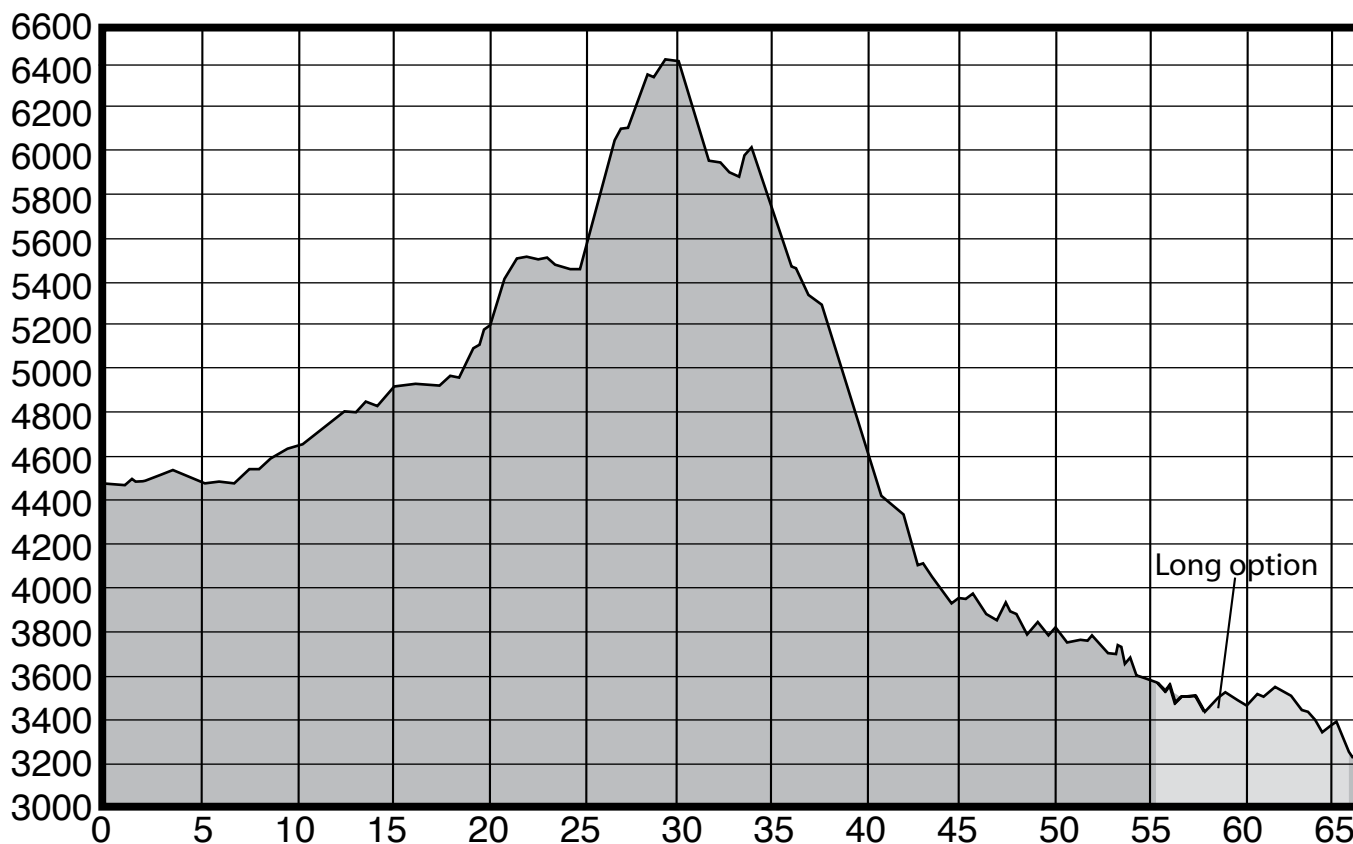
67 miles, 3300' up, 4600' down

Leave Crane Prairie Campground.....	0.0
L on Crane Prairie Road	0.1
L on NF-40	3.5
R on Cascade Lakes Highway (NF-46)	6.5
Summit (6400')	29.6
Becomes Century Drive (Hwy 372).	
L onto Rimrock Trail (aka Haul Trail).....	44.4
<i>One-tenth of a mile after Widgi Creek Golf Club.</i>	
L on Skyline Ranch Road	46.8
Or use bike path next to road.	
<i>Tetherow District on west side of Bend.</i>	
L on Skyliners Road	49.6
Jog R on Crossing Dr to L on Tree Farm Dr ..	50.3
R on Ridgeline Drive	51.1
L on McClain Drive.....	51.7
L on Shevlin Park Road.....	52.9

Becomes Johnson Road	54.1
R on Stag Drive.....	54.4
L on Buck Drive.....	55.5
R on Johnson Road	54.9
Long option diverges	57.0
R on Tumalo Reservoir Road	59.0
R on O. B. Riley Road	59.1
L into Tumalo State Park	59.2
Finish at group sites.....	59.4

Long option:

From Johnson Road, L on Tyler Road.....	57.0
L on Tumalo Reservoir Road.....	59.0
R on Pinehurst Road.....	59.7
L on Walton Road	60.7
L on Collins Road.....	61.2
L on Tumalo Reservoir Road.....	62.3
Bear R to stay on Tumalo Reservoir Road.....	65.3
R on O. B. Riley Road	66.3
L into Tumalo State Park	66.4
Finish at group sites.....	66.6



Stage 4: Crane Prairie Lake to Tumalo State Park
59 miles, 3000' up, 4300' down
67 miles, 3300' up, 4600' down



Stage 5: Tumalo SP to Smith Rock State Park

77 miles, 2500' up, 2800' down

63 miles, 1500' up, 1800' down

Long route:

Leave Tumalo SP group sites.....	0.0
L on O. B. Riley Road.....	0.3
L on Cooley Road.....	2.2

Outskirts of Bend.

At traffic circle, take first exit to 18th Street....	4.1
L on Scottsdale Drive.....	4.6
R on Old Deschutes Road.....	4.9
L on Ann Margaret Drive.....	5.2
L on Overtree Road.....	5.5
Becomes Cooley Road.....	6.2
Becomes JD Estates Drive.....	6.3
L on Deschutes Market Road.....	6.8
Becomes Homehook Road.....	7.1
L on Butler Market Road.....	8.2
R on Dickey Road.....	9.2
L on Nelson Road.....	9.7
R on Powell Butte Road.....	10.7
L on Nelson Road.....	10.9
R on Waugh Road.....	12.6
L on Alfalfa Market Road.....	14.1
Becomes Willard Road.....	21.9

Alfalfa Store.

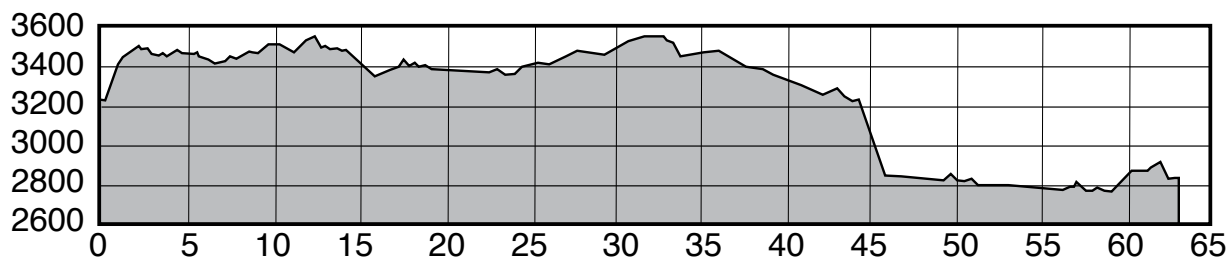
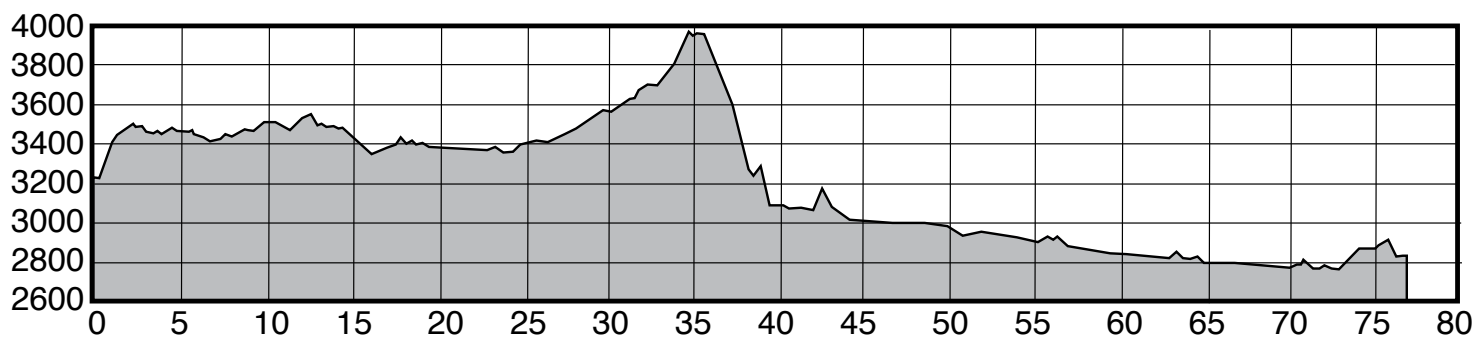
Becomes Reservoir Road.....	25.7
Rest stop.....	26.3
Short route diverges.....	28.1
L on Hwy 27 N.....	35.7

Crooked River National Scenic Byway.

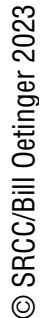
Town of Prineville.....	58.0
L on 4th Street.....	58.3
R on Deer Street.....	58.4
L on Hwy 26 (3rd Street).....	58.8
R on O'Neil Hwy (Hwy 370).....	59.4
Rest stop.....	
R on Lone Pine Road.....	72.1
L on Smith Rock Way.....	73.4
R on Lambert Road.....	74.0
Becomes Wilcox Avenue.....	75.3
R on Crooked River Drive.....	76.2
L into Smith Rock State Park Bivouac Area...	76.6
Finish at camp.....	76.7

Short option:

From Reservoir Road, L on Millican Road	28.1
R on Tom McCall Road.....	43.7
At traffic circle, R on Hwy 126.....	44.0
L on O'Neil Hwy (Hwy 370).....	46.1
Rejoin long route, minus 13.3 miles.	



47



Stage 6: The Gorges Loop

58 miles, 2600' up and down

78 miles, 4600' up and down

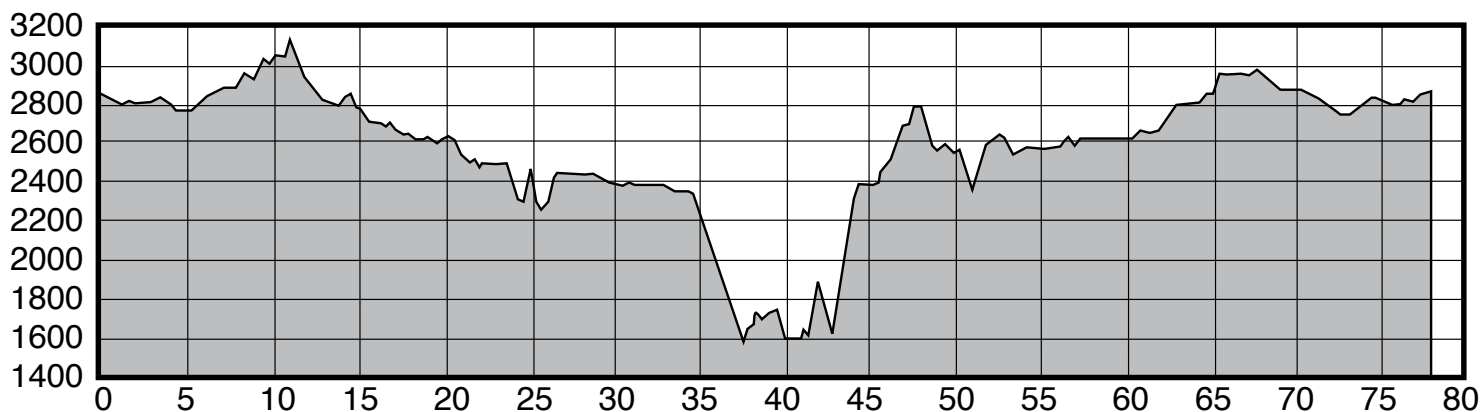
Basic route:

Leave Smith Rock State Park.....	0.0
R on Crooked River Drive.....	0.1
R on Wilcox Avenue.....	0.5
R on 9th Street (aka Austin Road)	1.5
R on Hwy 97 N.....	3.4
Cross Crooked River	5.2
R off Hwy, over gate, north on Culver Hwy	5.4
R on Hwy 97 N.....	12.2
R on Jericho Lane	13.0
L on Bear Drive	14.5
R on Irving Lane	15.5
L on Bear Drive	15.9
L to stay on Bear Drive.....	16.7
R on Hwy 97	19.7
L on Bear Drive	19.9
L on Belmont Lane.....	23.3
<i>Long route turns R.</i>	
L on Mountain View Drive.....	29.0
R on Riverview Road	30.7
Follow sign to Round Butte Overlook Park.	
Rest stop at park.....	31.5
Retrace to R on Mountain View Drive	32.3
Bear R to stay on Mountain View Drive.....	33.2
R into Lake Billy Chinook overlook.....	36.9
Retrace to R on Mountain View Drive	37.0
L on Peck Road.....	37.6
R on Frazier Drive/Fisch Lane.....	37.9
R on Feather Drive	38.9

R on Iris Lane	40.2
L on Green Drive	41.2
R on Lasalle Lane.....	44.0
L on Green Drive	44.2
Bear L, becomes Monroe Lane	45.2
R on Hwy 97	48.1
R off Hwy 97 on trail over old bridge, into Peter Skene Ogden Scenic Viewpoint.....	52.8
Leave Viewpoint on path under RR trestle	53.2
Dirt trail to Wimp Way.....	53.3
R on Hwy 97	54.8
L on Austin Road (aka 9th Street)	55.0
L on Wilcox Avenue	56.9
L on Crooked River Drive	57.9
L into Smith Rock State Park	58.3
Finish at camp.....	58.4

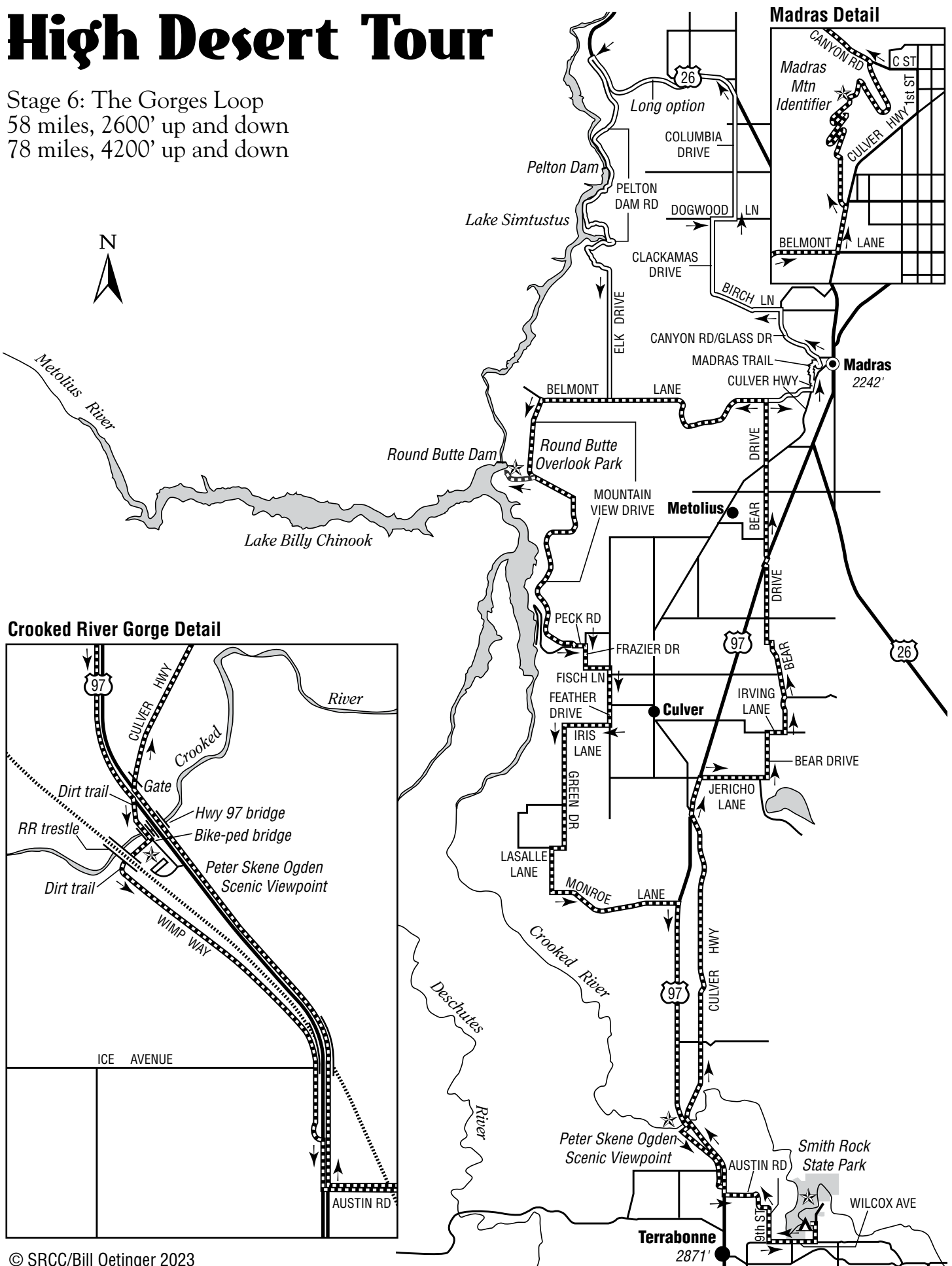
Long option:

R on Belmont Lane	23.3
L on Culver Hwy (Hwy 361)	24.4
<i>Town of Madras.</i>	
L on bike trail to Madras Mtn summit.....	24.6
L on Canyon Road/Glass Drive.....	25.5
L on Birch Lane.....	26.9
Becomes Clackamas Drive	28.5
R on Dogwood Lane	30.1
L on Columbia Drive	30.6
L on Hwy 26 W	33.2
L on Pelton Dam Road	37.2
<i>Pelton Dam/Lake Simtustus.</i>	
Becomes Elk Drive at top of climb	43.9
R on Belmont Lane	46.7
<i>Rejoin basic route, plus 19.2 miles.</i>	



High Desert Tour

Stage 6: The Gorges Loop
 58 miles, 2600' up and down
 78 miles, 4200' up and down



Stage 7: Smith Rock SP to Tumalo State Park

55 miles, 2400' up, 2000' down

63 miles, 2900' up, 2500' down

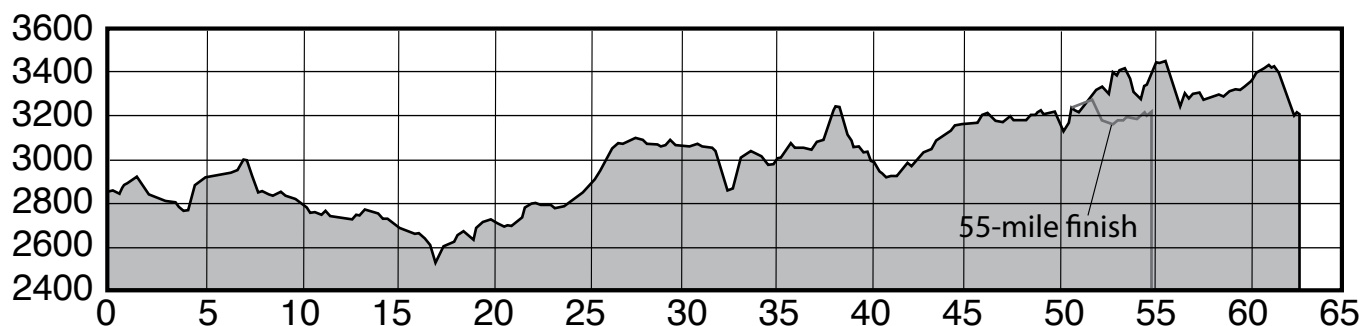
Short route:

Leave Smith Rock State Park	0.0
R on Crooked River Drive	0.1
L on Wilcox Avenue	0.5
R on 33rd Street	1.0
R on Smith Rock Way	1.4
L on 1st Street/Cornelius Road	3.6
Becomes 5th Street/Cornelius Road	5.0
Straight on Hwy 370 W (Oneill Hwy)	6.1
Cross Hwy 97 to continue on Pershall Way	6.9
Becomes Coyner Avenue	8.6
R on Northwest Way	9.1
Becomes Almeter Way	10.6
L on 31st Street	11.3
L on Lower Bridge Way	12.3
L on Holmes Road	21.7
L to continue on Holmes Road	29.4
L on Hwy 126 E	30.9
R on Eagle Crest Blvd	36.9
L onto bike trail	40.2
Straight on Victoria Falls Drive	41.0
L onto bike trail	41.1
L on trail at tee	41.9
R on Cline Falls Hwy	42.1

L on White Rock Loop	47.1
L on Twin Bridges Road	49.4
R on Swalley Road	50.4
R on Tumalo Road	51.7
L on Cline Falls Road/Cook Avenue	52.9
Town of Tumalo.	
Cross Hwy 20 to O. B. Riley Road	53.2
L into Tumalo State Park	54.5
Finish at group sites	54.8

Long option:

L on Swalley Road	50.4
L on Old Bend-Redmond Hwy	51.9
R on Hereford Avenue	52.4
L on 93rd Street	52.6
R on Gift Road	52.8
R on 76th Street	54.0
R on Limestone Avenue	54.7
L on 76th Street	54.9
R on 85th Street	55.1
R on Tumalo Road	56.1
At traffic circle, take third exit to Old Bend-Redmond Hwy S	57.5
Cross Hwy 20	60.6
R on O. B. Riley Road	60.8
R into Tumalo State Park	62.1
Finish at group sites	62.4



High Desert Tour

Stage 7: Smith Rock State Park to Tumalo State Park

55 miles, 2400' up, 2000' down

62 miles, 2800' up, 2400' down

