

KISSING THE TRAIL

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NORTHWEST & CENTRAL OREGON
MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS

SECOND EDITION

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BEND AND CENTRAL OREGON

Tired of the rain, mud, and overcast skies of western Oregon? (And why wouldn't you be.) Bend, one of the West's finest mountain-bike destinations, combines dry weather with awesome trails—many of them user-built, which basically means they're perfect. Just two hours from Eugene and three hours from Portland, these 25 Bend-area rides provide great fodder for winter bike dreams and easy summer weekend tripping for most Oregonians. The riding is best early in the summer when the trails aren't too dusty and the thermostat isn't too high, or after the first nighttime freeze around mid-August, which rids the land of many mosquitoes.

Farewell Epic (ride 27) and North Fork to Flagline (ride 28) constitute new epics to this second edition. Both should be on the "ride once a year" list. I've also added C.O.D. (ride 30), Swampy Lakes (ride 36) and a new ride at Phil's Trail.

The routes at Phil's trail system (rides 31, 32, 33) epitomize Bend riding—fast, smooth, and dream-like—as well as being riding distance from town, another typical attribute. And with all the recent trail connections emanating out from Phil's, it may be the center of the mountain bike universe. Indeed, from Phil's trailhead, you can ride on dirt to 14 of the rides in this section.

For my gas money, though, the most outstanding trail near Bend is the circuit around Newberry Caldera (ride 39)—one of the best trails in the West. It's tough, exciting, and spectacular. Combine it with Paulina Creek (ride 38), and you've got your hands on a nice epic. But before you think this place can do no wrong, know there are shabby trails even in Bend. Forget about Lower Black Butte Trail—and even the upper trail at Black Butte, ride 21, is hanging onto this book by a thread. And while some of the trails near Skeleton Cave look interesting on the map, manzanita-shredded arms and unstable, horse-trodden trails are what you have to look forward to.

The Central Oregon Trails Alliance, COTA, is the mountain bike club to thank for trails and access near Bend. Their tireless work and political savvy have opened up riding here like no other place in the nation. Thank them, buy them beer, become a member!



Deschutes River Canyon

The trail follows along the canyon rim. When the wood chips end at a T, **2.7** miles (ridepoint 2), turn around and retrace your tracks. Arrive back at the trailhead at **5.4** miles.

Gazetteer

Nearby camping: Tumalo State Park
 Nearest food, drink, services: Bend

26 TUMALO FALLS



Distance 7-mile out-and-back

Route singletrack; views

Climbs Moderate; high point: 5,000 ft, gain: 200 ft

Duration Fitness rider: 30 minutes; scenery rider: 2 hours

Travel Bend—12 miles; Eugene—141 miles

Skill Intermediate

Season Summer, fall

Map U.S. Forest Service: Bend Ranger District

Rules National Forest Recreation Pass required

Manager Deschutes National Forest, Bend—Fort Rock District, 541-383-4000

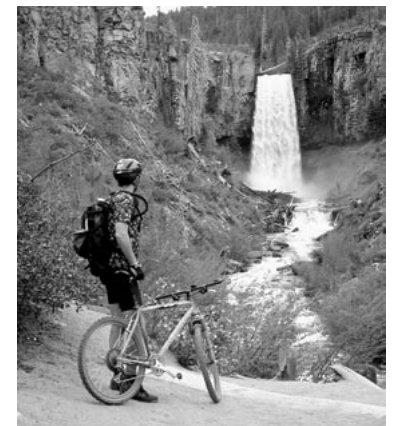
Web www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/recreation/trails/1025a-tumalocreek

Who Will Like This Ride

Dreamers and view seekers.

The Scoop

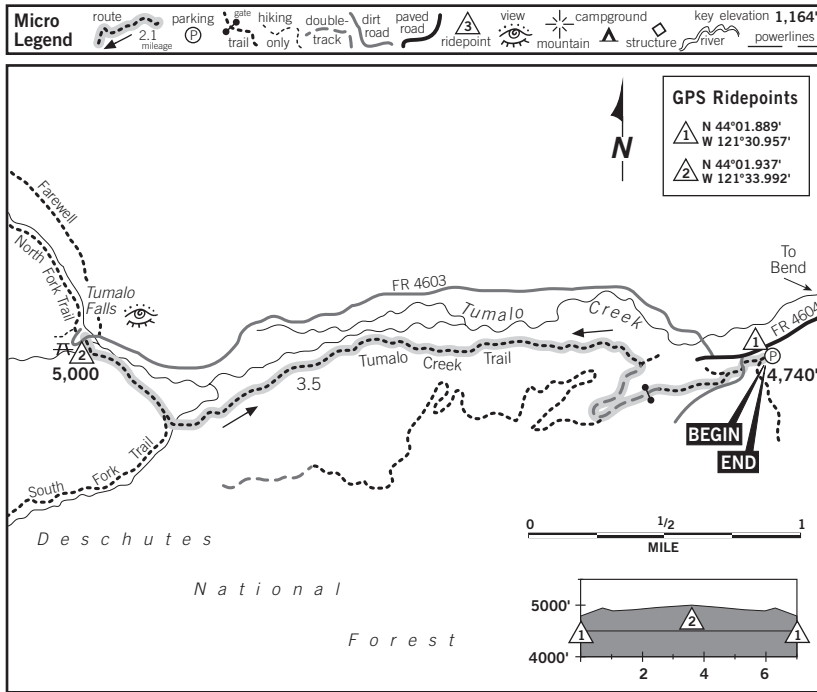
Though you can drive a car to Tumalo Falls, riding your bike is better. And when isn't that the case? The singletrack out to the falls, first through pine then later the thick manzanita of the oddly barren Tumalo Creek canyon, rises and drops in quick bursts, reminding me of those hot days on the highway when I hold my arm out the window and fly my hand in the wind, up and down. Tumalo Falls is dramatic and beautiful, and there's a picnic area at the falls for a meditative lunch. But the trails from Skyliners Trailhead go well beyond the falls. They jet out toward Farewell and Mrazek (rides 27 and 24), North Fork to Flagline (ride 28), Swede Ridge (ride 29), Phil's (rides 31, 32, 33), and many others. Get in shape and check it out.



Tumalo Falls



On top of Tumalo Falls



Driving Directions

From the junction of US Highway 97 and Northwest Franklin Avenue in Bend, set your odometer to zero and head west on Franklin (which becomes Northwest Riverside Boulevard). At 1.2 miles, turn right onto Northwest Tumalo Avenue. Continue straight ahead as Tumalo becomes Northwest Galveston Avenue and then Skyliners Road. At 4.5 miles, pass Forest Road 4604 (to Phil's trailhead) on the left. At 11.9 miles, bear left into the wide, gravel Skyliners trailhead and Sno-Park.

The Ride

From the parking area, take Tumalo Creek Trail, which begins just to the right of the bathrooms. Almost immediately, ignore a trail that cuts back on the left. Cross a dirt road and reach a fork—go left, paralleling the dirt road. From here, the trail, climbing slightly, winds through second-growth forest. At 0.6 mile, pass around an old green gate and climb what used to be FR 434.

When you reach a fork at 0.7 mile, take a hard right, continue up for a short way, then descend. At 1.1 miles, reach a fork and bear left, heading toward Tumalo Falls. From here, the trail gradually ascends in quick ups and downs along the south bank of Tumalo Creek. Scattered pines and thick manzanita line the trail, with views of the bare hillside north of Tumalo Creek. **WHOA!** Though some of the longer views are nice, the sightlines along this section suck. Head on collisions or even running into hikers is all too easy, especially when riding back toward the trailhead. It's easy to go too fast here, so watch out for other trail users. It's also an exposed stretch of trail and can be hot by late morning. At 2.1 miles, stay to the left at a fork.

Cross over a small creek at 3 miles. At 3.1 miles, reach a fork and bear right, continuing along the creek toward Tumalo Falls. At 3.5 miles (ridepoint 2), arrive at the picnic area below the falls. There's a nice view of the falls from the lower picnic area, but a quarter-mile push up North Fork Trail gets you right on top of the cascade. Turn around when you're done and ride back the way you came, returning to Skyliners Sno-Park at 7 miles.

Gazetteer

Nearby camping: Tumalo State Park
Nearest food, drink, services: Bend

27 FAREWELL EPIC



Distance 38.9-mile loop

Route Big singletrack horseshoe connected by 5 miles paved; views

Climbs Moderate with one exception; high point: 6,080 ft, gain: 2,460 ft

Duration Fitness rider: 4 to 5 hours; scenery rider: 6 to 8 hours

Travel Bend—5 miles; Eugene—134 miles

Skill Intermediate

Season Summer, fall

Map U.S. Forest Service: Bend Ranger District

Rules None

Manager Deschutes National Forest, Bend–Fort Rock District, 541-383-4000

Web www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/recreation/trails/trail-district-bend

Who Will Like This Ride

You love the smell of burning lungs in the morning.

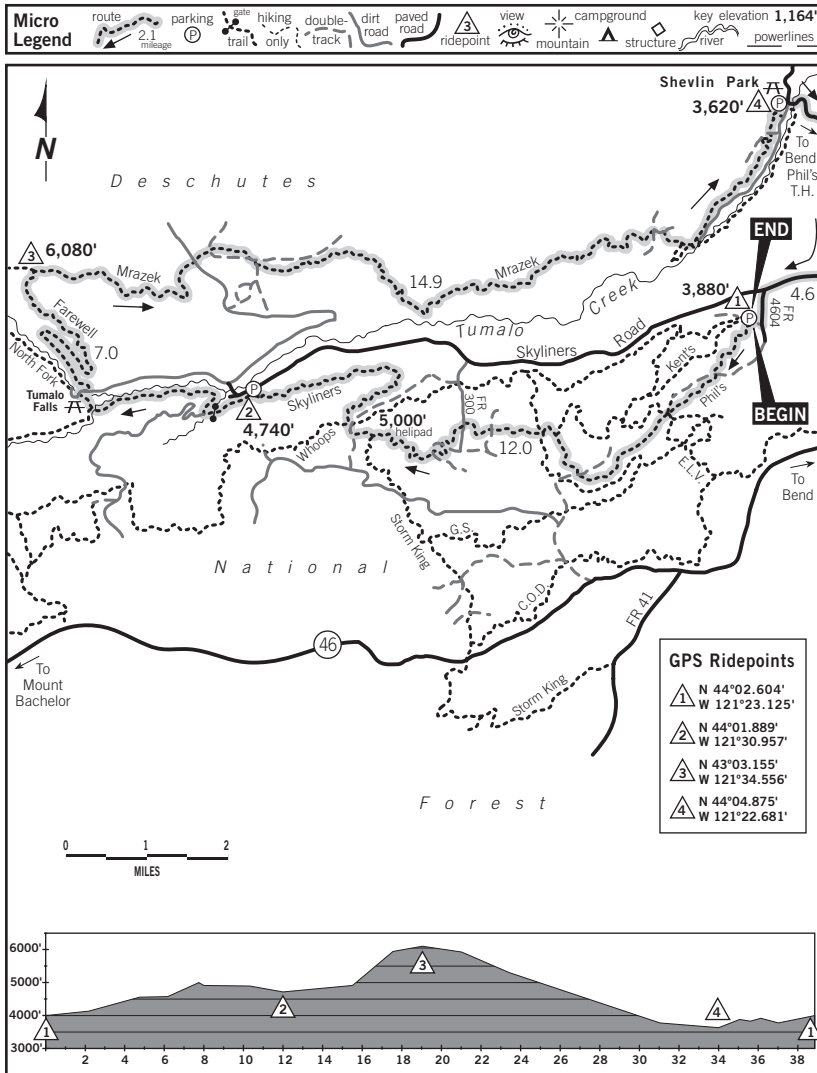
The Scoop

What could be better than combining Phil's (rides 31, 32, 33) and Mrazek (ride 24), both Bend classics, into one ride? Here it is. And you know what, the combining part—Skyliners Trail, Tumalo, and Farewell—are awesome trails as well. By connecting the singletrack orgy with four and a half miles of paved roads, you've accessed a huge wonderful loop straight from town. Who needs a car anyway?

Driving Directions

From the junction of US Highway 97 and Northwest Franklin Avenue in Bend, set your odometer to zero and head west on Franklin. Franklin becomes Northwest Riverside Boulevard. At 1.2 miles, turn right onto Northwest Tumalo Avenue. Continue straight ahead as Tumalo becomes Northwest Galveston Avenue and then Skyliners Road. At 4.5 miles, turn left on Forest Road 4604. At 4.9 miles, you'll find the parking area for Phil's trailhead on the right.





The Ride

From the trailhead, take Phil's Trail. After riding straight through a four-way, the fun begins immediately, winding fast along a smooth, sometimes dusty, tread through an open pine forest. Cross a gravel road at **1 mile**. At **1.6 miles**, the trail braids apart for a rock drop then quickly reconnects. Reach the "Flaming Chicken" roundabout, a 5-way junction, at **2.1 miles**. Essentially you need to ride straight through this intersection, which means taking the second left if you're riding clockwise around the chicken. From here the trail climbs at a gentle rate. The grade levels out before you cross a dirt road at **4.0 miles**.

At **4.7 miles**, reach a fork at Junction 18—go left. Ride straight through a four-way at **5 miles**. Cross a doubletrack. When you reach FR 300 at **6.1 miles**, turn left onto the road and then almost immediately right onto singletrack again. From here, it's a steep climb to the Phil's Helipad. The tread, through manzanita and an open pine forest, though often smooth becomes loose and rocky in sections, with a few technical step-ups and tightly wound switchbacks. **WOOF!** At **7.8 miles**, reach the helipad, a collection of small rocks in a flat open circle surrounded by tall manzanita. The way descends, gradually at first. Reach a fork and bear right (a left heads down Storm King, ride 35). At **8.4 miles**, the trail hits a dirt road at a T—turn right. Reach a 5-way at **8.5 miles** and take a shallow left toward Skyliners trailhead.

From the 5-way, the trail pinwheels around the base of Tumalo Ridge, swinging east for nearly a mile before rounding the ridge's eastern foot and shooting off to the west. This section of the route is determinedly intermediate, with few black-diamond maneuvers and little change in elevation. The forest, however, changes radically, heading at first through low manzanita and skinny pine—allowing for lots of light and making for a dusty tread—and ending with tall firs and a rich duff trail. Skyliners is a fun trail that combines the classic Phil's meandering with a point-to-point functionality—it connects all the trails in the Phil's system with all the trail opportunities from Skyliners Road and Tumalo Creek.

After a gentle ascent followed by a fast descent, reach the trailhead at Skyliners Sno-Park, **12 miles** (ridepoint 2). From the parking area, take Tumalo Creek Trail 25.1, which starts up just to the right of the bathrooms. The trail winds through a dark patch of second growth. Ignore a trail back

on the left at **12.1** miles. Immediately cross a dirt road, and reach another fork—go left, paralleling the dirt road. At **12.6** miles, ride around a green gate, and climb up the wide trail. Reach an unmarked fork at **12.7** miles and take a hard right turn. First climb then drop to a fork at **13.1** miles—stay to the left. From here the trail heads west, paralleling Tumalo Creek through a hallway of high manzanita. **WHOA!** Given the poor sightlines here, watch out for hikers and oncoming cyclists. It's an exposed stretch of trail and can be hot. After numerous short ups and downs, drop to cross over a creek at **15** miles. At **15.1** miles, reach a fork and stay to the right (left climbs to Swede Ridge, ride 29).

At **15.5** miles, the trail ends at a paved road. Above you'll see Tumalo Falls. Turn right onto the road, cross the bridge over Tumalo Creek, then find Farewell Trail 26 on the left. Farewell, it should be noted, doesn't mean "see you soon." It means goodbye for a long, undetermined amount of time, perhaps forever. And, given the climb you're about to embark upon, it's an apt name for the trail. Though the trail ducks into a forested short stretch during the climb, most of the ascent is up an open, manzanita covered hillside. Not that you'll notice. You'll be busy counting the knobs on your tires as they slowly churn up the steep slope.

WOOF! The incline eases at a sweet viewpoint, **17.5** miles, but it's not until nearly **18** miles, when you enter the forest, that you'll feel like slapping it into the middle chainring. When you reach a fork at **19** miles (ridepoint 3), turn right, heading toward Shevlin Park on Mrazek Trail. (A left heads off to Happy Valley and connects, via the Metolius-Windigo Trail, to North Fork to Flagline, ride 28.)

From the fork, Mrazek swoops and dives like perhaps no other trail, and if you haven't killed yourself on the climb you have 12 straight miles of smiling bliss ahead of you. The trail crosses numerous dirt roads and doubletracks during the descent. Stay on the main trail. At **21.1** miles, find a rocky outcropping on the right—it's a nice viewpoint and better place to break than the fork at the top of Farewell. Just before the **23**-mile mark, a new downhill-only segment of trail routes around an old doubletrack. When the singletrack ends, take a right onto the doubletrack and then a left to regain singletrack. The trail is again two-way from here back to Shevlin Park.

Just try to follow the fast windies as you spin your steed toward gallop. From about **26** miles on the pine forest thins out to reveal more manzanita,

fewer pines, and a dustier tread. After crossing many small dirt roads, cross a wide gravel road at **30.4** miles. A short distance farther, reach a fork and bear left. Reach the top of Shevlin Park at **31.1** miles. From here, bear left (rather than dropping to the park road) and Zen your way along the hillside, staying above the road but not climbing away from it either. Reach the parking area at the bottom (north end) of Shevlin Park at **33.9** miles (ridepoint 4).

From the parking area at Shevlin Park, ride north to the park entrance and turn right onto NW Shevlin Park Rd. At **35.6** miles, turn right onto NW Mount Washington Dr. At **36.6** miles, turn right onto NW Skyliners Rd. At **38.1** miles, turn left on FR 4604. Return to Phil's trailhead at **38.5** miles.

Gazetteer

Nearby camping: Tumalo State Park

Nearest food, drink, services: Bend

Making the turn onto Mrazek



28 NORTH FORK TO FLAGLINE

Distance 31-mile loop

Route All delicious singletrack; views

Climbs Ass-kicking ascent; high point: 7,020 ft, gain: 2,280 ft

Duration Fitness rider: 4 hours, scenery rider: 5 to 8 hours

Travel Bend—12 miles; Eugene—141 miles

Skill Intermediate

Season August 15 through early October

Map U.S. Forest Service: Bend Ranger District

Rules National Forest Recreation Pass required; North Fork Trail is uphill only; seasonal closure

Manager Deschutes National Forest, Bend–Fort Rock District, 541-383-4000

Web www.fs.fed.us/r6/centraloregon/recreation/trails/trail-district-bend

Who Will Like This Ride

Since you know patience is a great virtue, you enjoy planning your long rides months in advance.

The Scoop

North Fork to Flagline was not in the first edition of KTTO, which was a big mistake as it's one of those best trails. Thank God for second editions, eh? There are several ways to check out this classic Bend loop. You can shorten it by either starting at Tumalo Falls rather than Skyliners trailhead or by finishing via the South Fork Trail from Swampy Lakes rather than the Sector 16 / Whoops / Skyliners finish described here. You can lengthen it, too, of course (since it's August and you're in shape from a summer full of riding), by starting from Phil's trailhead (ride 31) and following the first 12 miles of the Farewell Epic (ride 27). Better yet, start the journey from Bend and ride out to Phil's trailhead, which would send it well over the 50-mile mark.

But it doesn't really matter how you assemble this ride as long as you get out there and do it. This loop gets you into unbelievably beautiful country, with waterfalls and high meadows and gurgling streams. You'll like the Flagline descent, too. Note: This loop is only open between August 15 and

when the snow flies at 7,000 feet, which most years means a short window of maybe only six weeks. Thus the need to plan ahead.

Driving Directions

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The Ride

From the parking area, take Tumalo Creek Trail, which begins just to the right of the bathrooms. Almost immediately, ignore a trail that cuts back on the left. Cross a dirt road and reach another fork—go left, paralleling the dirt road. From here, the trail, climbing slightly, winds through second-growth forest. At **0.6** mile, pass around an old green gate and climb what used to be FR 434. When you reach a fork at **0.7** mile, take a hard right,



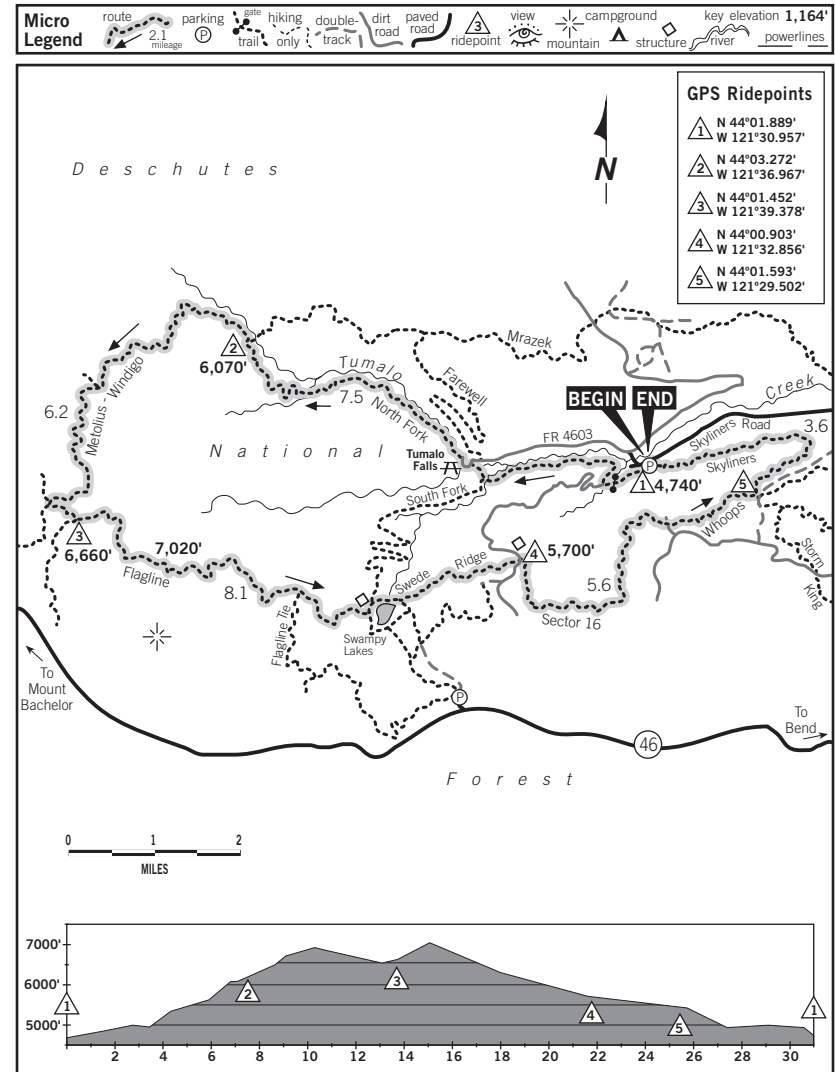
continue up for a short way, then descend. At **1.1** miles, reach a fork and bear left, heading toward Tumalo Falls.

From here, the trail gradually ascends in quick ups and downs, along the south bank of Tumalo Creek. Scattered pines and thick manzanita line the trail, with views of the bare hillside north of Tumalo Creek. **WHOA!** The sightlines here are poor, so watch out for other trail users. At **2.1** miles, stay to the left at a fork. Cross over a small creek at **3** miles. At **3.1** miles, reach a fork and bear right, continuing along the creek toward Tumalo Falls. At **3.5** miles, the trail ends at a T—go left and ride a few pedal rotations to a parking area where you have a nice view of Tumalo Falls. From the parking area, take North Fork Trail 24.2 toward Happy Valley. Note: This trail is only open to bikes for uphill riding.

As you ascend, stay to the left. Three trails around the **3.8**-mile mark head out to high views of Tumalo Falls. At **4.6** miles, the trail winds out to the canyon edge for another view of the falls. After an extremely steep initial climb from the parking area, the ascent is somewhat more reasonable in its requests for suffering as it follows North Fork Creek toward Happy Valley. Cross to the north side of the creek at **6** miles. After the creek crossing, however, the trail angles up again, winding and switchbacking with a sadistic vengeance. Yet at the same time, the route rewards with views of one beautiful waterfall after another.

When the trail divides at **6.8** miles, go right. **WOOF!** The North Fork climb finally eases, though much climbing remains in your future. At **7.1** miles, bear right again at the fork to continue toward Happy Valley. Reach Happy Valley, a nondescript meadow, at **7.5** miles (ridepoint 2). The trail forks here—go left toward Todd Horse Camp (a right turn points you east toward the top of Farewell (ride 27) and Mrazek (ride 24). The way is level for a moment, but just as you think you’ve figured out that Happy Valley might just mean no more climbing, the route tilts upward again. Around the **8.7**-mile mark, the trail noodles forward, then drops to a small meadow. But the descent is short-lived as the trail inches towards 7,000 feet, gaining elevation in fits and starts, through small fir and mountain hemlock.

At **10.4** miles, crest a false summit. Reach a fork at **10.7** miles and go left. From here, it’s a fun descent to an open rocky creek crossing at **11.2** miles.





Then it's up again, and back into the shade of the trees. Ignore a hiker-only trail on the left at **11.3** miles. Following a long stretch of trail that skirts a big meadow, the trail, somewhat ragged here, descends to a fork at **13.1** miles—bear left. Reach another fork at **13.2** miles and again go left, climbing now. When the trail splits at **13.7** miles (ridepoint 3), take another left toward Tumalo Falls trailhead. Thus begins Flagline Trail.

Flagline climbs eastward, then cuts south, heading straight at Tumalo Mountain, a huge cylindrical cone immediately northeast of Mount Bachelor. **WOOF!** At **15.2** miles, you finally pass over the top of the loop. From here, it's downhill, and you'll like it. During the descent you'll find lots of ramps, ladders and the occasional jump. At **18** miles, reach a fork and bear left, following the signs toward Swampy Shelter. At **19.2** miles, hit a T and turn left. When you reach a fork at the shelter at **19.4** miles, go right. When the trail forks again at **19.9** miles, stay to the left. From here, the trail climbs at a gentle rate before romping down Swede Ridge. At **21.8** miles (ridepoint 4), arrive at a dirt road. Across the road, take Sector 16 Trail.

Sector 16 Trail, narrow, schizophrenic, and serpentine, marks quite a change from the wide, romping descent down Flagline and Swede Ridge. After countless ups and downs, arounds, and needle-threads, cross a dirt road at **25** miles (from here, it's 9.2 miles to Phil's trailhead; 6 miles to Skyliners trailhead). Cross a doubletrack near a shelter at **25.3** miles, then cross another dirt road a short time later. At **25.8** miles, the trail crosses a dirt road at Junction 30 and becomes Upper Whoops Trail, an intermediate version of a downhill course. It's fun, though the trail is loose in places. **WHOA!** At **27.4** miles (ridepoint 5), reach a confusing intersection: Bear right on the doubletrack then immediately left on a singletrack (Skyliners Trail) toward Skyliners trailhead.

Skyliners, zippy and fast in sections, slower and methodical in others, heads east before wrapping around the sharp base of the ridge. From here, through darker forest, the route aims westward. It's a fun, middle-chaining trail. Around **30.5** miles, stay on the main trail, which descends quickly. Reach Skyliners trailhead at **31** miles.

Gazetteer

Nearby camping: Tumalo State Park

Nearest food, drink, services: Bend