

Misery Ridge

MISERY RIDGE. ITS NAME CONJURES UP IMAGES OF EARLY PIONEERS SLOGGING IT IN WAGON TRAINS OVER MOUNTAIN PASSES, BUT IT'S NOT THAT BAD. REALLY.

Start of the Misery Ridge Trail just across the bridge at Smith Rock State Park.

NOTE: Horseback riding and mountain biking are not allowed on the Misery Ridge Trail.

In fact, it could be renamed "Awesome" Ridge, because that's what it is when you get up to the 3,360 foot summit. Especially if you decide to hike it from the other direction as described in detail on this suggested hike.

Off-limits to mountain bikers and horseback riders, hikers can take Misery Ridge at their own pace, yielding to others that have a faster one. Trekking poles can help for balance as well as assist in powering up the 600 foot elevation gain. They also help a bum knee on the way down navigate the scree.

The .68 mile trail to the summit takes off directly across from the bridge. You soon meet up with climbers on Picnic Lunch Wall after a series of small switchbacks. Continuing up, you pass Ship Rock and another favorite climbing destination, the Red Wall.

A series of wooden steps helps hold the crumbling trail in place. Each year people cutting the trail erodes it even more. Don't be one of them. A lot of volunteers in addition to the park staff work hard each year to maintain the trail system.

Once at the summit, scramble up on the rock ridges. Get a great view of the Monument Area to your left. Look down and see the Crooked River as it winds around below.

Continue on the path for another .3 miles, and you'll come to another great viewpoint. All decked out with a park bench, you can take a load off while you take in the beauty of the scenery in all directions. The top of one of the park icons, Monkey Face, looms at the ridge. Hang out and watch slackliners traverse a rigged line to the Monkey's "mouth."

You can often see climbing parties on various routes finishing up their ascent of the free-standing welded tuff pillar. Done for the day after watching the climbers? Go back the way you came—just keep your weight centered over your knees on the steep scree down. You'll be fine.

Not done and want to do the Misery Ridge Loop along the River Trail? See the TIP below.

