

# BLUE MOUNTAINS/WALLOWA LOOP TOUR



## 8 Day Loop Tour

(9 Nights Lodging)

July 8 – 17, 2016

Meet Friday, 7/8; Ride 7/9-7/17

Total cost: **\$1175**

Tour deposit: **\$400** (Pd at registration)

Single supplement: **\$600** (Paid at time of registration)

Final Payment: **\$775 due by April 15, 2016**

Rider limit: **32**

**Tour leaders:** Ralph & Carol Nussbaum



### OVERVIEW:

This tour starts in Walla Walla, but its focus is the northeast corner of Oregon. The first day we cross the Blue Mountains and coast down into La Grande, OR. The second day, we follow part of the Oregon Scenic Bikeway through the historic towns of Union and Medical Lake to Baker City where we will stay two nights. On day three we ride up the Powder River Valley on the Sumpter Stage Highway to the town of Sumpter where we can visit the huge gold dredge used to mine gold from the river. The more courageous can follow a beautiful highway loop around past the Anthony Lakes Ski Area back to Baker City and the more relaxed can return on the Sumpter Stage Highway, taking some time to stop at Union Creek Campground for a swim in Phillips Lake on the way back down to Baker City. The next day we climb up to the Oregon Wagon Trail Interpretive Center before riding on to Halfway, the gateway to the Wallowas Mountain Loop Road. Day five, we ride the Mountain Loop Road, taking in the Hell's Canyon Overlook and some of the most gorgeous scenery in Eastern Oregon. We finish at the south end of Lake Wallowa where we take a day off to enjoy the lake and the mountains. From this spot, we go through Joseph, Enterprise, and several other small towns before returning to La Grande to close the Loop. On our final day, we retrace our steps over the Blue Mountains on a slightly different route back to Walla Walla.

Download the [route map](#) (PDF).

### WHAT TO EXPECT:

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:** The ride is intended for riders with moderate biking skill levels or better, though this tour will be somewhat more challenging than previous COGS Tours. Everyone can ride at their own comfortable pace. Be aware that there is an 85-mile day with 7,000' climbing on one day, as well as two other 80+ mile days. Participants should train to be capable of riding 80 miles in one day. There will be a day off at Wallowa Lake. Although the route generally traverses lightly travelled rural roads, there are occasional stretches with no shoulder and/or significant traffic.

**WEATHER:** Weather in the Eastern Oregon can be very warm in July. Nevertheless, riders should also be prepared for rain and chilly conditions.

**MEALS:** This tour will provide both snacks and lunch on riding days. Breakfast and dinner are your responsibility; however, some of our accommodations provide a complementary warm breakfast.

**LODGING:** Quality of lodging varies from basic to traditional motel chains such as Holiday Inn Express and Best Western. We will be staying for 2 consecutive nights at two locations.

**DAY BY DAY ITINERARY:** (Mileages & Elevation gains are approximate – route may vary slightly due to unforeseen circumstances.)

**Friday, July 8 – Orientation Meeting in Walla Walla, WA**

We meet the first night at the Walla Walla Comfort Inn for an 8:00 PM briefing meeting. Folks may wish to get together for dinner informally beforehand.

**Saturday, July 9: Walla Walla, WA to La Grande, OR - 83 miles, 5,500 ft. climbing**

We leave Walla Walla on back roads, heading south along the edge of the Palouse until Milton Freewater, after which we turn uphill into the Blue Mountains. This is a long climb, but not steep – after 25 miles we will summit at about 5,000 feet. After lunch at the top, we glide down into Elgin, turn right and continue into La Grande for the night.

**Sunday, July 10: La Grande to Baker City - 60 miles, 2,900 ft. climbing**

We leave La Grande and follow the Oregon Scenic Bike Route past towns little changed since they were settled in the 1850's. After an easy day, we arrive in Baker City where we will stay for two nights.

**Monday, July 11: Sumpter Loop - 97 miles, 6,500 ft., or 63 miles, 2,000 ft. climbing**

This day starts up the Powder River Valley past Phillips Lake and the Sumpter Valley Steam Locomotive station to the town of Sumpter for lunch and a visit to the State Dredge Heritage Area to find out about mining in the mountains of the region. After lunch, riders can continue into the Elkhorn Mountains for a 90+ mile (paved) ride and a total of 6,500 feet of elevation for an adventure into the beautiful back country of the Elkhorns, or return to Baker City with a stop at the lake for a swim. Either way, we stay another night in Baker City.

**Tuesday, July 12: Baker City to Halfway: 55 miles, 1,850 ft. climbing**

This day starts with a ride up to the Oregon Trail National Interpretive Center for an informative visit into the past. We continue on to the small town of Halfway for the night.

**Wednesday, July 13: Halfway to Wallowa Lake - 83 miles, 7,400 of climbing**

This is the “queen” stage for visiting the Wallowas. We will leave Halfway and climb up the Wallowa Mountain Loop Highway to the Hell's Canyon Overlook, then continue through the beautiful Wallowa Wilderness Area over several ridges to the north exit. From here it is a short trip to the town of Joseph and a lodge on Lake Wallowa for a well-deserved day off.

**Thursday, July 14: Wallowa Lake – DAY OFF**

There's a cable car up the mountain for beautiful views and hiking. Of course there's an alpine lake to swim in!

**Friday, July 15: Wallowa Lake – La Grande - 77 miles, 2,000 ft. climbing**

From Wallowa Lake, we will travel along the Wallowa River through more small towns including Joseph, Enterprise, Losine, Minam, and Elgin back to La Grande.

**Saturday, July 16: La Grande – Walla Walla - 85 miles, 4,000 ft. climbing**

We follow a slightly different return route over the Blue Mountains back to Walla Walla. Although there is still some climbing, overall there's more going down than up! Saturday night's lodging is included in the tour so relax and enjoy the day! We will all be driving home on **Sunday, July 17<sup>th</sup>**.