

CHALLENGE 3

BLUE MOUNTAINS

Oregon's Ultimate Bikepacking Ride

The Southern Blues 600 is among North America's most ambitious bikepacking routes. Covering 600 miles across remote Eastern Oregon, it forms a vast loop through the remote Blue Mountains with over 56,000 feet of elevation gain. From the initial ascent, the route requires endurance, thorough preparation, and resilience as you traverse a landscape that feels both boundless and wild.

Over the ten-day ride, you will cycle along high ridgelines, descend into deep river canyons, and cross a series of ranges: the Elkhorns, Strawberries, Greenhorns, and Wallowas. Each presents its own unique challenge: steep gravel climbs, rocky ascents, long stretches without resupply, and exposure to the late-summer sun.

The reward lies in the remoteness. Passing alpine lakes, hidden valleys, and fire-scarred ridges where the views stretch on for miles. Small mountain towns punctuate the journey, offering moments of rest before the trail pulls you back into solitude. It is a true wilderness ride, where every mile earned carries the weight of adventure.

Like all Pole to Pole Challenges, every detail is meticulously planned and managed, from expedition logistics and food preparation to the support structure that enables you to venture further into wild places. This is the ultimate way to experience Oregon's backcountry and to ride one of America's most challenging long-distance bikepacking routes.

Overview

Location	Duration	Month	Difficulty
Oregon, USA	15 Days	29 August to 12 September 2026	7

CHALLENGE 3 – BLUE MOUNTAINS

The Pole to Pole Blue Mountains Challenge is shaped by years of experience in adventure cycling across various environments and conditions. Our expedition leaders have traversed polar ice, high mountains, and remote deserts, bringing the same standard of safety, endurance, and purposeful challenge to this long-distance bikepacking expedition. Challenge 3, through Oregon's Blue Mountains, is no different.

With decades of combined expedition experience, our guides and instructors meticulously prepare every detail. From bike and kit setup to nutrition, pacing, and backcountry safety, we provide participants with comprehensive resources before and during the Challenge. A dedicated support vehicle, GPS tracking, and carefully planned resupplies offer security while enabling the group to experience the independence of true bikepacking.

This is a test of resilience, focus, and endurance along one of North America's most ambitious long-distance routes. For those prepared to embrace the climbs, exposure, and quiet of Oregon's interior, the Southern Blues 600 presents an expedition as rewarding as it is demanding.

Itinerary

The Southern Blues Mountains Route is a remote and challenging bikepacking journey in Eastern Oregon, winding through pine forests, high ridges, tranquil valleys, and historic mining towns. This itinerary balances difficulty with rest periods, combining long climbs with moments of respite at lakes and small, local communities.

Like all adventurous journeys through rugged terrain, conditions can change unexpectedly. Weather, wildfires, and road closures may impact the route, and adjustments might be needed at short notice. We will collaborate closely with our local partners to stay as close to the planned schedule as possible.

Please also note that bikepacking at this level involves uncertainties. Resupply points might be closed, weather could slow progress, and detours may be necessary. For this reason, we recommend booking flexible flights and avoiding major commitments immediately after the expedition.

Climate

The Southern Blues cross altitudes from valley floors to alpine passes. Expect hot summer days, cool nights, and the chance of sudden weather changes. Thunderstorms and wildfire risks are common in late summer. Riders should pack to be self-sufficient in both heat and cold and always carry layers for wind and rain.

Resupply & Meals

This is a remote area with limited services. Some stages have reliable resupply points, while others have none. Evening meals are usually a mix of dehydrated or cooked camp foods, with occasional chances for a hot restaurant meal.

Pole to Pole Challenge 3 – Blue Mountains**Day 1**

Flights to Boise, Idaho.

Arrival day. Transfer from Boise Airport to your accommodation in La Grande and a quick brief by your Pole to Pole leader, before resting and adjusting from your travel.

Day 2

Preparation Day

Collect your bikes for the expedition, conduct bikepacking equipment checks, and some gentle acclimatisation with a short test ride.

Day 3

Preparation Day

Final acclimatisation day with kit checks and group briefings by our expedition partner. Another short test ride before sharing a meal together to get to know the group.

Day 4

La Grande to Cash Hollow

Distance: 100km | Elevation +2,100m

The first ride begins with steady climbing out of La Grande, rolling through ranch land and pine forest before reaching the remote camp at Cash Hollow.

Day 5

Cash Hollow to Indian Lake

Distance: 110km | Elevation +2,500m

A demanding day of climbing into the high country. Riders may find limited supplies in Weston before descending toward Indian Lake.

Day 6

Indian Lake to North Fork 2

Distance: 130km | Elevation +2,000m

One of the longest stages, with punchy climbs and backcountry tracks and some incredible views through Imatilla National Forest.

Day 7

North Fork 2 to Magone Lake

Distance: 93km | Elevation +2,200m

Climbs through dense forest and over ridges before descending to the alpine setting of Magone Lake. A chance to rest and swim.

Day 8

Magone Lake to Starr Ridge

Distance: 70km | Elevation +1,200m

A shorter day, with rolling climbs through forest and logging country. Limited services, but full resupply is available before leaving Magone Lake. The camp at Starr Ridge provides a chance to recover before the remote climbs start again on day 9.

Day 9

Starr Ridge to North Fork

Distance: 80km | Elevation +1,700m

Remote doubletrack and quiet service roads, with no resupply opportunities. Riders will need to carry everything for the day as they pass through the beautiful Strawberry Range

Day 10

North Fork to John Day River.

Distance: 95km | Elevation +1,500m

A tough day brightened by the welcome stop in Prairie City, where full resupply and hot food are available. Afterwards, the ride continues up the Greenhorn Mountains with camp along the John Day River.

Day 11

John Day River to Desolation Creek

Distance: 115km | Elevation +1,900m

A long, demanding stage across valleys and creeks, with climbs into higher ridges. For those feeling extra adventurous and wanting to cool off, there is an option for a singletrack side route to Olive Lake.

Day 12

Desolation Creek to Anthony Lake

Distance: 95km | Elevation +2,700m

The toughest climbing of the route comes on the penultimate day but is rewarded by alpine scenery at Anthony Lake.

Day 13

Anthony Lake to La Grande

Distance: 65km | Elevation +650m

A final short climb before descending back into La Grande. When back in the accommodation and showered it's time to celebrate the journey and reflect on the challenge with a celebratory meal together.

Day 14

Recover and Post-Exped Admin

A full day to rest, pack down bikes, and complete logistics before departure.

Day 15

Transfer and Flights

Return transfers from La Grande to Boise Airport before onward travel home.

Further Information

Money and Personal Expenses

There are no cash machines along the route. Credit cards are not widely accepted, so we recommend bringing cash to buy items during the journey.

Swimming

Along the route, certain stages will provide chances for swimming. Ensure you're prepared!

Water Treatment

The route features several water resupply points; however, we recommend carrying purification tablets or a water filtration device in case you need to refill from a stream or river along the way.

Dietary Requirements and Intolerances

If you have allergies or dietary requirements, please inform us when making your booking. Depending on your needs, Pole to Pole can supply you with freeze-dried meals that meet specific criteria.

Logistics Assistance

In case of physical weakness on a stage, there might be an option to be transported to the next accommodation by support vehicle. This transport is not available for certain parts of the route, and we advise you to be physically fit enough to complete the Challenge before setting out.

What's included

Pole to Pole has carefully selected our partners and providers based on their experience, quality, and reliability. The following list is included in your booking:

Challenge 3 – Blue Mountains

Fitness programme	Support in planning and preparation for training and the Challenge
Group airport transfers from and to Boise Airport	A suitably qualified and experienced local guide
Shared tents	Support vehicle for the route
Kitchen pack – stove & pot between two, bowl, plate, cutlery, mug per person	Sleeping bag, mat, and headtorch
Meals while on the bikepacking expedition including, breakfast, lunch, trail snacks, and dinner. These will be a mix of trail rations and fresh food	Pole to Pole rider jersey and mid-layer Celebratory final night BBQ
Bike and helmet hire	Panniers and bike spares

Not included

Challenge 3 – Blue Mountains

Insurance coverage – personal, medical, evacuation, or otherwise

Supplementary food purchased on the expedition

Flights to Boise, USA

Expenses incurred due to delays

Accommodation or meals in La Grande

Alcoholic beverages

Personal clothing and equipment

Guide gratuity – we recommend \$500 per person

Equipment

The nature of any expedition may require the purchase of some specialised personal equipment. Please see below for the full kit list for Challenge 3. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask a member of our team.

On booking, the team will provide you with a checklist.

Clothing

Good quality trekking socks	Midlayer jacket – PrimaLoft or fleece etc.
Underwear – Lycra or merino sports shorts – not cotton	Waterproof outer jacket
Light trousers, shorts, and waterproofs	Swimwear
T-shirts	Microfibre towel
Gloves	Cold weather hat (mandatory)
Gaiters (optional)	Sun hat
Cycle Shoes or Hiking boots/shoes – If you would like to bring clipless shoes you will be required to bring your own pedals as well. Suggestion would be flexible MTB cleats as there will be some hike-a-bike. Otherwise, waterproof and breathable hiking shoes/boots.	Flip flops or sandals for the evenings

Personal Equipment

50-70 litre rucksack for trekking. The weight of the daily trekking bag will be between 8kg to 12kg without food or water. Rucksacks can be rented, if requested. Rain cover recommended.

Dry bags – various sizes to waterproof and store equipment

Headtorch

Camelback-type water pouch. Minimum 2 litres. A hard Nalgene style bottle is also recommended

0.5 – 0.8 litre airtight plastic container for packed lunch

Travel knife, fork, spoon

Travel mug

Basic multitool e.g. Letherman

Power bank and cables – for charging electronics

Follow-on luggage bag – must be easy to transport and not too bulky. We recommend a sports bag as suitcases are not allowed.

Carabiners – several strong for attaching equipment. They do not have to be rated for climbing

Earplugs

Toothbrush & toothpaste – manual toothbrush

Toiletries – expanding wipes, sanitary products, Sudo crème etc.

Personal first aid kit – water purification tablets, plasters, balms, pains relief, foot tape, antiseptic, scissors, anti-bac hand gel, lip balm, sun cream

Earplugs

Toilet paper

Cash for purchases along the route

Equipment Provided by Pole to Pole

Sleeping bag, mat, and headtorch

Individual bowl, plate, cutlery, and mug

Pole to Pole Challenge 3 rider jersey

Shared stove and pots

Bike, helmet, and repair kit

Pole to Pole midlayer jacket

Training

Training for an expedition with a long duration is not to be ignored. Each day on the trip, you will cover long distances over unpaved terrain, which will physically and mentally tire you. While you do not need Olympic-level strength and endurance, we recommend you follow the fitness programme we provide and increase your daily activity and cycling duration.

If you require further guidance on training, please speak to a member of our team.

Payment

You can pay your deposit and balance using the links on the invoice or via bank transfer. If you send money by electronic bank transfer, you are responsible for covering the cost of any associated transfer fees.

Cancellation

A non-refundable deposit of 20% of the total trip fee is required on booking.

In the event the client decides to cancel their trip at any time between booking and the trip's commencement, a deduction will be made from the advance amount. This is due to Pole to Pole's obligation to pay providers, personnel, and resources during the planning process.

The cancellation will only be effective from the date that the cancellation is received in writing by email. Cancellation charges will be payable as follows:

- A non-refundable deposit of 20% is charged on booking.
- A cancellation fee of 60% is charged if cancelled 150 days or less from the Challenge departure date.
- A cancellation fee of 100% is charged if cancelled 90 days or less from the Challenge departure date.

Rescheduling

We do not routinely offer rescheduling, but if there is flexibility, we may be able to facilitate a request if the course is rescheduled in the same season. However, if you are unable to attend the date you booked in the same season, you will need to cancel your booking.

Cancellation will only be effective from the date that the cancellation is received in writing by email. Cancellation charges will be payable as previously stated.

Insurance

We recommend that all guests have appropriate travel insurance that covers the nature of the activity being undertaken on the booked course and protects them from cancellation.

For the Southern Blues 600, you may need specialist insurance that covers the location and medical evacuation. In the case of a medical problem arising during the expedition, which results in costs for evacuation, including, but not limited to, the use of aircraft or repatriation, responsibility for payment of these costs belongs solely with you. You must provide proof of adequate insurance or have other arrangements in place to cover costs associated with medical

care and evacuation. Please refer to your experience and determine the amount of coverage you will need. Responsibility for all fees is yours, and you will be billed for such costs in the USA.