

Running The Northwest

Spotlight: Palouse Country - Moscow, Idaho



University town receives high marks for its running scene.

Article and photos by Craig Romano

There's nothing quite like the Palouse, nothing so uniquely Northwest. Tucked in Washington's southeast corner and spilling over into Idaho's panhandle, the Palouse is a region of rolling golden hills and deep basalt canyons hiding snaking rivers. It's a region dotted with quaint villages, historic hamlets, and towns both thriving and dying. It's a land of fertile soils; one of the largest wheat and lentil growing areas in the world. And the Palouse is home to two major Northwest universities, Washington State and the University of Idaho. The two towns that house them, Pullman and Moscow are a mere eight miles apart. They compliment each other, but have their own flavor as well.

Both Moscow and Pullman are great places to study, live - and run! And we'll run both of them right here in *Running the Northwest*, first Moscow and then

next month, Pullman. So lace up those shoes for we're heading for the Palouse.

Moscow sits at a slightly higher elevation than Pullman. It receives a little more rain and has a few more trees growing around its environs. With its cityscape dominated by a university- and surrounded by a landscape of farms and fields yielding to low-lying forested ridges, Moscow looks like it could be in the Champlain Valley of Vermont. Not only does this city of 20,000 look like a small northeastern college town, it feels like one too.

The University of Idaho has a student enrollment hovering around 12,000, making Moscow quite diverse and culturally enriched for a small city. The university is at the center of this community, and not surprisingly, at the center of Moscow's running community as well. The University of Idaho is where many members of the Palouse Road Runners work and where they often meet for daily runs. Drawing on runners from Pullman as well, the Palouse Road Runners may very well be the Northwest's most academic running club. But holding a degree or not, this club is open to all runners, locals and visitors.

Palouse Road Runners having fun. The U. of Idaho campus is right ahead, Moscow Mountain and a Palouse tableau right behind.

The club maintains an excellent website (www.palouseroadrunners.org) to not only connect you with local runners, but also to give you the full scoop on the local running scene. Founded in 1973, Palouse Road Runners currently boasts around 100 members. They sponsor five top-notch area races and provide assistance and advice to many other events in the vicinity.

From May through August (summer break) the club meets everyday at the University for a midday run. Last May I was invited by club president Alan Place and club publicist Ron Robberecht to come run with the group. It was a great opportunity to meet a handful of club members and a great way to be shown one of their favorite running routes.

The club has developed a dozen running routes and thanks to Team DeMoura (a club sub-group) has mapped them all out and posted them on their website. The routes with such colorful and intriguing names as; Intergalactic,



Along the route of the Sheep Pens run.

Kurdistan, North Polk, Via Malodorosa, Geriatric, and Sheep Pens are as varied as their titles. My first club run was on the “Sheep Pens” route.

This 5.25-mile run goes through the U

institution of higher learning, head to WSU to put in a few miles. But don’t drive there – run instead. Starting from Perimeter Drive on the U of I campus is the Bill Chipman Rail-trail. This paved

of I Sheep Farm. It’s not a baaaa-d run at all, and one ewe should check out. It goes over a series of open hills that are a sheer delight to run. But there’s no wool pulled over your eyes as far as the views are concerned. Moscow Mountain, and Washington’s Kamiak and Steptoe Buttes stand out among the flock of outlying landforms. (Editor’s note: *groan*).

Check out the club’s website for all of the details on how to do this and other runs. But by all means seek out your own routes too. The University Campus itself has 320 acres which makes for great running. And if you tire of looping around this Idaho

path plows for eight miles along Paradise Creek going all the way to Pullman. It offers a superb run, complete with classic Palouse country scenery.

Heading east from the Chipman Trail is another great rail-trail, the Paradise Trail. This short paved path traverses the U of I and currently ends in Ghormley Park. It will eventually be linked to the Latah Trail, a new rail-trail currently being developed to connect Moscow with the tiny community of Troy. The Latah Trail is nearing completion, with sections in Troy and outside of Moscow paved and ready to be run. The entire trail is 11 miles long and when combined with the Chipman and Paradise trails it will provide for over 20 miles of car-free running. The Palouse Road Runners has been extremely active in helping make this trail a reality. Club Board Member Nancy Chaney is also on the board of directors for the Latah Trail Foundation (www.latahtrailfoundation.org).

If after running these great trails you’re still looking for more, there’s one other trail in town worth checking out. In Moscow’s northeast corner you’ll find Mountain View Park. Aside from delivering a great view of Moscow Mountain, a small paved trail takes off from the park running alongside a pretty creek and delivering you to the small but picturesque Hordemann Pond in Kiwanis Park. The neighboring quiet streets allow for you to extend your run in this part of town.

Racing in Palouse Country

Are you interested in a race or two? Over a score of events are staged in town each year courtesy of the Palouse

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Road Runners and various athletic clubs/organizations from the university. The Road Runners sponsor five major races, three in Washington (we'll talk about those events next month). Moscow events include September's Moscow Mountain Madness and October's Women's Run.

The Moscow Mountain Madness Run is the club's toughest event and a rather unorthodox race. First held in 1978, the race was resurrected in 1991 after a four-year hiatus. This event allows mountain bikers to participate too - the field is small so fighting for turf is not a problem. Fighting *the* turf is tough though! The race goes over the long ridge of Moscow Mountain. Primarily utilizing dirt roads, the course climbs over 2,400-feet and drops 1,500 feet. It's a 12-mile odyssey with lots of views and pretty forest along the way. Last year 26 runners and 44 bicyclists completed the race. The winning running time: a sizzling 1.19.16 belonged to Wayne Bunce.

The Women's Run is held in October in conjunction with the Women's Wellness Forum. The Palouse Road Runners have been sponsoring this race for 14 years. Race director Nancy Chaney is



The Bill Chipman Trail from Pullman runs right behind this entrance arch.

also the Wellness event coordinator. The Race's 5K course is flat and fast on roads near Mountain View Park. There are lots of prizes, complimentary massages, exhibits and vendors on hand. The event

is for women only, but men participate by helping with registration, water stations, and the post race activities. Last year's race saw 39 participants.

Physical education students at the

University of Idaho actually earn credit for participating in this event. "One of the most exciting things we are doing here at the U of I is combing forces with the Palouse Road Runners," states Peg Hamlett of the Wellness Program. "We're allowing students to earn University Credit for participating in races."

The University of Idaho hosts a race each April: the Spring Forward 5K, now in its 8th year. The University's Triathlon Club also hosts events throughout the year. For info contact the club at <http://stuorgs.uidaho.edu/~triclub/>. Mike Collins, Head XC/Track Coach at Lewis and Clark State College in nearby Lewiston (28 miles to the south) is always staging races open to the public. Check out their race schedule

at http://www.lcsc.edu/crosscountry/2005%20Race%20Sites/2005_races_main_page.htm

The hamlet of Genesee (15 miles south) is home to a fun little race, the Genesee Cow Creek Run. The 2 and 5-mile event is part of the annual Genesee Community Days festival (208-285-1621 or 208-285-1498) held in early June. The race primarily utilizes dirt roads in this town of 750 residents.

Race forms and information about all of these events can be found on the Palouse Road Runners website. Race forms can also be found at Tri-State Sporting goods store (1104 Pullman Road, <http://www.t-state.com/Moscowl.htm>). Tri-State is also your

source in the Palouse for running shoes and gear.

Now, if you're coming to Moscow from out of town, you'll need a place to stay. The AmeriHost Inn is a personal favorite. Located right on SR 8 across from the Chipman Trail, the inn is also within a 5-minute jog to the university. After your run you'll need to "recarb," and there are some great places to eat in this town. One of the finest restaurants in the region, one that is continuously acclaimed is the Red Door on Main Street. One of my favorites is Basilio's Italian Ristorante on 4th Street.

The Palouse is a great place to go for a running getaway. Enjoy Moscow-next month we'll continue our tour of the region in Pullman. •