

TRAIL FACTOR Sunday Run Report 2-8-2009

[Hamilton Mt/Hardy Creek 7.5 mile loop](#)

Trail Factor drove out to Beacon Rock State park and tackled the Hamilton Mt. 7.5 mile loop. This is a challenging loop on the WA side of the Columbia River Gorge that climbs 2,100 ft in the first 3.5 miles.

We had a great crew show up for today's run. Not only did we have some Trail Factor return runners like Andrea, Reed, and Jeff, but we also had some new Trail Factor runners that Mallory brought along.

Kristin and Allie were new to TF, but certainly not new to running. They both run competitively and were up for the big climb challenge.

To round out the group Shawn, Jessi and Mallory were also out. We were 8 runners strong and ready to get our hearts pumping.

[Hamilton Mt. trail](#) is located about 41 miles away from Portland, OR just off of Hwy 14. It takes about 40 minutes to reach the parking lot located on the north side of Hwy 14. It was very nice to get to the parking lot and see that there were restrooms at the trail head. Especially after driving for about 40 minutes and having just previously finished some café.

We all piled out of our cars and were greeted by some very cold and windy condition, but the sun was shining and we knew the views were going to be spectacular.

We had a quick TF trail brief, handed out some maps and we were off.

This trail starts climbing right away. There really is no warm up phase. Even though this is fairly typical for Gorge trails, I still never get used to it. I always seem to go anaerobic before settling into a nice running rhythm. The trail has amazing footing for most of the way, so getting into this rhythm is a bit easier than on technical trail.

We climbed for about 1.6 miles before reaching our first trail juncture and a sign that directs you to the summit of Hamilton Mt. One arrow points to one trail that they claim is difficult and the other arrow points you to another trail, which they claim is most difficult. We chose the most difficult route.

I prefer to run up the steep stuff instead of down the steep stuff. Not to mention, the most difficult side of the trail has some pretty technical switchbacks, which would not be as much fun on the downhill.

The most difficult side was certainly hard. It is pretty relentless for most of the first mile and then offers up some rocky switchbacks. Once you get through this switchback section, the trail starts to give in slightly. It eventually dumps you onto an awesome ridge with an amazing south side view of the Gorge. Since the ridge faces south, the sun was beaming in our eyes and warming up our bodies as the wind pelted our jackets. We had just climbed to over 2,400 ft in just over 3.5 miles and it was awesome.

The trail then begins to follow a ridgeline, which on this day was covered in snow. Luckily, there were footprints the whole way marking the trail, and the snowy section only lasted .75 miles.

We were finished with the snowy section and now running on trail. At this point, the trail leads you to a sign that directs you down a jeep road toward the picnic area. The route finally started heading downhill.

The jeep road section was a great time. The footing was fair to good, with some loose rocks. It really allowed you to pick up some speed. This section of jeep road is pretty short and only lasted about .75 miles before intersecting our next trail juncture.

The last on the new trail that we ran on was named Hardy Creek trail and it was great footing, with only one obstacle. It was a small tree, which each and every TF runner hurdled with ease. This trail was only about a mile long and eventually dumps you back into Hamilton Mt. Trail, which is the original trail that we started on.

Everyone picked up the gear that they dropped off at the trail juncture during the ascent and we continued on back to our cars. It would only take us about 10-12 minutes to descend the last 1.6 miles of trail past all of the beautiful waterfalls. We were finished running and we all felt great.

Originally when I sent out our route plan and had stated that the loop was 9.4 miles. I used a resource that is typically accurate to plan the run, but unfortunately it was wrong. I owe everyone an apology for claiming that it was 9.4, when in reality the loop was 7.5 miles. Next time I won't question Andreas Garmin.

The total ascent time for Jeff and I to summit the 3.5 miles was 36 minutes and we finished the 7.5 mile loop in less than 1:15. Everyone else finished the loop in less than 1:30. It was a great day of running and we were happy to be done. We were all hungry, so we went across the river and ate some breakfast at the Charburger.

If you are interested in joining us for a future TRAIL FACTOR run, visit our website and subscribe to our e-forum. www.trailfactor.com

Shawn Bostad