

#76 Wilson Creek-Mini Moab Loop

Location: Owyhee Mountains, south of Nampa

Difficulty: Epic

Distance: 15.6 miles

Tread: Dirt road, singletrack

Hiking time: 7 hours

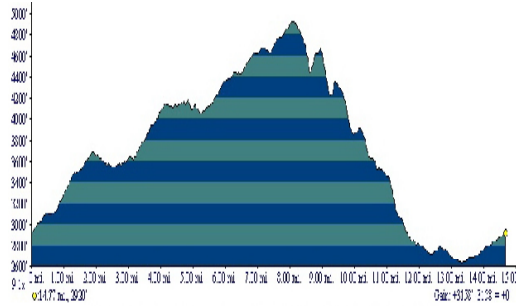
Running time: 2:45

Vertical gain/loss: 3,158 feet

Watch out for: Wildflowers, wildlife

Water: Seasonal in Wilson Creek; otherwise it's a dry route.

Season: April-November



Getting there: From downtown Boise, hook up with I-184 west and head for Nampa. Take the Franklin Road exit (City Center) in Nampa, and turn left. Follow Franklin to the intersection with 11th Street. Turn right and take 11th into downtown Nampa. Follow signs for Idaho 45 south. Take ID 45 to Walters Ferry at the Snake River and turn right on ID 78, heading for Marsing. In a couple miles, turn left on Wilson Creek Road. Proceed up the road to a BLM parking area on the left. The hike/run starts here.

General notes: This is a major hike/run in the foothills of the Owyhee Mountains, about 45 minutes from Boise. Get an early start and power-walk it or run it before it gets too hot. The trail weaves through many cool rock formations on the way over the saddle of Wilson Butte, including a number of hoodoos and spires. The downhill turns unexpectedly into some steep uphill sections, and it also features major large rocks, so footing can be tricky. Bring your camera, plenty of water and a lunch.

Directions: To begin, climb up the Wilson Creek road. It starts out at a steep pitch and then mellows a bit at mile 2. At mile 3.3, ignore the two-track on the left, cross the creek and climb. At mile 4.5, ignore the two-track on the right and go straight. At mile 6.5, turn left on a two-track primitive road and climb to the Wilson Creek saddle (mile 9). Climb to the peak if you wish. Find a lunch spot. Continuing on, the trail drops down and then climbs at a steep pitch against the mountain. Drop down a bit, and you'll come to a three-way junction. Take the middle route, a steep dropoff. Follow the 4WD road as it bounds down the mountain like a mountain goat. At mile 14, you'll drop out of the rocks onto a sandy Pigeon Creek Road. Watch for a two-track on the left, Trail #400. Go west and climb through the sagebrush to a small saddle. Here you can take #300 or #400 over to Wilson Creek Road, finishing at mile 15.6.

The Hike: It's a long hike, but if you've got the whole day, it's a great tour.

The Run: This is a tough running route, more than a half-marathon in distance and more than 3,000 feet of vertical gain. The pain factor is going to be high. – SS

