

Nature Viewing - Wildflowers

Skyline Road/F.S. Road 31

Forest: Umatilla National Forest

District: Walla Walla Ranger District

Description: The Skyline Road provides nearly 40 miles of easily accessible wildflower viewing along the crest of the Blue Mountains between Pendleton and La Grande, Oregon. This road, maintained by the Umatilla National Forest, showcases the dramatic landscapes of the central Blues at any time of year. In a typical summer, the 5000 foot elevation roadsides burst into spectacular bloom in early June and the show continues until about mid-July.



Viewing Information: Highlights of the wildflower extravaganza include the early July flowering of Blue Mountain penstemon, growing in large but tidy clumps for miles along the road shoulders. Interspersed with the deep purple-blue of the penstemon are yellow buckwheats and cinquefoil, and the dramatic reds of Indian paintbrush and scarlet gilia.

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In the area around High Ridge Lookout the magnificently large and brilliantly yellow Sabin's lupine dominates forest openings. In early to mid June, a drive along the summit road will reveal numerous "scab flats" in full bloom. Don't be fooled by their unappealing name! Although these meadow-like openings present a harsh dry environment for plants by mid summer, just after snowmelt they appear as gardens covered with delicate, low growing wildflowers in a variety of colors.



Directions: The Skyline Road (marked as Forest Service Road #31 on the Umatilla NF recreation map) provides a scenic loop route that connects State Highway 204 about 10 miles southeast of Tollgate, Oregon to Interstate 84 at the Mount Emily exit, about 40 miles east of Pendleton. The northern end of the road is paved to Ruckel Junction. South of that, the well-maintained gravel road is easily passable by passenger cars. More detailed directions can be obtained from the Umatilla National Forest at (541) 278-3716.