

## Riding High: Glass off with tandem paragliding

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There are plenty of extreme sports for adrenaline junkies in Central Oregon. But those who really want to fly should consider taking a ride with U Fly Tandem, a local paragliding business in Bend.

Lisa Darsonval started U Fly in 2010 as a way to supplement her income.

"I love paragliding and wanted to share it with other people," she said. "We thought, 'What would we want to do to bring in some additional income?' And this seemed like something fun to do."

Tandem paragliding means that you share a parachute with an experienced pilot, so there is no need for long, time-intensive instructive courses. It also makes the rides very customizable—rides can be mellow or more adventurous depending on what the rider wants, Darsonval said. "Each person has their own harness which is like a cozy comfortable seat attached together by a spreader bar," Darsonval said. "This is attached to the paraglider wing by lines which are called risers."

Most flights take off from Pine Mountain, Darsonval said. There is some hiking involved to get to the take off site, and then people will be in the air somewhere between 20 minutes and an hour.

Because Bend is part of the High Desert, the air quality is different than in other places where paragliding is typically done, Darsonval said.

"Something unique to desert flying is a phenomenon called 'Glass Off,' Darsonval said. "During the day the sun heats the desert floor, and as evening approaches and the air cools, the ground releases this heated air, which can be smooth as glass. This means there is lift everywhere without turbulence."

U Fly Tandem tries to schedule their flights to take advantage of this, so most flights happen a few hours before sunset.

"Lisa and I had an amazing flight," said Gail Lovelace, who wanted to try paragliding to see how different it was from skydiving. "You head up instead of down, which completely bewildered me at first. But we got to get close to the trees and other objects you have to stay away from in skydiving, and it was a really cool, peaceful experience."



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