

# Central Oregon High ART

Jared Leisek's high-flying videos capture Central Oregon from a perspective few have experienced.

by Debbie Renton / for The Bulletin Special Projects

Film stills courtesy  
of Jared Leisek

From the harness of his powered paraglider, Jared Leisek sees the beauty of Central Oregon like most can only imagine.

It's a good thing he flies with the purpose of sharing what he observes, as evidenced by the stunning and sharply edited videos he's posted on YouTube during the past year.

Leisek's passion for powered paragliding began in 2005 after his brother, Byron, arrived at his Redmond home following a tandem ride with friends. Byron's overwhelming enthusiasm rubbed off on his older brother.

"We ordered the gear that very same night," Leisek said.

Many blunders ensued as the brothers attempted to learn the sport on their own, which they are quick to point out was a huge mistake.

"We had lots of mishaps in the beginning

that led us to get proper training and equipment," said Leisek, whose brother has started a powered paragliding school. (See the sidebar on page 9.)

Videos — found at [www.youtube.com/leisek](http://www.youtube.com/leisek) — feature favorite Central Oregon landmarks such as Monkey Face at Smith Rock State Park, the Crooked River, Bend's Drake Park, and Tumalo Falls. He gives viewers a 107-mile tour of the Deschutes River from Terrebonne to Tygh Valley, and he takes them over the Cascade mountain range.

His first posted video was recognized as GoPro's Video of the Day, but Leisek didn't let

that get to his head as he continued to push himself in both his flying and filming.

"We are our own worst critic," he said. "I always ask myself, 'How can I make something that is better than someone else to get people to watch?'"

The paraglider that Leisek rides is operated by a gas-powered, two-stroke motor hooked up to a propeller that creates the thrust. Depending on wind conditions, he launches his powered paraglider using a forward technique or a



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reverse technique.

A new wing Leisek purchased gives him several advantages, including stability, and the ability to pull tighter 360s while still gaining altitude as he films.

"I'm on a really small wing," he said. "A lot of the wings are going to be in the 24- to 28-meter range. Mine is between 19 and 21 meters."

Leisek's camera of choice is the GoPro HD Hero2, which he creatively mounts on his foot by taking the vented helmet mount and replacing the webbing with Velcro. This keeps the camera from capturing lines that run from his harness to his wing, obstructing views of snow-capped mountains and crystal blue lakes and streams. It also allows Leisek to maintain his upper body's focus on his wing controls, while his lower body captures video.

With images in hand, Leisek turns to editing with Final Cut Pro X, a program downloaded on his MacBook Pro. Using Conform Speed effects, he is able to drop the speed to 40 percent, resulting in dramatic slow motion shots. This editing process can take hours.

"From the moment I get home, it takes me roughly six hours for a two-minute video," he said.

Leisek has launched a company called Snip Film Productions ([www.snipfilms.com](http://www.snipfilms.com)).

These short videos make a huge impact. This is especially true for a video produced for the

Deschutes County Fair and Expo Center that gives a bird's eye view of the facility and its buildings.

Roxie Thornton-Todoroff, director of sales and marketing with the fair, said fair leaders plan to utilize the video on its web site and link it with proposals to possible vendors.

"It's phenomenal," Thornton-Todoroff said of the video. "It shows what we offer, how large our facility is, how diverse our facility is."

While Leisek's videos focus mainly on Central Oregon, he is fond of venturing and finding new places to film, which led him to Montana in July. As he flew and filmed north of Missoula, a prototype throttle he was using malfunctioned, forcing him to land in a remote area 30 miles from town.

Leisek had the skills to return safely, but as he took in the beauty surrounding him, he decided to stay.

"I could have flown, but thought I'm up here now, and I'm going to make the most of it," Leisek recalled.

The result of this adventure is captured in a 35-minute video featuring Leisek climbing glaciers,



swimming in and drinking their water, camping in a hollowed-out log, and a failed attempt at starting a fire “castaway style.”

Song selection is an important part of Leisek’s editing technique. This is particularly true in his Broken Top video, whose song begins with the opening line, “I am the sun, and the air,” timed in perfection as Leisek floats over a dramatic peak bathed in sunlight.

His favorite playlist song when flying is Youth Group’s version of “Forever Young.”

“I always want to be forever young,” Leisek said, explaining his preference for the song. “I want to always enjoy life. I want to look back and say I really had a good time.”

Photo below by Christopher L. Ingersoll



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# TEAM FLY HALO

Learn-by-doing power paragliders gain knowledge the hard way when they start their passion for the sport, destroying thousands of dollars in equipment and suffering numerous injuries. (Just ask Jared Leisek about the finger he had reattached.)

These experiences led Byron Leisek to launch a school with fellow paraglider Shane Denherder, a full-time paragliding instructor from Utah. Denherder is a certified powered paragliding instructor, certified tandem instructor as well as certified parachute rigger through the U.S. Powered Paragliding Association and U.S. Hangliding and Paragliding Association. Byron also is certified through USHPA, and is studying for his instructor certificate.

The school, known as Team Fly Halo, conducts training on the Oregon Coast where the stable airflow allows for better conditions when teaching glider control.

Classes include lessons on high-altitude launches and flights, mountain flying, ridge soaring and low flying techniques. Most important in training is master kiting and glider control training.

“We spend 35 to 36 hours teaching students to control their wing,” Byron said. Before students even take to the air, instructors insist that they remain within an inch of control when handling their wing.

Team Fly Halo’s courses can last up to 10 hours a day. “We push them as far as they can go,” Denherder said. This includes up to 1½ hours a day in what’s known as “ground school,” where instructors take students through courses on mechanics, aerodynamics, topography, weather and flight ethics.

Instruction lasts a minimum of seven days to ensure that student pilots are safe enough to take up the sport, one that currently is loosely regulated as long as those participating uphold themselves to high standards.

To learn more about Team Fly Halo training camps, visit [www.flyhalo.com](http://www.flyhalo.com).