



READY, SET, GORGE!

----- ReadySetGorge.com

MAKE IT FUN. MAKE IT SAFE.

Travel tips for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area



Balsamorhiza, by Debbie Asakawa



Lyle Cherry Orchard, by Debbie Asakawa



Lyle Cherry Orchard, by Debbie Asakawa



Catherine Creek, by David Dent

THE NATION'S LARGEST BI-STATE SCENIC AREA IS A SITE TO SEE - AND A PLACE WORTH PROTECTING

Established in 1986, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area protects nearly 293,000 acres of trails, forest, waterfalls, parks and historical sites within this spectacular river canyon.

A unique working landscape of public and private lands, the National Scenic Area is a world-renowned destination as well as a place that many people call home. As the Gorge becomes an increasingly popular place to recreate, many of the area's trails, parks, picnic areas and natural resources are becoming threatened by overuse.

When planning your visit the Gorge, take **READY, SET, GORGE** to heart.

- Plan your route ahead of time to avoid crowds.
- Bring what you need and research road, trail and weather conditions.
- Take steps to help protect the Gorge so that future visitors can enjoy it, too.



GET READY



The Historic Columbia River Highway and State Trail (Route 30) provides access to many unique features on the Oregon side of the Columbia River Gorge. Visitation often exceeds the automobile capacity along and at parking areas on the Historic Highway and on I-84, including at Multnomah Falls, Angel's Rest and Wahkeena Falls. Popular trail heads along Highway 14 in Washington often experience over-crowding.

When planning your visit to the Gorge, follow these tips to avoid crowds. You'll be rewarded with stunning views and solitude.



Steigerwald Lake, by Debbie Asakawa

GO EARLY

Aim to start your hike no later than 10 a.m. to avoid congestion at popular trail heads.

LOCAL PICK: STEIGERWALD LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Listen to the songbirds while taking an early morning stroll at Steigerwald Lake. This flat, one-mile hike takes you to the edge of the Columbia River, providing great views.

[More Info.](#)



Columbia Hills SP, by Debbie Asakawa

GO EAST

Hike the less popular but equally beautiful hikes in the eastern Gorge.

Or, consider doing your trip in reverse order (starting in The Dalles and driving west).

LOCAL PICK: COLUMBIA HILLS STATE PARK

With 12.5 miles of hiking trails, rock climbing, swimming and more, Columbia Hills State Park is a secret gem at the eastern end of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

[More info.](#)



She Who Watches, Columbia Hills State Park by Michael J Horodyski



Weldon Wagon Trail, by Micheal Drewry

GO NORTH

When visiting the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area, consider checking out the Washington side of the Gorge. Note, some Washington trails, including Cape Horn, Beacon Rock, Dog Mountain and Catherine Creek, are as popular as Oregon's Waterfall Corridor. Go early or go farther east to avoid crowds.

LOCAL PICK: WELDON WAGON TRAIL

Enjoy a hike or mountain bike ride on this early 1900s road built to transport apples from the upper farmlands to the White Salmon River. This 2.5-mile out-and-back trail offers rolling hills, wildflowers and an oak grove. [More info.](#)



Dry Creek Falls, by Yeng Tang

GO MIDWEEK

The weekends are the busiest times to visit the Gorge, especially between April and October. You'll avoid crowds if you can visit mid-week (Tuesday through Thursday). Even better, consider planning a midweek multi-day stay to check out the towns, museums, wineries and other attractions throughout the Scenic Area.

LOCAL PICK: DRY CREEK FALLS

This often-overlooked trail near Cascade Locks follows a section of the Pacific Crest Trail to the base of a 230-foot waterfall that plunges into a basalt amphitheater. [More Info.](#)

GET SET



Wahclella Falls, by Tom Kloster

1. Choose trails that meet your group's comfort and fitness level.

When choosing a hiking trail, consider the following:

- Total distance (round-trip).
- Total elevation gain and loss (generally speaking, the more elevation gain, the more strenuous it will be).
- Trail conditions (read online trail descriptions and trip reports to determine any natural hazards).
- To view trail alerts, go to gorgefriends.org/trail-alerts.

LOCAL PICK: WAHCLELLA FALLS

The Multnomah Falls Trail gains 600 feet in less than a mile. It's a very strenuous hike. If you are looking for a short but beautiful hike to a waterfall without the strenuous climb, consider the Wahclella Falls Loop Trail. It's also one mile, but gains only 300 feet.



2. Research road, trail and weather conditions.

ROADS: For up-to-date road conditions, visit these mobile-friendly websites:

- Oregon - tripcheck.org
- Washington - wsdot.com/traffic

TRAILS: Storms and other factors can close trails or make them hazardous or unpleasant to hike. Always check at least two sources before deciding on a trail. We recommend the following information sites:

- fs.usda.gov/activity/crgnsa/recreation/hiking
- gorgefriends.org/trails
- oregonhikers.org/tools/hikefinder/hike_finder.php

WEATHER: In any area, weather can change rapidly and with very little warning. The weather in the western Gorge is often very different from the weather in the eastern Gorge. Check these weather sites before you leave:

- [NOAA forecast for western Gorge- tinyurl.com/n282tgf](https://tinyurl.com/n282tgf)
- [NOAA forecast for the eastern Gorge - tinyurl.com/mm35n9b](https://tinyurl.com/mm35n9b)



Hamilton Mountain, by Peter C Hamilton



Western Gorge, by Debbie Asakawa

3. Tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be home.

1. Call or send a text message to a close friend or family member notifying them:
 - Where you are going hiking (the area and trail number).
 - When you plan to leave and return.
 - Who you are going hiking with.
2. Send that same person another message once you are back to your car.
3. Make sure that person knows what to do if you don't return safely.
 - Call the person or people you were hiking with (in case your phone's battery died).
 - If your friend or family member can't reach you or anyone in your party, he or she should notify the local sheriffs office.



Jonathan Graca

4. Research recreation use fees and bring cash to pay them.

Recreation fees help pay for trail maintenance and amenities, such as restrooms and picnic areas, at trailheads. Not all sites in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area require passes. Some sites, however, require one of three passes: Northwest Forest Pass, Washington Discover Pass or an Oregon State Parks Pass.

For more info, visit gorgefriends.org/passes.



Lyle Cherry Orchard, by Debbie Asakawa



Klickitat Trail, by Peter Cornelison



Tom McCall Point, by Debbie Asakawa

GET SET (10 ESSENTIALS)

1. Appropriate footwear. Wear boots or tennis shoes. Do not wear flip-flops or shoes with heels.
2. Printed map and compass. We recommend the National Geographic Columbia River Gorge trails map.
3. Extra water and chlorine dioxide tablets or other method for purifying water.
4. Extra food. Energy bars and trail mix are good sources of protein and calories.
5. Rain and wind gear, and extra clothing. Hypothermia is the #1 killer of outdoor enthusiasts. Always carry a windproof layer and a rain jacket (even in the summertime). Fast-drying, wicking fabrics such as polyester or wool are best. Avoid cotton.
6. Emergency items: Firestarter and matches, headlamp, and a whistle. A warm fire can keep you warm if you end up lost or hurt. A headlamp will come in handy if you are trying to read your map or follow a trail at dusk. The whistle is a good tool for signaling distress (use 3 short bursts).
7. First aid kit. Many outdoor stores sell compact hiker's first-aid kits. If you hike often, consider taking a first-aid class.
8. Knife or multi-purpose tool.
9. Sunscreen, a sun hat and sunglasses. These items will help you avoid sunburn.
10. Backpack. A comfortable pack will help you carry all the essentials, as well as litter you might find along the trail.

+ If you're hiking with dogs, please remember to pack a leash and plastic bags for your dog's waste.

Source: americanhiking.org, gorgefriends.org/essentials

BEFORE heading out, keep these additional tips in mind just in case you do get lost or injured.

- Consider hiring a local guide for challenging activities.
- If going on a long hike, carry an emergency shelter and/or emergency blanket.
- If you forget a map and compass, take a photo of the map posted at most trailheads.
- Cell service in the Gorge is spotty. If you download maps onto your phone, don't plan to rely solely on your phone for navigation.
- **IF YOU GET LOST OR INJURE YOURSELF, CALL 911.** If the injured person can't move, send someone for help. Depending upon your location you may be able to get cell service by moving up or down the trail or up or down one of the geographical features close to you or hiking out to a trailhead.

GORGE!

Help protect the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, so that future visitors can enjoy it, too.

10 WAYS TO LOVE THE GORGE - A HELPFUL GUIDE

More than 2 million people visit the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area annually. We all have an obligation to help ensure that future visitors to the Columbia River Gorge can experience the same scenic beauty and world-class trails that we're able to enjoy today.

Help protect the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area so that future visitors can enjoy it, too.

1. Protect vital habitat by using only authorized trails and campsites.

- Step aside when you encounter other users on the trail to avoid widening the trail.
- Follow good trail etiquette:
 - » Motorized users always yield (pull over) to non-motorized users.
 - » Hikers, runners and mountain bikers should always yield (step aside) to horses.
 - » Mountain bikers should always yield (step aside) to hikers and runners.
 - » Downhill traffic should yield (step aside) to uphill traffic. If you have recyclable materials, deposit them in appropriate containers.

2. Leave no trace by packing out your trash and picking up litter you find.

- Carry a trash bag and pick up any litter you find.
- If you pack a lunch or snacks, hold onto wrappers and other garbage (including food waste). Dispose of it at trailhead garbage cans.
- If you have recyclable materials, deposit them in appropriate containers.

3. Stop the spread of invasive species by using a boot brush, available at many trailheads.

- Noxious weeds are overly aggressive and difficult to manage, and can be carriers or hosts of serious insects or diseases. In most cases, noxious weeds have a direct, negative impact on native plants. Historically, humans have been the chief vector (transmitter) of noxious plants.
- The U.S. Forest Service, Friends of the Columbia Gorge and the Skamania County Weed Board have installed boot brushes at numerous trailheads around the Gorge. Please check them out and use them before and after using the trail.



by Becky Brun



Boot brush, by Kate Lindberg

4. Protect wildlife by keeping dogs on leash and picking up their waste.

- Most trails within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area require that dogs be on a six-foot leash at all times when in developed recreation areas and on interpretive trails. If leashes are required, trail signs will say so.
- Dog waste can spread disease to wild animals and contaminate water. Picking up dog waste is common courtesy to campers, picnickers and hikers.

5. Be courteous. Don't block parking spots or private driveways, and don't park in unauthorized spaces.

- Please be mindful of local landowners. Parking in private driveways is considered trespassing.
- When parking in designated parking lots, please be sure to park between the painted lines. Otherwise, you might take up two parking spots.

6. Reduce carbon emissions and congestion by carpooling, taking a shuttle or biking.

- Take a car-free trip by arranging to take one of many public-private shuttles.
 - » columbiagorgeexpress.com
 - » gorgefriends.org/hikebybus
 - » gorgetranslink.com
 - » graylineofportland.com
- Explore the Columbia River Gorge Historic Highway and State Trail by bicycle.

MAPS: Historic Columbia River Highway Bike Map

- » [Historic Columbia River Highway Bike Map](#)
- » [Columbia River Gorge Bike Map](#)
- » Map with [elevation profiles](#) and a mile-by-mile description for biking the Historic Columbia River Highway and I-84 freeway.
- » [Map for getting from the Gresham MAX station to the Historic Columbia River Highway.](#)

ITINERARIES: Travel Oregon's bike itineraries.

- » Travel Oregon's [bike itineraries](#).
- » Take a guided tour with [Portland Pedal Bike Tours](#).



7. Respect local cultures, practices and resources.

- Resist taking anything with you (rocks, memorabilia, plants, etc.).
- Consider hiring a guide to learn more about the natural and cultural history of the region.
- Research local customs, social norms, and environmental issues before you arrive, especially when visiting tribal resource areas.

8. Help Gorge businesses prosper by shopping locally.

- Each of the 13 communities in the Columbia River Gorge have their own unique character and an eclectic mix of stores, galleries, hotels, restaurants, breweries, wineries, parks, museums and more. For travel ideas, go to visitcolumbiarivergorge.com.
- To learn more about the benefits of shopping locally and find out how to get deals with local, sustainable businesses, visit gorgeowned.org/local.

9. Donate time and skills to local nonprofits and agencies.

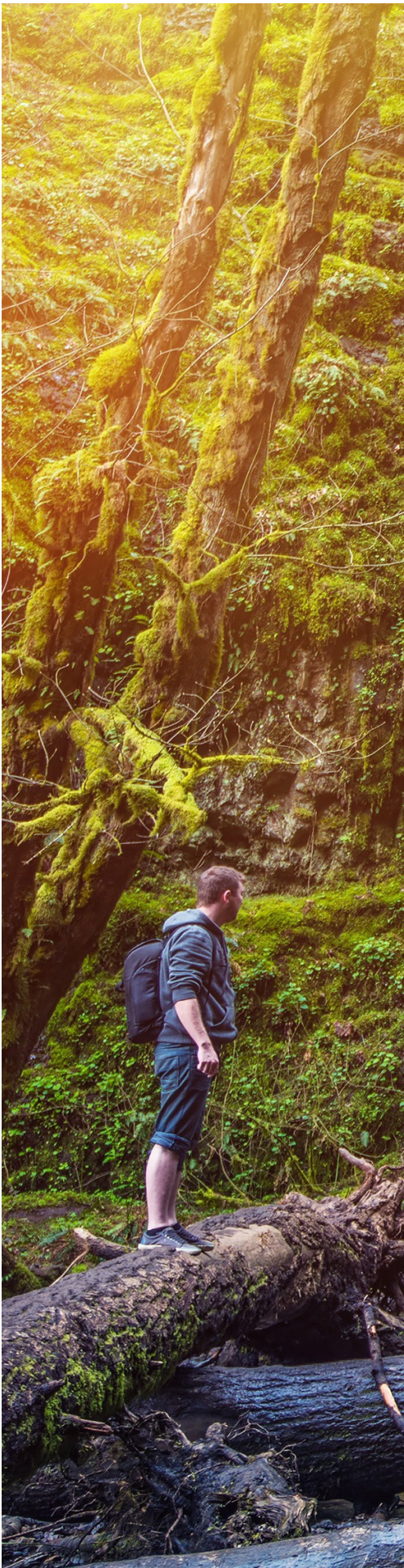
Many local nonprofits host volunteer work parties and events to help you learn more about the environmental issues facing the region. Here's a sampling:

- Cape Horn Conservancy
- Columbia Riverkeeper
- Columbia Gorge Windsurfing Association
- Crag Rats
- Friends of the Columbia Gorge
- Hood River Area Trail Stewards
- Klickitat Trail Conservancy
- Mount Hood National Forest – Route 44 Trail Crew
- Mazamas
- Pacific Crest Trail Association
- Portland Mountain Rescue
- Trailkeepers of Oregon
- Washington Trails Alliance
- Washington Trails Association

10. Support maintenance and conservation efforts by paying usage fees.

Recreation usage fees help pay to manage services at parks and trailheads throughout the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

- Remember to bring cash or check to pay usage fees.
- For information about which fees are required at different locations, go to gorgefriends.org/passes.



RESOURCES

TRAVEL INFO

- traveloregon.com
- visitcolumbiarivergorge.com
- hoodriver.org
- skamania.org
- thedalleschamber.com
- mtadamschamber.com
- westcolumbiachamber.com

ROAD CONDITIONS

- Oregon - tripcheck.org
- Washington - wsdot.com/traffic

TRAIL RECREATION FEES

- gorgefriends.org/passes

SCENIC AREA INFO

- fs.usda.gov/crgnsa

HIKING INFO

- gorgefriends.org
- fs.usda.gov/crgnsa

SHOP LOCAL

- gorgeowned.org

EMERGENCIES

In the case of an emergency, call 911. Explain the nature of your emergency and your location. They will dispatch the appropriate authorities and/or volunteers to assist with search and rescue.

TRANSIT INFO

COLUMBIA GORGE EXPRESS – From Portland’s Gateway Transit Center (serviced by Tri-Met) to Multnomah Falls and Rooster Rock State Park. The bus runs Fridays-Sundays + federal holidays, during the summer months from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m., leaving Gateway Transit Center every 30 minutes. The air-conditioned Columbia Gorge Express is equipped with wifi and bicycle racks. A round-trip ticket from Gateway to Multnomah Falls is \$5. [More info.](#)

PORTLAND GREY LINE — Stops at Crown Point, Multnomah Falls, Oneonta Gorge, Horsetail Falls, and Bonneville Lock and Dam. The bus leaves daily from Pioneer Courthouse Square at 8:45 a.m.; weekends during the shoulder season). [More info.](#)

WEST END TRANSIT (WET BUS) — Stops at nine trailheads and Columbia Gorge communities on the Washington side of the Gorge. This service connects with TriMet and C-TRAN. The WET bus runs Fridays-Sundays during the summer months. [More info.](#)

MT. ADAMS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES — Get a ride with your bike across the Hood River Bridge (\$1/way). [More info.](#)



ReadySetGorge.com -----

READY, SET, GORGE!

Ready, Set, GOrge! is a bi-state, multi-organizational campaign aimed at improving the visitor experience in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. By providing helpful tips in one place (ReadySetGorge.com), the campaign helps people safely travel to, from, and around the region while having the least impact on its natural and cultural resources. Ready, Set, GOrge! Is a collaboration between the U.S. Forest Service, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Travel Oregon and Oregon Department of Transportation.

