Travel the historic trail and visit state parks along the way

Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is a 212-mile, 4,956-acre park that goes from Cedar Falls in the Cascade Mountains to the Columbia River in central Washington. The trail is perfect for long or short trips and extends to Idaho.

The trail leads travelers over high trestles with spectacular views of the valley below, mountainous terrain, sagebrush desert, arid scrublands and charming countryside farmlands of the Columbia Basin.

Hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, wagoners, cross-country skiers, snowshoers and dog sledders can discover the rugged beauty of the Pacific Northwest by trekking this unique trail that follows the path of the old Chicago-Milwaukee-St. Paul-Pacific Railroad, also known as the Milwaukee Road. The family-friendly trail has a light gravel surface, a gentle and easy-to-negotiate grade and camping along the way.

Day-use parks offer fun adventures

* Olallie State Park (Exit 19) Five miles southeast of North Bend. The park includes Twin Falls Natural Area. Visitors can walk a 2.5-mile interpretive trail and enjoy viewpoints of Wheel Falls and fishing opportunities. The relatively flat Twin Falls Trail (hikers only) passes between two waterfalls on a 7-foot, free-span bridge, clinta to a ridge with excellent views of the waterfalls and follows the South Fork Snoqualmie River.

* Olmstead Place State Park (Exit 19) A short side trip to Kittitas County takes travelers to this charming, rustic, 217-acre day-use park. The park features a working pioneer farm and offers public tours of a big cabin built in 1870, a farmhouse and antique farm implements. Enjoy a picnic or short walk along the Ahtapes Creek interpretive trail.

Tour reservations: (509) 925-1943

Stay overnight at state parks

Vacationers may use state parks as base camps for day excursions or stop and camp after a long-day’s hike or ride.

* Lake Easton State Park (Exit 19) 90 standard campsites, 45 utility sites with full hookup (some accommodate RVs up to 70 feet), two video sites and one group site. Set in a glacial valley 16 miles east of Snoqualmie Pass. A freshwater shoreline and a stretch along the Yakima River make this park a pleasant spot for boating, fishing and picnicking. The park has a working harbor and dock; there is a 10-horsepower limit. In winter, 37 miles of trail are open to cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and dog sledding. Snowmobiles may use the trail from Stampede Pass Road to Cabin Creek.

Reservations: May 10–Sept. 15 (888) CAMPOUT, (888) 226-7688 or at www.parks.state.wa.us

For more information on state parks along trail, visit Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail online at www.parks.state.wa.us

* Palouse to Cascades State Park (first come, first served) five campsgrounds along the trail, each with three to four campsites, one picnic table and a vault toilet. Back-country camping fee; trailhead kiosk for registration information. Untreated water is available in nearby streams. Bring water filters.

* Ginoga Petrified Forest State Park* Wanapum Recreation Area (Exit 58) 20 utility sites with full hookup at Wanapum (some accommodate RVs up to 60 feet), a waterfront launch and swimming beach. Ginoga Petrified Forest Interpretive Center open April through October – check the web page for current information. The Ginoga Trailside Museum has 3 miles of hiking trails that wind through the sagebrush landscape. Visitors can view exposed petrified wood along a short interpretive trail.

Interpretive center group reservations: (509) 925-1943

Legacy of a trail

From railroad to long-distance trail

The Palouse to Cascades Trail isn’t just an ordinary abandoned railroad line. History can be literally accessed much of Washington state on the gentle grade of the Old Milwaukee Road right of way – a trail of western expansion and a vital connection linking the industrial Midwest to Seattle.

Operating a railroad through the rugged western mountains posed a challenge nearly a century ago. Winter brought heavy snow and avalanche danger. The Nairobi forest fire plagued summers. To remedy severe conditions, the Milwaukee Road took a truly revolutionary step – it electrified its line through the Rocky Mountains in 1915 – and a first in transcontinental rail travel. This was an amazing feat — and a first in transcontinental railroad history. Not only did electrification solve problems caused by severe mountain weather, it also proved to be more efficient than using steam or diesel. Because it was more efficient than using steam or diesel. Because it was more efficient than using steam or diesel. Because it was more efficient than using steam or diesel. Because it was more efficient than using steam or diesel.

Eventually, visitors will be able to travel on the trail across the entire state of Washington. Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail will link up with regional trails in King and Snohomish counties, the Columbia Plateau Trail from Pasco to Spokane, and the Spokane River Centennial Trail, which connects trailheads’ trail systems.

Historic areas on or near the trail

* Rosslyn (Exit 80) Former mining town that served as a backdrop for the TV series Northern Exposure.

* South Cle Elum (Exit 88) Pass the old depot and oil tank south to glimpse the 1909 bunkhouse* built for Milwaukee Road crews.

* Thorp Mill (Exit 101) This 1883 old grist mill is now a museum.* Open for tours during summer. Call (509) 994-9040 for information.

* Ellensburg (Exits 106 and 109) A historic downtown district* with wall-preserved examples of late-19th-century brick buildings.

* Kittitas (Exit 115) An old railroad depot* from 1909 is one of two intact depots remaining on the Milwaukee Road line in Washington.

* Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
Cedar Falls — Homestead Valley .................................. 4.5 miles/7.2 km
Homestead Valley — Hyak ........................................ 16 miles/26.2 km
Hyak — Easton .......................................................... 18 miles/29 km
Easton — South Cle Elum .......................................... 11.5 miles/18.3 km
South Cle Elum — Thorp ........................................... 18.5 miles/29.9 km
Thorp — Ellensburg West ........................................... 7 miles/10.9 km
Ellensburg West — Ellensburg East .......................... 1.0 miles/1.6 km
Ellensburg East — Kittitas ........................................ 4.9 miles/7.9 km
Kittitas — Army West ................................................. 6 miles/9.7 km
Army West — Army East ........................................... 20.6 miles/33.2 km

Notes:
- Covered photo: Hall Creek Trailhead, west of Snoqualmie Pass, east of Cedar Falls.
  - (509) 856-2700 for current trail conditions.
- When using state park trails, please respect private property and stay on the trail.
- Vault toilets are available at all state park trailheads.
- Pack it in, pack it out. Please properly dispose of garbage at home or at a designated disposal site.

The Discover Pass is required for vehicle visits to state parks and access to other state-managed recreation areas. The pass provides access to millions of acres of parks, wildlife areas, trails, natural areas and water-access sites. The annual pass is transferable between two vehicles.
  - Annual pass: $100 — One-day pass: $30
  - Additional fees may apply.

The Discover Pass can be purchased online, by phone or at a permit. For details, visit www.discoverpass.wa.gov or call (866) 320-9933.

Thank you for supporting Washington state recreation lands.

Hiking Trails

* Northwest Forest Pass or America the Beautiful Pass required at U.S. Forest Service trailheads.