Augspurger Mtn, WA

Vicinity Location: The trailhead is 49 miles east of Portland, Oregon in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Directions:
From Portland, Oregon, there are two ways to drive to the trailhead. If you have an extra 30 minutes then make your trip a loop drive. For the loop drive, take I-205 north across the Columbia River. Exit I-205 on HWY 14 east for about 28 miles through the town of Stevenson.

For the non-loop option, take I-84 east from Portland and take exit #44 for Cascade Locks. Take the first right turn, just after you go under the Bridge of the Gods. The toll for cars is $3.00 going either way across the bridge. Cross the bridge, and turn right onto HWY 14 and drive 2.5 miles to Stevenson.

Once you get to Stevenson, drive about 10 more miles east to the Dog Mountain trailhead, just past milepost 53. Parking on spring weekends is next to impossible with the small parking lot. Look for shuttle schedules.

To return, take HWY 14 west back through Stevenson, and after about 2.5 miles, turn left and cross the Columbia River at the Bridge of the Gods. The toll for cars is $3.00 going either way across the bridge.

After the bridge, the road loops around and intersects Hwy 30, Cascade Locks Hwy, near the base of the bridge. Turn left here and you will merge onto I-84 west in about ½ mile. Follow I-84 west, back to Portland.

A Northwest Forest Pass is required at this trailhead.

An outhouse is available near the parking lot.

Length and Elevation:
15.2 miles roundtrip Elevation gain 5,000 feet and loss 1,900 feet to the turn-around point. Elevation at the turn-around point is 3,400 feet. Returning back to the parking lot is a gain of 960 feet and loss of 4,100 feet. Total gain is 5,960 and total loss is 5,960 feet. Total gain and loss is 11,960 feet.

(Using Augspurger Mtn Trail both ways 14 miles, Elevation gain 4,100 feet and loss 960 feet to the turn-around point. Total gain and loss is 10,320 feet. Elevation at the trailhead is 150 feet, the highest elevation is 3,654 feet.

Trail:
Gifford Pinchot National Forest Dog Mountain Trail 147 and Augspurger Mountain Trail 4407.

There is at least one geocache along this trail at: **N 45° 44.308 W 121° 42.277**. Info at Geocaching.com

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpx file

Review: June 14, 2012
Find the trailhead at the east end of the parking lot. Plan to arrive early on weekends because the

parking lot fills up. There are two ways to begin hiking to the top of Dog Mountain. Plan to take trail 147 on the right for spectacular views of the Gorge and the incredible wildflower display in May and early June.

Walk up the gravel road, passing the bathrooms in a short distance. From there, trail 147 switchbacks and you'll soon get views of the Columbia River and the Gorge as the trees on the slopes become sparse and the mountainside becomes rockier. Poison oak abounds along the first .6 mile, where you reach the first trail junction. The right trail has a more gradual climb but is .4 mile longer.

Take the left trail and enjoy the level stroll through the forest for about .1 mile. The trail climbs steeply away from the level forest along what must have been the old jeep road to the site of the old fire lookout. The trail climbs steeply for about .5 mile before leveling off at another small plateau in the forest. Here the road noise has been left behind and the sounds of birds chirping surround you. Once you reach the next trail junction, turn left and travel uphill. This section feels like the steepest section on the Dog Mountain Trail.

After climbing from the trailhead for 2 miles, you come out into the first big opening with vistas of the Gorge. From here the views shortly become spectacular as you climb past the last of the trees and have an unobstructed view looking south and west into the Gorge. As the trail climbs further you get views to the east, including Hood River. The whole expanse of the Gorge is laid out before you.

After climbing for less than another .25 mile you reach the site of a former fire lookout. People call it Puppy Dog Lookout because many people turn around here and head back. From here you have more than 180 degree views of the Gorge. There is another trail junction at the lookout. Continue up the trail on the exposed slope to the summit. The trail to the right goes through the forest and comes out near the summit of Dog Mountain.

At 2.4 miles from the trailhead, you reach the junction for Augspurger Mountain and the summit of Dog Mountain. Take the time to walk the .1 mile on up to the summit of Dog Mountain for the nice views then come back down to this junction and head towards Augspurger Mountain.

The open slopes provide terrific views of the Columbia River Gorge. On a clear day from the summit of Dog Mountain you can see Mt. Defiance across the gorge at 4960 feet high. In the distance you can see Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Hood. In the spring there is a succession of flowers until early summer. The wildflowers usually peak around Memorial Day but the balsamroot can peak as early as the second week in May. The yellow balsamroot flowers are spectacular when their blooms cover the hillside.

Follow the trail across the mountain meadows then downhill into the second-growth forest. The part of the trail stays muddy late into the spring. The understory plants here enjoy these moist slopes. Cow Parsnip, ferns, piggy-back plants and duck's foot grow in profusion here.

Reaching the junction Take a right turn at both the first trail junctions just below the top of Dog Mountain. Descend about a mile and take a right at the Augspurger Mountain trail. Be careful about wandering off-trail because there are steep cliffs just west of the trail. From the junction the trail drops down rapidly through a large field of thimbleberries. Here, if the trail isn't brushed out, it is a very narrow and somewhat steep and slippery trail. Descend several swithcbacks then ascend a bit to a forest road.

Turn right at the forest road look back to remember where to turn off the road on the return trip. There should be a tree with a blue diamond on the uphill side of the road. There are several trees

marked with blue diamonds along this section of trail. Walk about .4 mile to high-voltage power towers. The left access road goes steeply uphill and the right access road drops down to a stream. Continue straight on the road, passing under the powerlines.

Follow the road as it gently goes uphill for about .2 mile and look for the trail leading off to the right. The trail may be marked by a very small rock cairn or a nearby tree may have a blue diamond marker. Follow the trail uphill towards Augspurger Mountain. This part of the forest is a pleasant second-growth forest and has Vanilla leaf, Vine maple, and False Solomon's seal on the forest floor. The trail isn't used very often so it is carpeted with fir needles and other forest duff.

After leaving the road and walking for about .75 mile the trail comes out into a clearing with patches of wildflowers and a glimpse of the Gorge. The trail climbs up along the lower edge of this mountain meadow then reenters the woods, heading generally north.

At 5.6 miles from the trailhead, you walk through another clearing, a rocky spur of Augspurger Mountain, approaching a set of powerlines. Just before reaching the powerlines the trail reenters the woods. The trail parallels the powerlines for a short bit and continues along the rocky spur. The trail heads generally northeast, passing through several brushy meadows. The trail here has tall Thimbleberry growing into the trail which means that anytime there is rain or dew on the plants you will need a raincoat and rain pants to keep from getting soaked by the water that comes from pushing by the wet brush.

The trail climbs steadily and sometimes steeply up the shoulder of Augspurger Mountain through forests and mountain meadows. After about 6.5 miles the trail begins to level off and gains the ridge that leads to Augspurger Mountain.

The trail goes along the ridge and then eventually veers away from maps that mark Augspurger Mountain and drops down off the ridge on the east side. Descend fairly steeply down a ridge towards the northeast to several viewpoints. The trail re are 3-mountain views of Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Rainier, and Mt. Adams and to the south, Mt. Hood can be seen from some vantage points.

I stopped at the last rock knob before the trail drops steeply down to powerlines. From this promontory there are nice views of Mt. Adams and St. Helens and a partial view of Mt. Rainier through a gap in the neighboring mountains. Looking east you can see the Columbia River and two powerline right-of-ways that head east and west through the Gorge.

There are some nice views with lone trees silhouetted against the sky and green forests all around. The sketchy trail continues downhill to another trailhead about a mile away.

Retrace your steps back to the Augspurger Mountain junction, remembering to walk along the forest road for .6 mile then looking for the trail on the left.

The switchbacks climbing up to the junction for Augspurger Mountain Trail seem to take forever but eventually you reach the junction and head downhill towards the parking lot.

The nice wide trail drops steadily downhill and comes to spots with rocky slopes and open to the sun. There are two things to watch for here, Poison Oak and rattlesnakes. Keep an eye out for them and some of the shy lizards that live on the rocky slopes.

In some places the Poison Oak is more than waist high and leaning into the trail. Be careful not to let your trekking poles, hands, or clothes brush against the foliage. Be especially careful with children and pets. There is a picture of Poison Oak and Poison Ivy in the pictures posted for this hike.

This is a great hike for a spring day. Be prepared for rain, fog, wild winds and crowds. There is no water along the trail so carry plenty on hot days. This trail is not recommended for dogs or small children because of all the poison oak, the occasional rattlesnake along the trail, and the steep, open slopes of the trail below the summit.

With those warnings in mind, this is a great spring hike. The flowers and crowds are at their peak right around the end of May.

Enjoy the photos!!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve