

Big Tree and Cougar Woods Trail, OR



Vicinity Location: La Pine State Park, about 27 miles south of Bend.

Directions:

From Portland drive to Bend, Oregon on Hwy 26 or I-5 and Hwy 20 depending on conditions.

From Bend, Oregon drive on Hwy 97 South for about 22 miles. Turn right into LaPine State Park and drive about 4.3 miles.

Turn onto Bench Leg Drive and drive about .7 mile to the parking lot.

An Oregon State Park Permit is required to park.

There is a restroom at the trailhead and along the trail.

Length and Elevation:

Total distance is 4.4 miles. Elevation at the trailhead is 4,236 feet. Ascent 480 ft, descent 480 ft, maximum elevation 4,101 ft, minimum elevation 4,247 ft.

Trails:

Big Tree Loop, Cougar Woods Trail with connection to LaPine Parallel Trail and various trails in the State Park.

Trail Maps:

Oregon State Park Map, Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpx file, Open Garmin .gpx file

Review: June 8, 2022

Start from Big Tree Day Use Area parking lot that is quite uncrowded. From the parking lot there are several routes you can take. You can do the big tree first which starts from across the parking lot from the main beginning of the trail. There's a nice post marked with a big tree label. This review is to walk a little farther to get to the Big Tree.

Start on the Big Tree Loop at the south end of the parking lot and walk northeast going through the Ponderosa Pine forest on a nice pine needle and cone covered trail. The forest is very open because it has been thinned and it looks like there has been a low intensity fire in the past.

About 0.3 miles you come to a private residence and turn sharply left on the trail. After just a few hundred feet you bear to the right and head down towards the river. The alternate trail has been blocked off. Meander down towards the big tree by the Deschutes river, walking about another 200 feet to a nice overlook of a horseshoe bend in the Deschutes River.

Soon you'll reach a trail junction where you are paralleling the river and follow the trail going downhill.

Soon you reach the Big Tree. It is marked on some maps as a Heritage Tree. This Ponderosa Pine is the biggest of its species ever recorded. It was a mammoth tree before the Oregon Territory was established and has survived centuries of fires, insects, and people. A storm has snapped off the top

part of the tree making another Ponderosa pine taller but this tree is still the largest by circumference. It is about 500 years old, about 162 feet tall, and the circumference is 28' 11".

Once you've looked at this giant Ponderosa Pine you can continue along the river on a user trail which follows by the river bank and then rejoins the Cougar Woods Trail. This user trail is underwater when the Deschutes river is running high so you may have to take the trail through the woods depending upon the season you hike this.

The trail goes along the Dead Slough and In about a half a mile the user trail rejoins the Cougar Woods Trail. Soon you reach another trailhead parking lot. To continue on the Cougar Woods Trail go uphill just a little bit and look for the trail which is across the road and going slightly uphill. There is an 8 x 8 wood sign post with the trail name marking the trail.

About 1.8 miles from the start you drop back down to the river where there are some flush toilets and some water spigots.

Continue along the mostly level trail as it winds along the river. It does take a little short cut across another big horseshoe Bend and comes back out to the river again.

In about 2 1/2 miles you come to another trail junction. Bear to the right continuing on the Cougar Woods trail. The trail to the left goes back to where the flush toilets and water faucets were.

Along the river there are several different kinds of wildflowers but as you climb away from the river the ground becomes drier and there is less variety growing on the forest floor.

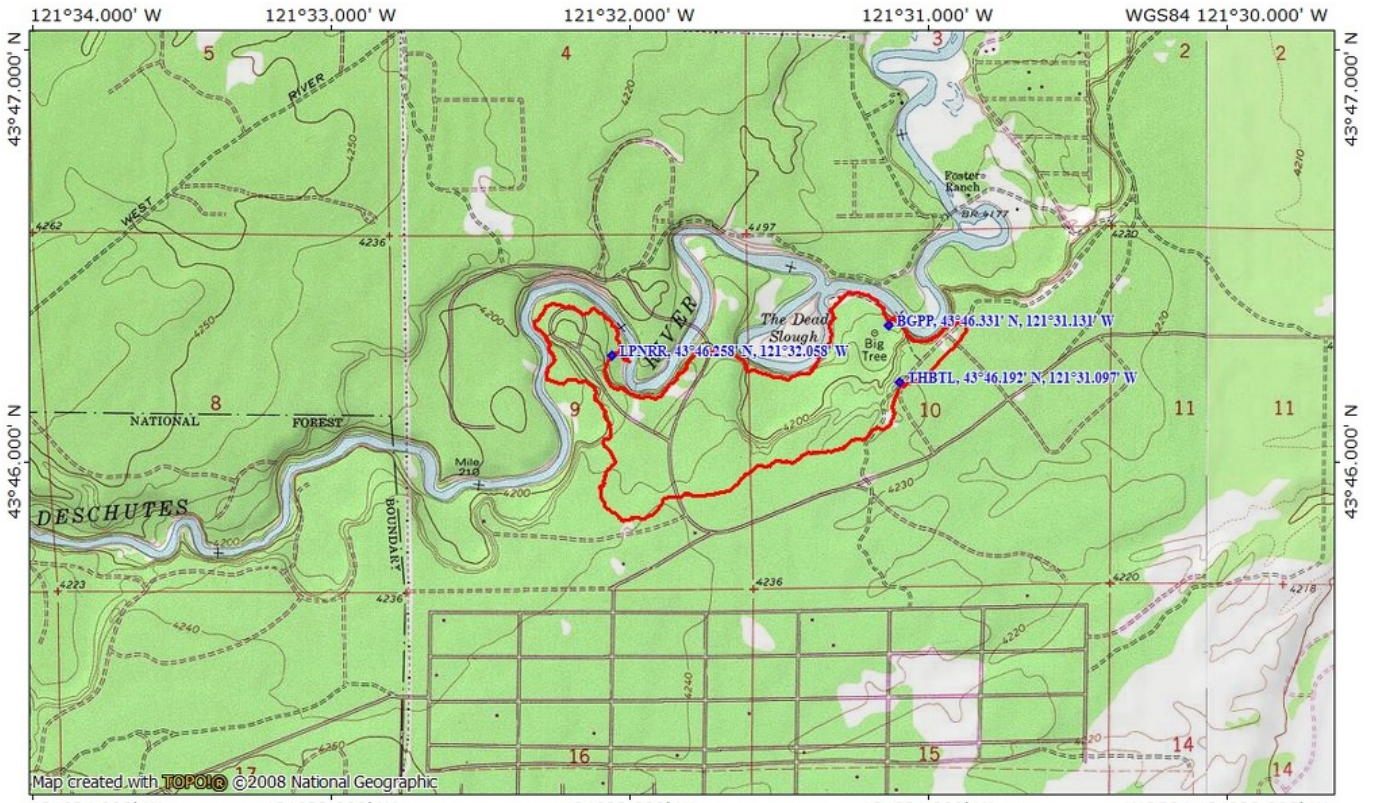
In about 2.75 miles start climbing back up above the river. There is probably one more nice view of the Deschutes river and then the trail stays in the woods to return back to the trailhead.

At about 3 miles the trail gets a little confusing. Just keep to the main trail and don't take the jeep road that crosses the trail. You will end up at the correct place where the trail crosses State Park Road again.

Just across the road there's another next to the trail where you can verify where you, where you were, and were and where you are going. From here it is only 0.8 miles back to the parking lot on a mostly flat trail.

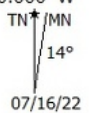
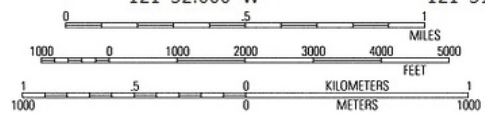
This walk is great for children with just a few drop offs along the trail above the river to be careful of and a beach for kids to play at.

Enjoy the Photos!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve



Map created with **TOPOLIC** ©2008 National Geographic

121°34.000' W 121°33.000' W 121°32.000' W 121°31.000' W WGS84 121°30.000' W



07/16/22