Central Gales Creek Trail, OR

Vicinity Location:
About 34 miles west of Portland, OR. in the Tillamook State Forest.**Directions:**
From Portland, take Highway 26 west for about 20 miles. Take the left exit for Hwy 6 towards Banks, Tillamook, and Forest Grove. This road is also known as the Wilson River Highway.Continue on Highway 6 for several miles from the junction Hwy 26 and Hwy 6. From the junction to Timber/Vernonia and drive 3.7 miles. Look for the brown sign for Gales Creek Campground. The signpost is on the left side of the road. Turn right as you near the sign and drive down a gravel road for .6 mile. Park in the lot just before the bridge.

No permits are required.

There is an outhouse in the day use area about 200 feet before the trailhead.

For directions to the far trailhead see Step Creek Trail, OR.

Trail:
Central Gales Creek Trail with connections to Storey Burn Trail and Gales Creek Trail.

There is at least one geocache for this trail at: **N 45° 38.538 W 123° 21.726** Info at Geocaching.com

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, State of Oregon Map (5.03mb), Download Garmin .gpx file

Length and Elevation:
16.9 miles round trip. Elevation gain of 2,070 feet and loss of 1,990 feet to Reehers Camp Day Use Area. Elevation at the trailhead is 940 feet.

Review: January 29, 2011, June 11, 2012
The access road to this trailhead closes in the fall for the off season each year. During those months you have to walk from highway 6, down the road for about .6 mile along Rogers road to reach the trailhead. Traffic noise from highway 6 can be heard during most of this walk, though all the seasonal streams drown out a lot of the traffic noise.

The trailhead is on the left, just before the concrete bridge over Gales Creek. The first .5 mile of the trail climbs steadily then suddenly drops back down towards Gales Creek. The sights and sounds of Gales Creek are never far from the trail along the first .9 mile of the trail. At .9 mile is the junction with Storey Burn Road Trail. This first section of the trail to the junction for the Gales Creek Trail and Storey Burn Trail gains about 240 feet and loses about 150 feet.

Just after crossing the new bridge, turn right at the junction and you will soon be walking upstream along Gales Creek. The trail soon turns to the left and follows Gales Creek uphill. There is a fair amount of elevation gain in the .5 mile from the junction as the trail climbs away from the stream valley into the lush plant-filled forest. Walking through the second-growth forest you'll see Alder with Fir and Hemlock mixed together. The canopy has shaded out a lot of the undergrowth so you can see fairly well through the forest. Ferns, Apple Clover, Coltsfoot, Monkey Flower, Epimidium, Thimbleberry, and Devils Club are growing all along the trail.

Just before 1.7 miles, you reach a new section of trail that was built after the 2006 and 2007 floods washed out sections of the trail. A gentle uphill grade was blasted out of the side of the hill and some

of the rubble was used for a stream crossing.

The trail passes on the edge of a little open valley with nice views of the valley with its stream and of the tiny creek the trail crosses and the general forest surrounding you. Here you'll find the plants of the forest have changed with the introduction of Maples and Firs along with Alder. The understory now has more Thimbleberries and Ferns.

The trail goes up and down along Gales Creek, through the lovely forest. This section of the trail is well maintained and crosses many small streams and seeps. There are probably a dozen water crossings or seeps within the first few miles. At 3.75 miles the trail begins to switchback higher above Gales Creek. Once again sections of the trail has been blasted out of the rock to make a nice, wide trail for hiking.

The trail continuously gains elevation at a moderate rate climbing far above Gales Creek. At 4 miles, the trail dips down and crosses a small creek with a tiny waterfall, then climbs and rounds a corner back into the Gales Creek Valley.

The trail gains and loses elevation, but generally going uphill. At 5.5 miles there is a short section of trail that climbs steeply out of the Gales Creek drainage and away from the sounds of streams that have been present throughout the hike.

The forest here is second-growth Douglas fir. This portion of trail is nicely maintained as it appears the trail crews use the nearby logging road for access.

The trail climbs up to a logging road and continues on the other side of the gravel road, a little to the right.

From here the trail follows an old logging road, up a moderate grade to another road with a small parking area on the left. This could be utilized for a shuttle hike which goes mostly downhill back to the Gales Creek Trailhead or down to Reehers Camp.

From this road the trail goes through an open forest and crosses another road going a bit uphill. The trail flattens and crosses another logging road. After this, the trail starts to drop down fairly steeply towards Reehers Camp. Follow the trail, which at times drops fairly steeply, through the forest.

This trail can have muddy spots and can be slippery in the steeper sections. After 1.7 miles from the crest of the trail, cross another road and enjoy a gentle descent for a short time, then continue dropping towards Reehers Camp. Pass the junction for Step Creek Trail on the right and continue through the pleasant forest.

After continuing down several switchbacks the trail comes to an old railroad track which has been out of service for several years and trees are growing in the tracks.

The trail crosses the railroad track, drops down, and goes along the Nehalem River for a bit. The trail comes out to a large Forest Service Road where you turn right, cross the bridge, walk about 30 feet past the end of the guardrail, then go right to get back onto the trail heading to the Reehers Camp Day use area.

From here, follow the sometimes muddy trail back to the day use area.

At the day use area there are bathrooms but no water. After taking a break, head back to the Gales Creek trailhead or if you used a shuttle, enjoy a rest in the car.

This trail is popular with mountain bikers.

Enjoy the photos!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve