

Elowah Falls, OR



Notice: 1/1/2021 - This trail is now open. Several trails in the Columbia River Gorge are closed until further notice, sometime in 2021 or later, due to the Eagle Creek Fire.

Vicinity Location: About 34 miles east of Portland, Oregon in the Columbia River Gorge.

Directions:

From Portland, OR, take I-84 east past Troutdale to exit 35. Turn left at the stop sign towards Dodson. After about 200 feet, turn right on Frontage Road. Drive 2 ¼ miles to the parking lot at Yeon State Park. To return, you can go back on Frontage Road or merge into the eastbound lane of I-84 and turn around at the next exit.

No parking permits are needed.

No outhouses are at the trailhead.

Length and Elevation:

3.0 Miles, Elevation gain 1,085 feet and loss 1,085 feet. Trailhead is 120 feet in elevation. The turnaround point above Upper McCord Creek Falls is 550 feet in elevation.

Trail:

McCord Creek Falls trail and Elowah Falls trail with connections to trail 400, and Trail 428, Nesmith Point Trail.

There is a geocache along the trail at N 45° 36.758 W 121° 59.705. Info at Geocaching.com

Trail Maps:

Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpx file

History:

This park was acquired in 1935 and is named in honor of John B. Yeon, who worked with Simon Benson in the early days of the Oregon State Highway Commission. Near the trailhead, between the railroad and the river, there once was a pulp mill. When you take the trail to Upper McCord Creek Falls you will cross one of the pipes that supplied water for the mill. The pipe route was uphill and then was used to lay where the trail is blasted out of the cliff at Point Nesmith. The intake for the pipe was a large pool in McCord Creek.

Review: April 23, 2006

The trail is easy to find. It is at the west end of the parking lot near a wooden water storage tank. Take a left at the junction of Nesmith Point Trail. At the junction with trail 400 and Upper McCord Falls trail, turn left and stay on trail 400. Follow the switchbacks down into McCord Creek Canyon and to Elowah Falls. The water free-falls 289 feet to a rocky pool. Stand on the bridge that crosses the creek and enjoy nature's air conditioner. In spring the falling water creates a strong wind at the bridge. Continue past the waterfall and don't climb up the gulley just past the bridge. Instead, use

an old trail that is about 100 feet from the bridge and on the right, the old trail climbs up to an overlook of the falls. Re-trace your steps and continue up the trail a bit. Take a break at a picnic table in the shade of the trees to the right of the trail and use this for your turn-around point.

Heading back towards the parking lot, take the trail to Upper McCord Creek Falls. The trail climbs about 400 feet using a series of switchbacks. You pass two old water pipes that were probably used to power sawmills.

A short portion of the trail has been blasted out of the basalt walls of the gorge. A pipe railing guards against people falling off the trail. There is a nice variety of plants to see in this section of the trail. Stonecrop, paintbrush, Monkshood, and other plants have adapted to this microclimate of overhanging rocks. Here too you get a great view of the gorge and an overlook of Elowah Falls. The trail becomes damper as you enter the woods and get closer to Upper McCord Creek Falls, a 65 foot tall waterfall. The trail provides nice views of the falls and you have to make a slight detour around a huge fallen tree. Here the trail becomes wilder. You can enjoy the tiny falls here or go back to view Upper McCord Creek Falls. Return the way you came and go back to the parking lot.

The trail is reasonably maintained and the trail is pretty safe for school age children or pets who have been on other trails in the gorge. As with many trails, there are cliffs and there are a fair number of switchbacks on this trail. You will hear car, truck, and train noises on the lower portions of the trail that parallel the freeway. These noises are easily overpowered as you get closer to the waterfalls.

Waypoints:

FLMCC - Upper McCord Creek Falls, PKEF - Parking Lot for Elowah Falls and Upper McCord Creek Trail.

Enjoy the photos!!

Gallery Pics

Switchback Steve

