Gooseneck Loop, OR



Vicinity Location:
110 miles east of Portland, Oregon in Cottonwood Canyon State Park

Directions: Take I-84 East to about 95 miles and take exit 97 from I-84 East to OR-206 E in Wasco County.

Follow OR-206 East for about 31 miles and turn left into Cottonwood Canyon State Park.

Park at the Pinnacles Trailhead

Pit toilet bathroom at the trailhead.

You need an Oregon state park permit to park here.

Length and Elevation:
8.8 miles roundtrip. Elevation at the trailhead is 540 feet. Total gain is 1,480 feet and loss is 1,480 feet. Highest elevation is 1,440 feet and the lowest elevation 521 feet.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpx file, Open Garmin .gpx file

Trails: Sage Steppe Trail. Sage Knob Trail, Gooseneck Trail, Pinnacles Trail.

Review: October 20, 2024
From the Pinnacles Trailhead, walk left and then in just a couple hundred feet take the Sage Trail that starts at a gentle climb through the open countryside. You walk the well graveled and well maintained trail through sagebrush and a few other plants. You get a nice view of the valley before the trail drops back down to the to be alongside the road.

There are several artifacts from the old ranch, including some trucks.

Walk along the trail to the junction for the Sage Knob Trail and turn left walk up a gentle grade..

Continue walking and you will soon reach Sage Knob Trail, which is just a small bump in the canyon that is about 50 feet above the floor of the canyon and it looks out over the river. Retrace your steps about 100 feet and take a left to start climbing up the wall of the canyon on a narrow dirt trail.

Climb steadily as the trail turns from dirt to gravelly rocks, and then reach the top of a ridge with a nice view of the river and distant windmills. From here you follow the trail up the ridge to the top of the canyon.

Watch the GPS because in about 1000 feet from knob there’s a very faint trail going off to the left that allows you to summit another knob.

Follow the faint trail and use your GPS to check progress. This portion of the track is not totally

accurate because the track got off trail a couple of times on the way up. About halfway up to the top of the canyon climb the knob then come back to the main trail. An alternative is to just to follow the main trail which meets this side trail.

From here continue left off the main trail climbing up to the shoulder of a knob where you turn left on a wide trail and finish gaining elevation up to the top of a rounded off knob with a stone cairn on top. From here there are views of dozens of windmills and several high-voltage transmission lines.

There is limited service from Verizon and and service with T-Mobile. If you need cell service, there will be coverage in many spots along the top rim of the canyon.

Go back down one of the trails to hit the main trail and turn left following the side of the hill to the saddle. When you reach the fence turn right and basically follow the fence line to the edge of the next deep canyon. This is a good place to take a break and enjoy the spectacular views of the river. From here you have to carefully descend down into the canyon and back up the other side.

Pick your way carefully down the steep rocky slope into the canyon staying to the right of the fence line. There are a couple of places where you have to use your hands to help get you across some especially steep rocky sections as you drop into the canyon. Be sure to check for rattlesnakes before placing your hands on the rocks. Once in the canyon, start climbing along the side of the hillside heading towards the John Day River. Try to follow the sheep tracks and climb up to where you go through a boulder field and you should see a nice clearing heading straight up the hillside to where you can again be near the top of the ridge and the fenceline. Don’t forget to watch out for snakes.

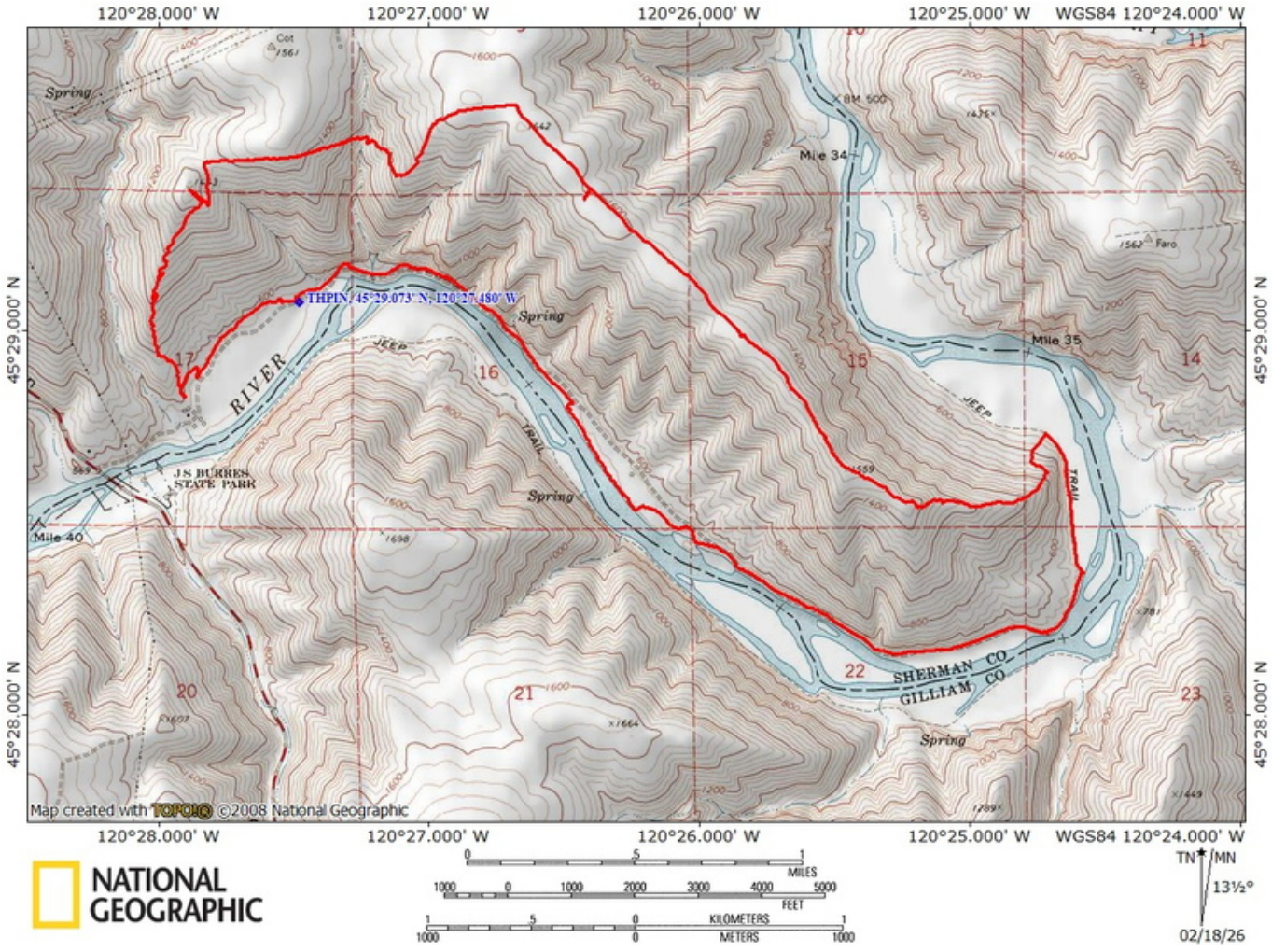
Terrain here is short grasses, balsam root, and sage. There is a Juniper tree here and there.

The steepness of the hillside decreases as you get closer and closer to the top of the canyon. Start working your way through the sagebrush moving to the left and eventually you’ll reach the fence line near the top. You should pick up a faint trail and it comes out where the fence has a T junction with another fence line.

Soon you’ll find a rutted old road which you follow along the ridge and until it turns into a trail. From here, you follow the trail that climbs up to a knob along the ridge with a juniper tree growing on it. This is a great place to stop and have lunch with nice views of the river which makes a big horseshoe bend around your spot. From here you’ll follow the ridge until it drops down and then you drop off the left side on the spine, which is pretty apparent from the knob.

Back at the road turn right, taking time to drop down and check out the river. This is the last spot you can access to river for sometime. After walking another half three-quarter mile you reach the junction of the Lower Walnut Trail. Turn left here and gain some views of the river as you wind through the sagebrush.

Enjoy the photos!!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve


120°28.000' W
120°27.000' W
120°26.000' W
120°25.000' W
WGS84 120°24.000' W
45°29.000' N
45°28.000' N
THPIN 45°29.073' N, 120°27.480' W
Spring
RIVER
JEEP
TRAIL
J S BURRES STATE PARK
Mile 34
Mile 35
Mile 40
SHERMAN CO
GILLIAM CO
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MILES
FEET
KILOMETERS
METERS
TN
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