Grove of the Patriarchs Trail, WA



Notice: 7/15/2024 The Grove of the Patriarchs is CLOSED to all public entry effective November 17, 2021 and until further notice, due to flooding which caused significant damage to the suspension bridge. Construction to replace the bridge is scheduled to begin summer 2027. Summers represent the only viable construction season in the park due to the heavy snow that blankets the park from roughly November through May.

Vicinity Location:
About 70 miles southeast of Seattle, WA in Mt. Rainier National Park.

Directions:
From Seattle: Follow I-5 South for 25 miles and take exit 142A to merge onto WA Highway 18 East toward North Bend/Auburn. Drive 4.4 miles and take the Auburn Way/WA Highway 164 East exit toward Enumclaw for 0.2 mile.
Merge onto WA-164 W then turn left at Auburn Way S/WA-164 W and continue to follow WA-164 W for 14.7 miles.
Turn left at Roosevelt Ave/WA-410 E and continue to follow WA-410 E for 40.8 miles.
Make a slight right turn at WA-123 S and drive for 10.9 miles.
Turn right at Stevens Canyon Road and drive for 0.4 mile.
Highway 410 is seasonally closed during the winter.

From Portland: Take I-5 North towards Seattle and drive for about 75 miles.
Take exit 68 for US-12 East. At the top of the off ramp, turn right onto US-12 and drive 71.8 miles east. This takes you past the Morton and through Packwood. Turn left at WA-123 N and drive 5.4 miles. Turn left at Stevens Canyon Road and drive about .4 mile, through the park entrance, to the parking lot on the right.
There are bathrooms and water at the trailhead.
Pets are not allowed on the trails in National Parks.

A permit is needed to park.

Trail:
EastsideTrail, Grove of the Patriarchs Trail.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, National Park Map, Download Garmin .gpx file

Length and Elevation:
1.5 miles round trip. Elevation gain of 120 feet and loss of 120 feet. Elevation at the trailhead at 2,200 feet, highest point is at 2.200 feet. Lowest elevation is 2,150 feet.

Review: October 10, 2009.
This is a very popular trail and the parking lot overflows on summer weekends.

The trail starts near the bathrooms and drops down to the Ohanapecosh River. You can hear the river almost from the trailhead and you get glimpses of the river as you walk along the trail. There are plenty of interpretive signs talking about different aspects of the forest.

Soon you'll pass by a few old growth trees as you make your way along the trail. It is a short distance to the suspension bridge across the Ohanapecosh River. The bridge was damaged in the floods of 2006 but is now repaired. The bridge leads to an island with ancient Douglas fir and western red cedar trees. Shortly after crossing the river, the trail enters the Grove of the Patriarchs and you walk on a boardwalk. The boardwalk was added so that the thousands of people who visit this grove each year don't compact the soil around the tree roots.

Where the loop begins, turn around, look for a tree inside the loop trail where you can see a little tunnel under the tree. The tree grew on a nurse log and the nurse log has rotted away.

The trail enters into a grove of huge cedar trees in this small area. The trees tower over you and shade out most of the other plants on the forest floor. Cedars like moist soil and from walking from the river, you can tell the land this grove grows on is just a little higher than the nearby Ohanapecosh River.An interpretive sign talks about 2 Douglas Fir trees that are over 1,000 years old. The sign explains that the trees are rotting from the inside and that only the outside 8 to 10 inches of the trunk is good wood. Someday the rot will cause the trees crash to the ground.Nearby is a large Douglas Fir that toppled and fell, smashing part of the boardwalk and blocking the trail. The boardwalk was just repaired in the fall of 2009.

This is a great hike for small children as long as they aren't afraid to cross a bouncy suspension bridge.

Enjoy the Photos!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve