

Leif Erikson Trail, OR

Directions:

In Portland, OR, Take I-5 to I-405. Exit towards St. Helens onto highway US-30 W. Go about 1/3 mile, looking for the NW Vaughn Street exit. Bear Right on NW Vaughn St. Turn Left on NW 24TH AVE – go 0.1 mile. Turn Right on NW Thurman St. and go about 1.5 miles. Arrive at the parking lot at the gated trailhead.

No parking permits are needed. Parking lot fills up by 7:00 or 7:30 am on weekends. The neighbors request you park downhill around 29th Ave and Thurman St. when the parking lot is full.

Portable outhouse near trailhead available seasonally. In 2010, they are about .25 mile up the trail.

Mountain bikes are allowed on Leif Erikson trail and most firelanes.

Portland law requires dogs to be on a leash at all times while in the park. Dogs must be leashed prior to entering and when leaving the park. You are also required to pick up after your dog, not kick it off the trail. In actual practice, about 20% of dogs are leashed on the trails.

Length and Elevation:

22 Miles round trip. Elevation gain is 650 feet and the loss is 200 feet to the turn-around point at mile 11. Total gain and loss is 1,700 Feet. Elevation at the trailhead is 300 feet. Elevation at Germantown Road is 650 feet. High point is about 750 feet.

Trail Maps:

Topo Map - Leif Erikson Map , Topo Map - The Art Of Geography

Trail:

Leif Erikson Trail with connections to the Wildwood trail and a multitude of other trails.

There is at least one geocache along this trail at: N 45° 34.095 W 122° 46.115 Info at Geocaching.com

History:

There is one other large Forest Park in the United States. It is in St. Louis, MO. and is about 1,293 acres in size. Forest Park in Portland is over 5,100 acres in size. A century ago the old growth trees in the hills above Portland were being cut down for the city. Fires also burned in the park in the 1940's and 1950's burning over 2,000 acres. There has been support for preserving the hills as a park since the 1870's as well as plans to develop the park for homesites. Rumors of oil created a rush to drill wells, but no oil was found. The idea of a park continued to gain favor and Forest Park was created September 23, 1948. The park was originally 4,200 acres in size and has had small tracts of land added over time and has become the largest urban forest park in the United States.

Review: March 1, 2008

Forest Park has numerous trails throughout its length. The south end Forest Park is bounded by Washington Park which contains the Children's Museum, Hoyt Arboretum, Oregon Zoo, Japanese Garden, Vietnam Memorial, World Forestry Center, and International Rose Test Garden. This hike starts north of these tourist attractions. The trail is actually called Leif Erickson Drive and is a gated road with mileposts every quarter mile and additional mileposts scattered along the trail.

Since this trail is within a metropolitan area, it is well maintained and gets very busy when the weather is nice. Mountain bikers, hikers and runners along with their dogs use this trail heavily.

There is trail signage at the trailhead showing several of the trails and trailheads. The trail starts out as a paved road and heads uphill at a steady rate for the first mile or so. The road turns into a kind of cobbled road and then into a packed dirt road. There are limited views of the industrial area of the city for the first few miles. It is surprising how quiet this trail is for being so near to Portland, and the port. Enjoy the woodsy setting with fern covered cliffs and some small streams.

The major junction to pay attention to is at mile 6.5 where several trails come together. This trail junction also offers an excellent view of the St. John's Bridge, which crosses the Willamette River. From this point the trail narrows and gets muddier in wet weather. In some places you can't avoid the mud, but it is only a couple of inches deep and dries out in the summer.

The trail tends to follow the contour of the land, curving in and out of the gullies and small canyons and generally gains elevation over the entire length of the trail. I turned around at mile 10 but you could arrange a shuttle hike by parking at the Germantown Road and Thurman St trailheads.

Since this park is in an urban area, take considerable thought before venturing off-trail. Law authorities occasionally find marijuana plants being cultivated in the park. People who cultivate these illegal plants can be very protective of their plot and don't take kindly to people stumbling upon their crops. About 100 plants were seized in October, 2007.

Overall this is a great trail for a cloudy day and very child-friendly. There are some steep hillsides but no cliffs along the downhill side of the trail. All the unleashed dogs I saw were out for a romp and not interested in other people.

Enjoy the photos!!

Gallery Pics

Switchback Steve