Lewis and Clark Discovery Trail, WA

Vicinity Location:
The trailhead is about 86 miles Northwest of Portland, OR and about 120 miles Southwest of Seattle, WA.

Directions:
From Seattle:
Drive on I-5 south towards Portland for about 60 miles.

Take exit #104 for Aberdeen/Port Angeles onto US-101 N, toward Montesano/Aberdeen and go 5.9 miles.

Bear Left on WA-8 West towards Montesano/Aberdeen and drive 21.1 miles. Continue on US-12 West for 10 miles.

Take the ramp towards Montesano/Raymond/JCT WA-107 for 0.3 mile. Turn left on S Main St. and continue on WA-107 for 7.9 miles.

Turn left on US-101 and go 61 miles. Turn left on US-101-ALT for 0.6 mile.

Turn right on Pacific Coast Scenic Byway(US-101) and drive 1.8 miles. Continue to follow US-101 for 0.4 mile. Continue on Spruce St W(WA-100) and it changes into N Head Rd. Continue on N Head Rd for 1.8 miles and turn right, into the parking lot, for the Discovery Trail.

From Portland:
Take I-5 N towards Seattle and drive about 44 miles.

Take exit #36 for Longview (WA-4)/Long Beach towards Longview (WA-4)/WA-432 W/Long Beach and go 0.3 mile. The road turns into Tennant Way(WA-432 W) and drive for 3.5 miles.

Turn left on WA-433 and drive 1.8 miles. Continue along the road and drive over the Columbia River on the Lewis and Clark Bridge for 0.7 mile. Bear right to take ramp onto Lower Columbia River Hwy(US-30) towards Astoria and drive 12.3 miles. Bear right and continue to follow US-30 for another 35.4 miles.

In Astoria, turn right on US-101 and go 15.4 miles across the Astoria-Megler Bridge, turning left at the traffic light in Washington to stay on US-101. Continue on Spruce St W(WA-100) and it changes into N Head Rd. Continue on N Head Rd for 1.8 miles and turn right, into the parking lot, for the Discovery Trail.

A State of Washington Discover Pass is required for parking.

No bathrooms are available at the trailhead.

Length and Elevation:
Western portion: 12 miles round trip. Elevation gain 10 Feet and loss 20 feet one way. Total gain and loss is 60 feet round trip. Elevation at the trailhead at 45 feet, highest point is at 30 feet, lowest elevation is 10 feet.

Eastern portion: 2 miles round trip. Elevation gain 200 feet and loss 175 one way. Total gain and loss

is 750 feet round trip. Elevation at the trailhead is 25 feet, highest point is 130 feet, lowest elevation is 25 feet.

Trail:
Lewis and Clark Discovery Trail.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map

Review: October 25, 2008
The trail is accessed by several trailheads. This review begins at the largest parking lot along the trail. The Lewis and Clark Discovery trail is really two very different trails. The trail along the beach is mostly paved and mostly flat. Head west from the parking lot and wind past some towers of Pillow Basalt. The trail passes along a marshy area then enters the dune area. The sand dunes aren't very tall and they are mostly covered in beach grass. The trail crosses a small creek as it bends towards the north. The trail wends among the dunes about .25 mile from the beach. There are several user trails that cross this path and go to the ocean shore. There are several points of interest along the trail. There is a skeleton of a gray whale that had washed up on the beach and has been reassembled in a display along the trail. The skeleton has some interesting looking bones with some lichen beginning to grow on them.

Later along the trail is a bronze sculpture of Captain William Clark standing beside a sturgeon. The idea for this sculpture came from William Clark's journal: "I proceeded on the Sandy Coast 4 miles, and marked my name on a Small pine, the Day of the month & year, &c. and returned to the foot of the hill, from which place I intended to Strike across to The Bay, I saw a Sturgeon which had been thrown on Shore and left by the tide 10 feet in length, and Several joints of the back bone of a whale which must have foundered on this part of the Coast."

The trail continues winding through the dunes, crossing a couple of access roads to the beach. Near the north end of the trail is a lone tree. Look closely because it is two-ton bronze sculpture called "Clark's Tree" It commemorates the tree Clark carved an inscription: "William Clark. Nov. 19, 1805. By land from the U. States." True to form, today's pioneers try to carve their inscriptions into the tree.

The tree sculpture marks the north end of the trail. Just after the tree, the trail swings to the east and ends at 26th St. N in Long Beach. From here, you can have arranged a shuttle, go back the way you came, or go back through Long Beach on Pacific Avenue and Pacific Hwy, turn right on Spruce St W, which turns into North Head Road, then back to the parking lot.

The eastern portion of this trail is accessed by making a right turn just a couple of hundred feet along the trail after leaving the parking lot. The trail crosses a bridge over a marshy area and enters the forest. This section of the trail is graveled and climbs steeply up to cross North Head Road. There are views looking out over the ocean from this portion of the trail. Cross North Head Road and continue east along the edge of a clear-cut. The trail is an old logging road and the gravel is mostly fist and palm-sized rocks. The trail passes by a meadow then winds back through the forest. There isn't a lot to see along the trail and it drops down to a trailhead at Main St SW in Ilwaco.

I recommend hiking the western section of this trail. The trail along the beach is unique because of the unobstructed views of the Pacific Ocean along almost its entire length. I recommend biking the length of this trail or hike the north portion where the displays are. This trail can be combined with touring two nearby lighthouses.

Enjoy the Photos!

Gallery Pics

Switchback Steve