Lewis River / Curly Creek, WA

Vicinity Location:
The trailhead is about 57 miles Northeast of Portland, OR in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Directions:
The trailhead is almost 2 hours away from I-5 at Woodland or from Battle Ground yet is only about 70 miles by road. The two hour travel time assumes you don't get behind slow vehicles because the road is almost constantly curving.

From Seattle take I-5 south and exit I-5 to State Route 503 at Woodland, WA. Drive about 28 miles to Cougar, Washington.

From Portland, OR, take I-205 north to exit 30b to Battle Ground. This merges onto SR500. Move over to the middle or left lane and proceed north on SR500. The road continues straight north and changes into SR503.

Drive about 6.5 more miles to Battle Ground. Continue north on SR503 for about 23 miles, passing through Chelatchie Prairie and Amboy. At the junction of Lewis River Road and SR503, turn right and drive about 5 miles on SR503 to Cougar, Washington.

From Portland or Seattle, continue through Cougar and SR503 turns into Forest Road 90. Continue on Forest Road 90 to the junction with Forest Road 25. Turn right to stay on Forest Road 90. Drive across the Lewis River and continue on Forest Road 90 another 13 miles to the Lewis River Trailhead. Parking is on the shoulder along Forest Road 90.

Length and Elevation:
19.4 miles round trip. Elevation gain 800 Feet and loss 1,000 feet to the turn-around point at Curly Creek Trailhead. Total gain and loss is 1,800 feet one way. Elevation at the Crab Creek trailhead at 1,430 feet, highest point is at 1,630 feet. Lowest elevation is 1,120 feet. Elevation at the Curly Creek Trailhead is 1,230 feet.

Trail:
Gifford Pinchot National Forest Lewis River Trail #31 with connections to the upper portion of Trail #31.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map

A Northwest Forest Pass is required for parking at the Lower Falls Campground.

An outhouse is available at the Lower Falls Campground, about 1 mile farther northeast on Forest Road 90.

Review: October 6, 2008
The two trailheads at this location are known as Crab Creek Trailhead. Take the trail on the left (west) side of the road. The trail climbs a bit, turns to the right, then goes along the Lewis River. After going about .5 mile on the well maintained trail, you drop down and cross a stream on a wood covered steel girder bridge about 100 feet in length.

The trail climbs about 100 feet in elevation, rounds a corner, and slowly drops down and then

switchbacks down to a creek. There is a 100 foot long steel girder bridge with a wood deck crossing the stream. The bridge affords a nice view looking down Cussed Hollow Creek and across the Lewis River.

Less than .1 mile past the stream is the junction for the Bluff Trail which leads to Forest Road 25. For the first couple of miles the trail goes up and down as it crosses small side creeks and gullies. In general the trail stays about the same elevation as the river drops. In about 2 miles there is a 150 yard section of the trail that has slid down into the valley below. There is a steep, narrow, little reroute that is a few hundred yards long that goes around the slide at waypoint SLLR on the map.

About 6 miles along the trail, just after waypoint CMP2, is a place where there must have been a microburst. The trees are piled up like matchsticks and the trail winds around the edge of the damage.

A mile further down the trail is Bolt Shelter. It is a cedar shake covered log shelter that has been damaged by at tree. The tree fell on the front right corner of the shelter and has ruined the front of the shelter. There is still a place to get out of the rain, though not a lot of room. People have brought in plastic tarps to provide a dry place where the roof leads. Now that the shelter is damaged, people are taking off loose portions of the shelter for firewood.

There are some nice old growth cedars, Douglas Firs, and Big Leaf Maples near Bolt Shelter. Bolt Shelter is situated in a beautiful setting, on a small, flat area about 50 feet from the Lewis River.

After Bolt Shelter, the trail stays along the river and only goes up and down slightly, compared to the first half of the trail. This next mile of the trail is one of the most scenic parts of the trail with the river placidly flowing past the trees and rocks and the trail almost level.

In about 3.5 more miles, the trail comes to a gravel road and a concrete bridge that crosses Curly Creek. Cross the road and follow the trail along the river and up to the parking lot. From the parking lot you can also take a trail to Curly Creek Falls, which is just a short walk from the parking lot.

This trail is not for small children or unleashed dogs due to the cliffs and dropoffs along the trail. There are some tall cliffs dropping over 100 feet down to the river near the trail. There are other places where the trail is being undercut by the Lewis River. If your pet or child slipped off the trail in these areas, it could easily over a cliff and be swept down the river.

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