Lewis River / Quartz Creek, WA

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:
9 Miles round trip. Elevation gain 500 Feet and loss 100 feet to the turn-around point at Quartz Creek Trailhead. Total gain and loss is 600 feet one way. Elevation at the trailhead at 1,430 feet, highest point is at 1,800 feet. Lowest elevation is 1,430 feet.

Trail:
Gifford Pinchot National Forest Lewis River Trail #31 with connections to the lower portion of Trail #31, Quartz Creek Trail #5, Wright Meadow Trail #80, and Middle Falls Trail #31C.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, National Forest 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.

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The two trailheads at this location are know as Crab Creek Trailhead. Take the trail on the right (east) side of the road. The trail drops down a few feet then goes along the Lewis River. After going about .5 mile on the well maintained trail, you come to the Lower Falls overlook and the junction of several trails. The trail to take is along the bank of the Lewis River.

This first mile is a very nice, nearly level walk along the north bank of the Lewis River through a second growth forest. Most of the time you are about 60 feet above the river and other times the trail drops down along the river.

Just after the junction is an outhouse on the left. The trail passes along the edge of the Lower Falls Campground. Near the northern edge of the campground are sets of stairs leading down to the river. You can continue above the river or take the first set of stairs down, walk along the riverbank, and

come back up to the trail on the second set of stairs.
The next section of the trail climbs to about 200 feet above the river and meets one junction, then another, that leads to Forest Road 90. Just after the second junction, the trail drops down to the river for a view of Middle Falls, then climbs and passes above the Middle Falls. Middle Falls is a broad waterfall, about 200 feet wide, and the water cascades about 35 feet down the streambed.

The trail continues along the river to a view of the Upper Falls. The Upper Falls is very picturesque. The white water cascades down a drop of about 60 feet. The main cascade is on the left but the whole face of the waterfall has some water coming over it. There is a fallen cedar tree that provides a somewhat risky way to get past the brush and get a great view of the falls.

Continue up the trail across a sturdy wood bridge and up a fairly steep section of trail underneath a cliff. Turn to the right, round a corner, and climb a bit more to a viewpoint overlooking the Upper Falls.

Just after the viewpoint and before the Upper Falls, there is a short trail that branches off to the right and leads down to a close overlook of the Upper Falls. There are several spectacular viewpoints with the falls right in front of you.

The undergrowth along the trail isn't really dense nor is it very tall. There is salal, evergreen huckleberries and bear grass. As you proceed along the trail more ferns, Oregon Grape, vanilla leaf, and bunchberry dogwood appear.

Just a short distance above the Upper Falls is another very nice waterfall, Taitnapum Falls. The falls drop about 20 feet across the whole river. The overlook is about 100 feet above the river. If you don't want to hike all the way to the Quartz Creek Trailhead then walking to this overlook is a good turn-around point.

For about the last .25 mile of the trail, it leaves the Lewis River and follows along Quartz Creek, which you can get glimpses of through the trees. Once at the Quartz Creek Trailhead, the parking is about 100 feet west, or to the left, of the trailhead.

This hike is one of my top 10 cloudy day hikes. It features three great waterfalls and one small waterfall in 4.5 miles. The trail almost always has views of the Lewis River. This trail is not for small children or unleashed dogs due to the cliffs and dropoffs along the trail. Cliffs are especially prevalent when you are close to the waterfalls. If your pet or child slipped off the trail in these areas, it could easily slip downhill and over a cliff.

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