

Mazama Trail, OR

Vicinity Location:

The trailhead is about 49 miles southeast of Portland, Oregon in the Mt. Hood National Forest.

Directions:

From Portland take I-84 East to the Wood Village, exit (16A). Head south and turn left onto NE Burnside Rd. Heading East, Burnside will merge into Highway 26.

Follow Hwy 26 for 26.8 miles to Zigzag, turn left onto E. Lolo Pass Road and follow the twisty paved road for about 10.4 miles to Lolo Pass where the Pacific Crest Trail crosses the road and the pavement ends. About 4 miles along East Lolo Pass Road a large powerlines come into view and the road parallels the powerlines for the next several miles.

At Lolo Pass, the Pacific Crest Trail crosses Forest Road 18. Make the next right onto Forest Road 1810, though it may be signed as Forest Road 18 because the Forest Service renamed the road a few years ago. Do not continue straight over the hill past the yellow metal gate.

Drive on the 2-lane gravel Forest Road 18 for about 5.5 miles. Maps of the area may still show this as Forest Road 1810. Turn right onto Forest Road 1811 which begins as a narrow single-lane road going uphill.

After a 2.5 miles road 1811 passes the trailhead on the left. The trailhead sign isn't very large so watch your odometer. Pull into the large parking area on the left.

There are no bathrooms or water at the trailhead.

A northwest Forest Pass is required to park at the trailhead.

Length and Elevation:

8.8 miles roundtrip to Cairn Basin. 10.2 miles roundtrip to Eden Park. Elevation gain 2,394 feet and loss of 100 feet to Cairn Basin. Total gain is 2,394 and loss of 450 feet to Eden Park. Total gain and loss is 5,688 feet. Elevation at the trailhead is 3,400 feet, the highest elevation is 5,720 feet.

Trail:

Mazama Trail #625, Timberline Trail #600, Eden Park Trail #600H. Connections to McNeil Point Trail.

There are no geocaches along this trail at the time of this review.

Trail Maps:

Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpx file

History:

Before 1994 this trail was named the Cathedral Ridge Trail. Severe winter of 1985-86 ravaged the trees along the Cathedral Ridge and blew down hundreds of trees. Because of budget restraints the Forest Service abandoned the trail. In 1993 the Mazamas mountaineering group began repairing the trail. Thousands of hours of volunteer labor was spent to finish the project.

As part of the centennial celebration of the Mazamas organization the trail was officially renamed the Mazama Trail on September 10, 1994. Downfall clearing and restoration work continued and was finished in September 1997. The Mazamas continue to annually maintain the trail.

Review: July 25, 2010

The first part of the trail is level and has views of Mt. Hood. After about .3 mile is the signboard to register for entering the Wilderness area.

After the wilderness sign the trail ascends through a very dark forest for about .3 mile, the trail comes out to the bottom of a rockfield and takes several switchbacks to gain the top of the rockfield. The switchbacks climb up to a ridge above the Hood River and you have a nice view of the ridge to the east.

Black flies can be bothersome on this trail early in the year, but out where the breezes are there aren't any bugs to bother your trek higher and higher. The soil becomes less rocky but dustier as the trail approaches the Timberline Trail.

The forest here is made up of Hemlock and Silver Fir trees. Looking to the north you can see the powerlines and the clearcut, but those are soon left behind as the trail gains elevation.

After walking for about 30 minutes, you reach the top of the switchbacks and the first limited views into the Hood River Valley. From this point the trail climbs directly up the ridge.

The Mazama Trail climbs more gently now along the shoulder of Mt. Hood above the Hood River canyon with glimpses into the Hood River canyon. The trail is very well maintained by the Mazamas and there is little deadfall on the trail. The last part of the Mazama Trail climbs up a steeply sloped ridge to meet with the Timberline Trail.

In early summer avalanche lilies are plentiful along the upper parts of the trail. There is a section on the lower part of the trail where the understory is almost all rhododendrons. It doesn't look like many bloom each spring but what a show it would be if they ever bloomed all at once.

The forest cover isn't extremely heavy and dappled sunlight falls on the trail as you walk along. After walking about 2.2 miles, you get your first good view of Mt. Hood as the trail crests a hill and you walk through a narrow valley. The trail continues to gain elevation and turns and a great view of Mt. Hood appears about 2.8 miles from the trailhead.

As you climb up the trail, look carefully to the junction to Cairn Basin, which is on the Timberline Trail. When there is snow on the ground, it is easy to miss the junction and keep walking towards McNeil Point.

On the way to Cairn Basin, you have to cross Gee Creek, which is usually a step-across stream. Once you get to Cairn Basin there is a junction to the left that drops down to Eden Park.

Wander around Cairn Basin and find the stone shelter, one of the few left on the Timberline Trail. Cairn Basin has a nice view of Mt. Hood from the tiny stream and certain times during the summer, the meadow is filled with wildflowers.

Turn left just after crossing the tiny stream at Cairn Basin and head downhill to Eden Park. The trail to Eden Park can be partially snow covered even into July. The trail has several switchbacks so look for tracks to follow so you don't go blundering past one of the switchbacks in case it is covered by snow. You can see Eden Park from most of the trail so if you lose the trail, just make for where the trail enters the woods just above Eden Park.

Just before you get to Eden Park there is an unmarked junction. The right fork drops down to the south end of the meadow and continuing straight ahead shortly brings you to a junction to the right that leads to the north end of the meadow. Walking in to Eden Park, it looks like an old lake that has filled in over time.

Most of this trail is in the forest and there are no real cliffs right next to the trail. Other than the elevation gain, this is a good trail for children and dogs.

Enjoy the photos!!

Gallery Pics

Switchback Steve