

Mt. Adams, WA



Notice: 8/27/2022 - There is no fire danger here until summer 2022. This area has had fires the past few summers. Check conditions before you go. [Link to vicinity information, including fire updates.](#)

Vicinity Location:

About 73 miles northeast of Portland, Oregon.

Directions:

From Portland, Oregon, drive about 60 miles east on I-84 to Hood River. Take exit 64 for White Salmon. Drive about .3 miles, turn left at the stop sign, and continue straight at the flashing red light. Proceed to the toll booth and pay the \$2 for cars. Drive about 1 mile across the steel grate bridge over the Columbia River.

Turn left at the traffic light onto Hwy 14, the Lewis and Clark Hwy. You are heading towards WA-141 alt.

Drive 1.5 miles and turn right onto Hwy 141 alt. Drive 2.2 miles and turn left onto Hwy 141, towards Trout Lake.

Follow Hwy 141 for 19 miles to Trout Lake. At the gas station, turn right onto Forest Service Road 23 and drive 1.3 miles, turning right onto Mt. Adams Rd for .6 mile.

Turn left onto Forest Road 80, following the South Climb signs.

Drive 3.7 miles on Forest Road 80 and turn right onto Forest Road 8040. Follow Forest Road 8040 on the bumpy, rutted gravel road for 8 miles to Cold Springs Campground. The gravel road has washboard sections and ruts that could high-center low-clearance cars.

There are outhouses at this trailhead as well as metal containers for disposing of human waste.

Pack animals and pets are allowed on this trail. Hazardous conditions of ice, cliffs, and abrasive rocks exist year-round on this trail.

A Cascades Climbing permit is required to climb Mt. Adams. The one-time permit includes a parking permit which must be displayed on the car windshield. A Northwest Forest Permit may also be used for parking.

The Cascades Climbing Permit is \$10 for weekdays and \$15 for weekends. Purchase the permit from [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov). You can no longer get a permit at the ranger station.

Solid waste, including all feces, must be carried off the mountain. Bags are available at the Trout Lake Ranger Station and may be dropped off in the metal bins next to the double outhouse at Cold Springs Campground.

Length and Elevation:

12 Miles roundtrip, Elevation gain 6,776 feet and loss 260 feet to the summit. Total gain and loss is 13,380 feet. To lunch counter 3.8 miles one way. Elevation gain 3,750 feet, elevation loss 243 feet. Trailhead elevation is 5,600 feet, summit elevation is 12,276 feet.

Trail:

South Climb Trail #183 with connections to Trail #9 - Round the Mountain Trail.

Trail Maps:

Topo Map, Download Garmin .gpx file, Open Garmin .gpx file

History:

The building on the summit was first a fire lookout that was begun in 1918. It took three summers to haul materials to the summit and construct the building. The lookout was staffed for only two seasons before it was abandoned. Arthur Jones, the lookout guard, inscribed rocks at Pikers Peak. In the 1930's, the lookout was used as the base for sulphur mining. Sulfur was mined and hauled down the mountain on pack mules. When the price of sulfur dropped, the mining was abandoned.

Today the lookout is covered by glacial snow and ice most of the year. The inside is filled with ice and never melts out. You can smell sulphur while on the summit and in the summer the snow on the north side of Mt. Adams becomes tinged with yellow from the sulphur. There is a climber's register located on top of the building.

Several people have died on this trail during inclement weather and many others have lost the correct route on the way down from the summit. Do not assume this trail is suitable for a casual day hike. Before August, much of the route is covered in snow and ice and crampons and ice-axe are required for a safe trip.

Follow this link for information from Gifford Pinchot Nat'l Forest about climbing Mt. Adams

Review: August 22, 2009

The South Climb trail is heavily used on weekends by people climbing Mt. Adams. This is not a technically challenging climb when the snow melts and exposes the rocky soil, but it takes climbers at least 6 hours or more to gain the nearly 6,700 feet of elevation to reach the 12,276-foot summit of Mt. Adams. Though this can be done as a day hike, the safety gear and clothing needed for a safe trip should make your pack heavy enough that a few extra pounds for a tent and an overnight stay won't much matter.

From the trailhead, the trail follows an old road for 2 miles to about timberline and the trail is wide and sandy. After the 4-way intersection with Trail #9, the Round the Mountain Trail, it enters the Mt. Adams Wilderness. From here the trail gets rockier as it steepens and gains elevation. The trail crosses over to the Morrison Creek drainage and leads up the ridge on the west side of the creek.

The trail winds up through the very rocky terrain to the toe of Crescent Glacier. Be sure to look back the way you came to help find the route back down. There are a number of rock-walled camp sites along this section of trail and this may be the best choice early in the season.

The trail is maintained to the 8,000-foot level on Crescent Ridge, then an unmaintained trail continues to Lunch Counter. Early in the season much of the trail will be covered in snow.

At Lunch Counter there are dozens of cleared camping sites spread across the edge of the plateau. There are campsites right on the south edge, at the south edge of the large flat area of Lunch Counter, across Lunch Counter, and just above and to the north of Lunch Counter. These campsites

have C-shaped rock walls built of varying heights to shield tents from the wind and snowstorms. There is a nice stream that flows across Lunch Counter that usually flows from June throughout the season. The stream freezes most nights and in cool weather so be prepared to melt snow for water.

From Lunch Counter it is about a 3 hour walk up to the summit of Mt. Adams. As the snow melts throughout the summer, a footpath appears to get to Piker's Peak, at 11,600 feet in elevation. The long rock patch on Suksdorf Ridge is the easiest way up and down Piker's Peak if you don't want to use an ice axe and crampons. At about 11,000 feet, look for user paths leading up and to the west to the south side of Piker's Peak.

From Piker's Peak, walk across a mostly level .5 mile section of the trail to the final ascent to the summit. The trail climbs steeply up the south side for the remaining 600 feet to the summit.

The summit has a large flat area and people occasionally camp on the summit. There is the old forest service/mining shack on top and there is a U.S.G.S bronze marker embedded in a rock on the summit.

Walking around on the summit provides views of the mountains to the north, the dry Columbia Plateau to the east, the Columbia River Gorge and mountains to the south, and mountains to the west. In the summer you can see sulphur on some of the snowfields and you can smell the sulphur wafting through the air on the summit. It smells like someone is lighting matches.

The journey back down needs to be taken with care. Remember that you need strength in your legs to get back down the steep mountain slopes safely to the trailhead. Be very careful on the steep snowfields because they most all end with big rocks at the bottom. Losing control on the snow and sliding into the rocks spells disaster.

Be very careful of the weather conditions because Mt. Adams will make its own clouds at a moment's notice and there is very little protection from thunderstorms above timberline.

Be sure not to walk directly above anyone else in case you dislodge rocks. The rocks need to roll past people, not roll down and hit someone.

This trail is not recommended for dogs because of the abrasive volcanic rocks above timberline and dogs can get altitude sickness too.

Enjoy the photos!!

Gallery Pics

Switchback Steve