Multnomah Falls – Wahkeena Falls Loop, OR



Vicinity Location:
27 miles east of Portland in the Columbia River Scenic Area.

Directions:
Make sure you won't be leaving anything in your car that would lead to a break-in. We saw shattered automotive glass in the parking lot.

From Portland, OR, take I-84 East to past Troutdale to exit 31, Multnomah Falls. Please note this is a left-lane exit from I-84.

If you arrive early in the day then you could also exit I-84 at exit 28 or exit 35. Be aware parking fills up fast at the parking along the Columbia River Scenic Highway at Multnomah Falls. The main parking lot off I-84 can fill by 9:30 a.m. on weekends.

Follow the masses of people to the lodge and have a look around. It is obvious the trail starts to the East of the lodge.

No parking permits are needed.

Flush toilets are available at the trailhead.

Length and Elevation:
5.1 miles roundtrip, Elevation gain and loss totals 2,800 Feet

Trail:
Columbia Gorge Trail 441, 420, 419, 422 with connections to 400, 415, and 420C

There is at least one geocache along this trail at: N 45° 34.102 W 122° 07.404 Info at Geocaching.com

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, National Forest Service Map, Download Garmin .gpx file

Review: March 12, 2005, June 10, 2007
If you hike this on a weekend then get ready for an ant-line of people for the first mile.

Cross underneath the freeway and train tracks along Multnomah Creek. When cross the Scenic Highway, look carefully at the top of the falls. You can see the overlook at the top left side of the upper falls.

Follow the paved trail past the arched bridge which crosses over Lower Multnomah Falls and feel the bracing mist. The trail begins to switchback up to the top of the falls. After about .4 miles, turn right at the junction with Trail 400 and continue up the switchbacks. Just over the first crest of the trail you turn right to go to the overlook. You've hiked about a mile for this spectacular view.

From here, backtrack to the junction with the overlook trail spur and go across Multnomah Creek. Continue up the trail and leave the crowds behind. Soon you come to Trail 421, Perdition Trail, which has been closed for a number of years. Enjoy the waterfalls and rapids along the trail and turn right at the junction with Trail 420. The trail sign indicates the lodge is 1.7 miles away but if feels more like 2 miles.

Follow Trail 420 West and it will take you across Shady Creek and through the woods where you can see some past burn areas. There are a few old-growth trees and you can see how their thick bark and high branches survive forest fires.

Soon you'll come to a junction with Trail 420C. This is about 2.5 miles from the trailhead. We didn't hike this trail to Devil's Rest. If you added in this spur you would add an extra 3.2 miles and elevation gain to your trip.

At the junction with Trail 419, keep left and stay on Trail 420. This is an open forest with a few views into the Gorge.

The next trail junction is with Trail 415, Angel's Rest Trail. Hike on this trail for about 100 yards and have a rest at Wahkeena Spring. The volume of the spring suggests that you shouldn't need to filter water from this source.

If you continued on to Angel's Rest, you would get a fantastic view and add an extra 5.4 miles and 2000 feet of elevation gain and loss to your trip.

Heading back to Trail 420, continue downhill to the other junction of Trail 419. We followed Trail 419 for about .2 miles to a brushy overlook of the Gorge and the Multnomah Falls parking lot.

Back to Trail 420, you start heading fairly steeply downhill and you have the wonderful sights and sounds of Wahkeena Creek beside you. On the way down you'll start meeting a lot more people. Be sure to stop at Fairy Falls. It is a great place to take a break and watch the water spill down the basalt rocks. Stop at the Monument Viewpoint for another nice view of the Gorge.

There is an overgrown trail trail that starts near this junction. The trail switchbacks down towards the stream to a viewpoint of Necktie Falls. The trail has a short section along a cliff and the fence and railings are broken at points. The fence at the viewpoint is broken down so don't take small children all the way to the viewpoint.

When you are almost back down to the highway, you walk by Wahkeena Falls. Stand on the bridge and get a face-full of mist. The trail crosses the creek then proceeds down to the Old Columbia Scenic Highway. You've now gone about 4.5 miles.

Catch Trail 422 back to the lodge and have a stop in the public restrooms. Maybe you want to treat yourself to some ice cream too.

This loop is a "Must See" trail in the Gorge. With the additional loops you can make the day as long as you want! I plan to hike this trail again when the flowers are out more. We hiked it mid-March and the Trillium were just beginning to bloom.

Links to the waypoints coming soon

Enjoy the photos!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve

