Norway Pass Trailhead to Mt. Margaret, WA

Vicinity Location: 64 miles northeast of Portland, Oregon in Mt. St. Helens National Monument.
Directions:
The trailhead is 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. If you come from Randle, check ahead for road closures. I saw a sign warning of a closure on FR26.

Length and Elevation:
Total length is 10.8 miles for the out-and-back trail to Mt. Margaret. Elevation gain to Mt. Margaret is 2,150 feet and 250 foot loss. Elevation at the trailhead is 3680 feet, the high point is 5,835 feet.

Trail:
Boundary Trail #1, Norway Pass Trailhead with connections to Trail 211, 214, 227.

A Northwest Forest Pass is required for parking.

An outhouses is available at the parking lot.

There is a pump for water but the water has an iron taste to it.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map

Review: July 25, 2004
Trails within 10 miles of Mt. St. Helens were closed in October 2004 due to the renewed eruption activity. Most trails, including this trail, were reopened in the spring of 2005. The remaining trails were reopened in 2007.

Sunday dawned clear and cooler than the 100 degree heat from the day before so the hike was on; but where to go? I chose to drive into the Mt. Saint Helens Monument and hike from the Norway pass trailhead on Boundary Trail #1.

The map shows the trailhead at 4200 feet in elevation. The trail climbs steadily uphill and you are rewarded with great views right away because you are in the blast zone of the 1980 eruption.

In about a mile you come to a junction for trail 227A which hooks up with 227 which hooks back into trail #1. I heard from another hiker that 227A had washed out but the Gifford Pinchot website doesn't indicate any problems.

I continued on trail #1 to Norway Pass. The pass is a saddle that looks into Spirit Lake. You can still see thousands of logs floating at the North end of the lake. There is also the junction of trail 227 that is washed out. The Green Trails map show that you actually lose 100 feet in elevation over the past 1.3 miles. It sure felt like a constant elevation gain except dropping down into Norway Pass. From Norway Pass you continue the climb on the dusty trail. I wore running shoes and had my boots in my backpack. The whole trail is pretty easy obstacle-wise and I think it is okay to hike it in good trail shoes as long as it isn't raining.

There is another junction with trail 211 at the 5000 foot level. This trail goes back to several lakes and I was told that some of the lakes have fish in them. Continuing uphill the views just get better

and better. Bring sunscreen along on a clear day or you'll be like a ripe tomato by sundown.

About 1 ½ miles after the junction with trail 211 you come to Bear Camp. There was still a fair amount of snowmelt going on and a small mountain stream emanating from the snowpack. This will be all melted out in a few more weeks and then there really won't be any water along the trail. The trail is left of the Bear Camp signpost. I wandered about the campsite for awhile looking for the trail.

The campsite has a nice solar toilet though I didn't lift the lid to check out its efficiency. Continuing along the trail you are treated to spectacular views. I saw Mt. Jefferson, Mt. Hood, Mt Saint Helens (of course), Mt. Adams, and Mt. Rainier. On a really clear day you might be able to see farther North to Mt. Baker.

The trail has lots of dead trees and many new Noble Firs growing on the mountainsides. As you can see from the pictures, there are lots of wildflowers scattered all along though not huge fields of them or a great variety. Be prepared to have the weather in your face because there are no large trees to provide shelter and you get above 5500 feet in elevation. I ran out of time at the junction to trail 214, which is about ½ mile before Mt. Margaret.

I took a picture of Mt. Margaret showing the trail going to it. Part of the trail is covered in snow even in late July. As for wildlife, I saw lots of Elk droppings and tracks, hummingbirds, Robins, Sparrows, and Flickers. Hikers that I talked to had seen a Mountain Goat the previous day.

I hurried back down the trail to the car and drove home to a well deserved dinner and a couple of beers. I hiked this trail about the right time of year and I drank 3 liters of water. Green Trails show 11.4 mile round-trip to Mt. Margaret. Switchback Steve says there are a few switchbacks on this trail but the elevation gain feels like a 2000 foot constant climb. I would definitely hike this trail again.

For pics go Enjoy the photos!
Switchback Steve