



# Phelps Creek - Spider Gap - Buck Creek, WA

**Vicinity Location:** Central Washington in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

**Location:** The trailhead is 64 miles east of Everett and 150 miles northeast of Portland.

## **Directions from Portland:**

Avoid all the Seattle area traffic and take I-84 E for about 100 miles then take exit 104 to Hwy 97 N at Biggs Junction.

Take Hwy 97 N for about 75 miles to Yakima. Merge onto I-82 W/Hwy 97 for the next 37 miles.

Merge onto I-90 W for 5.1 miles and take exit 106, continuing on Hwy 97 N for 51 miles then merge onto Hwy 2 W and drive 19.3 miles, passing through Leavenworth, WA.

At Coles Corner, turn right onto Hwy 207 N

**Directions from Everett:** Drive 85 miles east on Hwy 2 to Coles Corner. Turn left onto Hwy 207 N.

## **Once at Coles Corner from Portland or Everett:**

Drive on Hwy 207 N for 4 miles reach a Y intersection just after crossing the Wenatchee River. Turn right onto Chiwawa Loop Road and drive 1.3 miles.

Turn left onto on Chiwawa River Road which turns into Forest Road 62. Drive 22 miles to the junction for Forest Road 6211. The pavement ends in 10.8 miles and the next 11 miles of dirt road gets progressively worse.

Turn right at the junction for Forest Road 6211. Drive 2.3 awful miles to the trailhead.

Total drive time from Portland is a little over 6 hours and about 3 hours from Everett.

A Northwest Forest Pass is not required for parking

Parking is limited and you may have to park along the road.

There is no restroom at the trailhead.

**Length and Elevation:** Total distance is 52 miles. Trailhead elevation is 2,750 feet. Highest point is 7,050 feet. Lowest point is 3,470 feet.

Total elevation change is 14,575 feet up and 14,575 feet down.

**Trail:**

Phelps Creek Trail, Miner's Ridge Trail #785, Miner's Ridge Lookout Trail #785.3, PCT #2000, Buck Creek Pass Trail #789, Sheep Camp Trail #787, Buck Creek Trail #1513, with connections to various others.

There is at least one geocache for this trail at: **N 48° 04.343 W 120° 50.988** Info at [Geocaching.com](http://Geocaching.com)

**Trail Maps:**

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

**Review:** July 31, 2021

This trail is also known as Spider Meadows Trail. Once you have arrived at the trailhead, turn around and enjoy the views of the nearby hills and the peaks to the south. The trail starts out on a wide path which was once a mining road. You soon walk over a small creek which is one of many small creeks you will cross, and in .25 mile you come to the Carne Mountain Trail junction. Keep left and stay on the wide trail which continues at a very moderate grade. In 2.5 miles you enter the Glacier Peak Wilderness and just after 3 miles you will pass some campsites.

Pay attention to this section of the trail so you don't accidentally take the wrong trail. Leroy Creek has washed out the trail and the re-route trail has a couple of faint spots. Just after Leroy Creek is a junction on the right for Trail 1512, Leroy Creek Trail, which goes to Ice Lakes. Drop back down to the main trail and continue up the valley for another couple of miles to Spider Meadow, at 5.4 miles

from the trailhead. This glacial valley is filled with flowers in the spring and in the fall, a mix of brown and green. There are several campsites and a pit toilet at this end of the valley and a few at the head of the valley.

Walking through the open valley, admire the views of the mountains beside and ahead of you. It is a gentle ascent through the valley and the trail threads across Phelps Creek a few times at the head of the valley. Climb a little more steeply to the junction to Phelps Basin, 6.7 miles from the trailhead, and drop by for a visit. This pleasant little cirque has a few sloping campsites as the sides of the mountains slopes tail out near the creek.

Return to the junction and head up the trail which soon becomes pretty steep as it climbs along the headwalls of the valley. Though it is less than a mile to what is left of Spider Glacier, it will take some time to ascend the tread which is filled with fist sized and larger rocks. At about 7.5 miles you reach the creek that flows from Spider Glacier and cascades down to Spider Meadow far below. There are some campsites here which must be wildly popular in the summer for their spectacular views. There also is a pit toilet here so you don't have to try to dig a cathole in the rocky ground.

If the weather is reasonable and the snow is soft enough, you can walk over Spider Gap without micro-spikes. Be aware that when walking on the snow, there could be big voids below you from the stream or rocks that create melted voids around them. Don't walk in the middle of the snow field and watch your step so you don't fall through the snow.

There is a stream that flows from Spider Glacier over the precipice down into Spider Meadows and is a good place to filter water.

#### Lyman Lake

We found a wonderful campsite at Lyman Lake. Upper line in Lake. I overlooked the lakes and the cirque north of spider gap. There were plenty of mosquitoes in July but the deed kept them away.

Some notes for day one.

Once you climb up to spider gap look for a rock path or a path through the rocks on the right.

You need to descend through the gully. At the top looking north you will see a trail that leads along the side of the mountain side. Do not take this trail. You want to send to the lakes through the gully.

When you have descended about halfway there is a user Trailmark Cairns over to the left of it. Follow that down to the upper Lyman Lakes.

Continue following along the lakes until you get to the last of the lakes. There are some nice campsites here. Line

We had a wonderful campsite overlooking the lake and the cirque.

At the lakes is a user trail that goes to the outlet of the last of the upper Lyman Lakes. Walk a short quarter mile or so and have some nice views of upper and lower Lyman Lake and the outlet cascading down a waterfall to destroy The stream that feeds the Lyman Lake.

The Lyman Lake systems are glacier fed and the water is not good for filtering. Look for the freshwater little streams that appear and disappear in the flatlands around the lake. There are some nice pools to get water to filter in though the pools can be fairly small. No fires are allowed in this area. I think that applies for the spider Meadows all the way through the gap and two upper Lyman Lakes.

A Scenic tip is to get do a short day hike on the trail towards lower Lyman Lake. Crest Ridge to the north of the camp and there's a great view of Bonanza Peak to the north east. In the mornings this is in the shade and in the afternoon it is shining and all its splendor.

Descend along upper line or lower Lyman Lake and then come to a large log stream crossing over the raging outlet of lower Lyman Lake. Just after crossing turn left and head to cloudy pass. There are some nice views of the lake and you could swim in it if you dare. At it's cloudy pass look for a boot track going off to the right. Follow that up about a quarter of a mile to great views of glacier Peak. Rested cloudy pass and then drop fairly steeply down to a Trail junction and take the hiker shortcut on the left. This traverses blocky rock far from the nearby Mountain granite rock bar in the nearby mountain that you have to negotiate.

We hiked to image lake and took a swim and then got some pictures a glacier Peak then hike down over to the minors Ridge and Lookout. We met Russ and Kelley who are volunteers restoring the lookout. Bryce has been spending the last five summers are starting to look at him and he will be here this year until Labor Day. They gave us the tour and told us about how lightning hit a tree just 150 feet from the lookout and Kelley was holding a knife and affected her nerves in her three fingers are still numb from the lightning strike. The view from the lookout and along this end of miners Ridge is simply stunning. You go along the top of the ridge line and you have amazing views of glacier Peak and all the mountains surrounding it and to the north you have that mountain range that's not the high route and deep valleys on either side.

We hit the PCT and then started climbing up. Trail is somewhat brushy and ready but not all that to have a reading. Fairly dusty. The trail soon came out along a large avalanche slope and were several trees across the trail and you could see many broken and dead trees down the hillside. It's open slope gives an amazing view of glacier Peak. We walked along for 15 or 20 minutes with fuse a glacier Peak on our left. We also crossed Stream cascading down the mountain. It's a great place to get some water but there is plenty of water on tiny little streams along the way at least in late July. After that we reach the next trail junction minors to get to minors Ridge and stopped to put some earbuds and music on so that we could not think about how hard it was to clients deeply for 900 feet up to camp. With our music on it didn't take long to climb up to lady camp. We had found out from Reser and Kelley, who we met on the trail, That lady camp was named because probably about 100 years ago they allowed sheep to be up here on summer range and a Basque shepherd card to figure out a woman in a tree. When we got to camp we met Reser and Kelley again and Russ walked up and showed us the tree carving. It turns out it is right next to where we camped. There's also the

top of the front or the head of a bedframe there propped up against the tree. This camp also has a toilet so we didn't have to dig any cat holes once again. We don't have great views from our campsite but it was in the shade which is nice on a warm day. They were some wind to keep the bugs down a little bit but it's been a pretty buggy trip so far. Next

I have to respect at our campsite Sean or the three of us went to image lake on a day hike. The trail climbs up a bit and then along a wide open mountain side meadow with incredible views of glacier Peak and then drops down into the basin for image lake. We went swimming at image lake and then dried ourselves off in the sun Jeremiah went back to camp and Sean and I continued on to the minors Ridge and Lookout. The minors Ridge is an incredible Ridge that is almost level and splits to deep valleys one that has glacier Peak to the south and one that has many more small mountains to the north. We got out to the Lookout and met Russ coming up the trail. He took us up for a tour inside to look out which he has been restoring. He is working on the roof this summer and all the materials had to be brought up by mules and pack horses. He's found some old photos of the original look out which was just a shock and the original fire Lookout person who staffed the lookout. That person has written a book and you can read about the staffing of this look out.

Walking around look out I had Verizon cell service and was able to text my wife about her change of plans and planned accident. I also was able to send her a picture from the lookout. It has a jaw-dropping glacier Peak and all the mountains all the way around. We could also see a fire or a Pyro cumulus cloud blooming over the mountains from a fire in the methyl valley. Luckily for us the wind has been from the north west and we haven't had any smoke.

A scenic tip for seeing Glacier Peak from Image Lake is on the north side of the lake is a user trail that climbs up above the lake. Be sure to take this short little trail for a classic view of glacier Peak behind image lake. If you can be here for sunrise there can be a lovely glow on the mountain.

At the quarter mile before the junction with the PCT is a big stream or you can get splashed in that cooler. Once on the PCT we turned right and started heading downhill towards the crossing of miners Creek. Continuing down through some lazy switchbacks the past several small streams and one a really nice viewpoint of glacier Peak. There's also crossing that big stream again either via A slippery log or slippery rocks.

Once you reach the junction of the PCT and Buck Creek Trail you really start a steep climb up middle Ridge. Trail switchbacks incline steeply and about a third of the way up the great place to stop for water. Continue in the climbing eventually break out into sundrenched slopes with exceptional views back towards image lake and lady camp. After climbing about 2000 feet you reach a junction at the top with metal ridge. Turn left here and walk a mile to where you camp for the night. There are at least three good camps to choose from on Meadow Ridge. This Alpine meadow has a knockout view of glacier Peak. We saw some time again in the Meadows at camp. We used magnets and plenty of insect repellent because during the day the blackflies and horseflies are out and in the mornings and evenings the mosquitoes are out in force.

From small creek you climb steeply up the trail for a mile and a half or so where it flattens out at the

junction to flower dome. You are not yet at Buck Creek Pass. Continue or take a break here and then continue up into giant Alpine Meadows. Looking down you can see avalanche to breeze and perhaps even lingering patches of snow. Glacier Peak looms large in the distance.

Start on the Buck Creek Trail at or near Park Creek Pass. You can see the campground down below you in the saddle. It doesn't look like there's any water in the area and the closest water is about a quarter mile down the trail. The trail drops through or drops down along the slopes of a steep rocky mountain. Brush and wildflowers abound in this section and there's a lot of small creeks to step across too. You get a few more glimpses of glacier Peak and then it's lost from beer for the rest of the trip. As the trail continues to gently drop into the forest the condition of the trail improves greatly. There's a lot less brush in the trail once you pass the trail the steep side trail on the left to help the camp at helmet dome.

The trail is also somewhat dusty here in the summertime so you might want to space out hiking along this section.

Trail continues to drop and passes through a burned out area. It's switchbacks down through burned out again it goes through some more avalanche zones I guess it does the avalanche zones first then the burned out here in the burned out area the trail cruise been through lately. After that continue to descend to the Chihuahua River Trail. This trail appears to be an old Forest Road and is much more open and less brushy than the trails you previously been on. Didn't hear the sound of Buck Creek in the nearby distance down in the canyon.

Enjoy the photos!!  
Gallery Pics  
Switchback Steve