

Santiam

STATE FOREST

Recreation Guide



Driving forest roads

Most of the recreation sites on the forest are reached over maintained gravel roads, but drivers should be aware that gravel roads require more caution, slower speeds, and higher clearance. Carry a forest map, water, check your spare tire, and be alert for log trucks and other vehicles. Stay to the right and expect a vehicle around every corner.

If you're looking for more specific information or a detailed forest map, visit our office one mile east of Mehama on Hwy 22 or click through our website at oregon.gov/odf.

Stay current on forest updates

Camping fees and sites that require fees may be subject to change. Trails, roads, and campsites are subject to closure due to weather, maintenance, and active timber sales. To view closures and other updates, visit oregon.gov/odf.

Forest Contact Information:

Santiam District Office
Oregon Department of Forestry
22965 North Fork Road SE
Lyons, OR 97358
Phone: (503) 859-2151



Come discover a forest of towering Douglas-fir and hemlock trees. Catch the mist on a hot day from a high waterfall as it plunges to a punchbowl of broken basalt. Feel the wind sweep over you as you stand on a rocky peak with the snow-capped Cascades towering in the distance. Relax at your camp near a clear lake ringed with rhododendron.

The Santiam State Forest may be one of the best-kept secrets in the foothills of the northern Oregon Cascades. It's easy to miss the tucked-away forest for busy travelers heading up Highway 22 to more popular destinations. The fact that it is largely unknown can be a plus for visitors seeking a more primitive, but highly scenic experience.

The Oregon Department of Forestry invites you to stop and visit the Santiam State Forest, located about 30 miles east of Salem. Spread over 47,000 acres of prime forest lands ranging in elevation from 1,000 to 5,000 feet, the forest is carefully managed to provide a range of benefits from wood products to wildlife habitat to recreation opportunities. Visit our office on Highway 22 near Mehama for information and maps and come ready to explore.

Be prepared to venture off the beaten path and travel gravel roads to find the best this forest has to offer. A little exploration will reveal secluded picnic spots, high mountain vistas, scenic waterfalls, tranquil lakes, and trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding.



Weather on the forest is generally warm and dry in the summer. The bright autumn colors and glowing sunshine of early fall give way to steady rain at the lower elevations by late fall. At higher elevations, snow blankets the forest and often stays until June.

History



Private timber companies harvested most of the forest in the Santiam Canyon between 1880 and 1930. By the 1930s and 1940s, much of the land was either logged over or burned by wildfire. Some of these landowners let their land return to the counties for delinquent taxes while others sold it to the county for a minimal amount.

The Forest Acquisition Act, passed in 1939, encouraged counties to deed the foreclosed lands to the Oregon Department of Forestry in exchange for a share of future timber harvest revenues, giving rise to the state forest system we have today. Since then, the Oregon Department of Forestry has managed the land.



Fairy slipper orchid

By the time the state took ownership, much of the forest was already naturally restocked with a native mix of seedlings. The first ground to be planted on the Santiam State Forest by the Department of Forestry was the area of the 1951 Sardine Creek Fire, which burned 21,400 acres near Detroit Lake.

Santiam State Forest Today

The forest is divided into several large blocks of land and numerous smaller parcels. The largest block of forest is in the Rock Creek Basin, located south of Highway 22 near Mill City and Gates. This area includes the Rock Creek campsites and the Santiam Horse Camp, where a growing network of non-motorized trails is available.

Another sizable piece of the Santiam State Forest lies just north of Highway 22 in the Niagara Road area. It includes the highest points on the forest and features trails to Rocky Top and Natural Rock Arch.

The other large block of Santiam State Forest is located in the Butte Creek Basin and is reached by driving south of Highway 213 through Scott's Mills and the Crooked Finger Road. Explore the High Lakes Recreation Area and Butte Creek Falls in this area.



View from Rocky Top

Campgrounds in the Forest

Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis; no reservations.
 Limit per site: 8 people, 2 vehicles
 Maximum stay: 14 days
 Fees: \$20/night drive-in sites*
 \$15/night walk-in sites*
 (*includes 2 vehicles)
 All pets must be on leash.

Legend



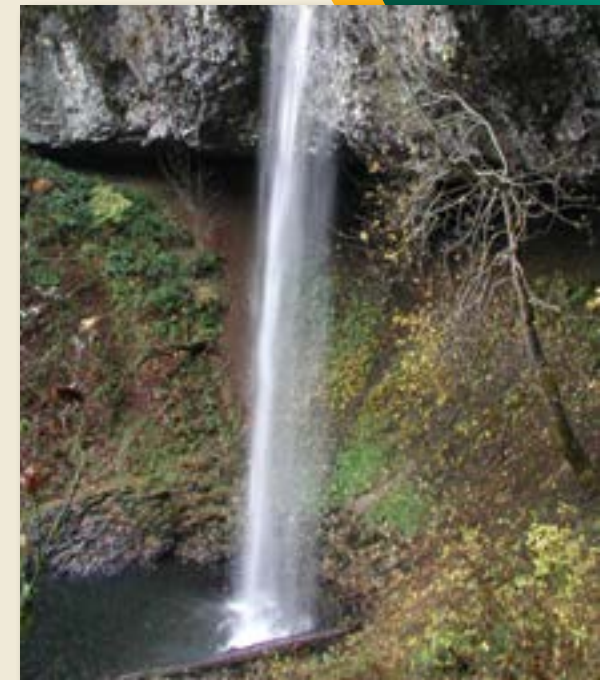
Shellburg Falls Recreation Area

Shellburg Falls Recreation Area offers a small, developed campground nestled in a moss-draped forest of Douglas-fir and hemlock. The scenic Shellburg Falls Trail passes behind the waterfall, which plunges 100 feet from the edge of a basalt cliff into a foamy pool. Nearby, you will find six miles of trails open to mountain bikes, horses, and hikers.

Season of use: Walk-in access year round; vehicle access May – November

Elevation: 1,500 feet

Number of sites: 7



Shellburg Falls

Santiam Horse Camp

The Santiam Horse Camp rests among the shade of Douglas-fir trees and is the starting point for a system of non-motorized trails for horses, bicycles, and hikers. Horse campers will find ample room for trailer parking with corrals and stock water for their animals. Trail users can travel through 12 miles of diverse forest on the Monument Peak trail system.

Season of use: May – October

Elevation: 1,700 feet

Number of sites: 12



Santiam Horse Camp

Rock Creek Campsites

Three campsites are spread out along Rock Creek offering a great spot to camp, picnic, or cool off in the stream during a hot summer day.

Season of use: May – October

Elevation: 1,300 feet

Number of sites: 3



Swimming hole at Rock Creek Campsites



Crooked Finger Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Area

The Crooked Finger OHV Area offers 6 miles of OHV trails which travel through diverse forest. There is a staging area with ample parking for trailers and most of the trails are moderate in difficulty.

Season of use: Year-round (closures during fire season)
Elevation: 2,300 feet



Butte Creek Falls Trailhead and Campground

Discover two beautiful waterfalls in less than one mile along the Butte Creek Falls Trail. Upper Butte Creek Falls splashes over a 20-foot rock ledge into a deep, cold pool. Follow the trail to its end at a rocky precipice where you can view the 80 foot high Lower Butte Creek Falls. Butte Creek Campground is located one half-mile upstream of the trailhead.

Season of use: May – October (Gates may close seasonally)
Elevation: 1,900 feet
Number of sites: 3



High Lakes Recreation Area

The High Lakes Recreation Area is a lightly visited area that includes **Rhody Lake** and **Butte Lakes**. This series of small lakes is nestled among thick patches of rhododendron at an elevation of 3,500 feet. A small primitive campground is located near Rhody Lake along with plenty of spots to set up a picnic.

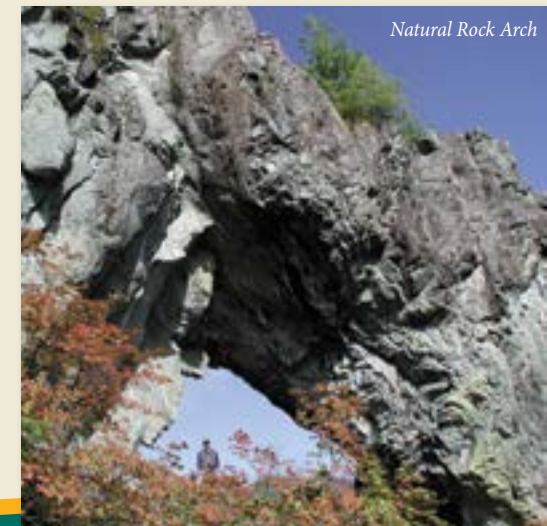
Season of use: May – November (depending on snow level)
Elevation: 3,500 feet
Number of sites: 3



Natural Rock Arch Trail

The Natural Rock Arch is an impressive geologic formation that stands 50 feet tall and 40 feet wide. After hiking the steep half-mile trail, you stand under the huge arch and can almost feel the weight of the rock hanging above. Explore around the base of the arch to discover numerous small caves in the fractured rock.

Season of use: May – November (depending on snow level)
Elevation: 3,800 feet



Rocky Top Trail

This rugged, half-mile trail climbs to the 5,000-foot summit of Rocky Top, which was once the location of a fire lookout. On a clear day, the spectacular view includes Mt. Jefferson, Three Sisters, and Three-Fingered Jack. Don't forget to look down for delicate flowers, such as the fiery red paintbrush and thick bunches of bear grass clinging to rocky crevices.

Season of use: June – October (depending on snow level)
Elevation: 5,000 feet

