

Spring24

Washington Trails

A Publication of Washington Trails Association • wta.org

Breaking down barriers

From welcoming new hikers to forging new paths,
how we're caring for trails and those who love them

+

4 tips (and resources)
to help you hike more

Hike the San Juans
— inspiration for a long weekend

How a major win in Congress
is improving trails





PROLOGUE Electrify your drive.

AWD
CR-V
HYBRID

Power your adventures.



Drive Good™ means getting back to nature. And doing it in an eco-friendly way. At Honda, you can choose from a variety of environmentally conscious vehicles, including the all-new, all-electric Honda Prologue and our award-winning hybrids. Partnering with the dedicated members of Washington Trails Association to safeguard our amazing outdoors, we're helping ensure the availability of trails and other natural wonders for everyone, forever. Let's all Drive Good™ together.

Drive Good™



Western
Washington
Honda Dealers

Visit your local Honda Dealer, Today!
WesternWashington.HondaDealers.com/Drive-Good



SCAN ME

Washington Trails

A Publication of Washington Trails Association

Board of Directors

President | Matt Martinez

Secretary | Todd Dunfield

Treasurer | Anson Fatland

VP, Development | Ethan Evans

VP, Governance | Jennifer Surapisitchat

Directors at Large

Bryce Bolen • Bhavna Chauhan

Michael Dunning • Jennifer Faubion

Halley Knigge • Sully Moreno • Ken Myer

Arun Sambataro • Ashleigh Shoecraft

WTA Leadership

Chief Executive Officer

Jaime Loucky

Washington Trails Staff

Washington Trails Editor | Jessi Loerch

Hiking Content | Tiffany Chou

Graphic Designer | Jenica Nordström

Copy Editor | Cassandra Overby

Contributors

Writers | Eric Allan, Tiffany Chou,

Brynna Counts-Morgan, Loren Drummond,

Joe Gonzalez, Martell Hesketh,

Nicole Masih-Théberge, Denice Rochelle,

Craig Romano, Sandra Saathoff, Allie Tripp

Proofreaders | Jim Cavin, Rebecca Kettwig

Trail Team | Jennie Flaming,

Kimberly Huntress Inskeep, Jessi Loerch,

Liz Rainaud, Craig Romano, Holly Weiler



Washington Trails Association

705 Second Avenue, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104

206-625-1367 • wta.org

General Information | wta@wta.org

Membership & Donations | membership@wta.org

Editorial Submissions | editor@wta.org

Meet all our staff at wta.org/staff

Making Time for Nature

One of the things I love most about the start of a new year is the opportunity to set goals and intentions for the year to come. One of my top intentions this year is to be more consistent about getting that daily dose of nature that I know is so important for my mental and physical well-being.

If you're anything like me, you know how easy it is to let that regular connection with nature slip amid the responsibilities of daily life. Taking care of my work, my family (including two young kids), my home and myself already feels like a full slate. But I know that making time to get outside is always worth it, and it helps me bring my best self to the other parts of my life.

Even though I know it's good for me, it's not always easy to make it happen. So many things can stand in the way of getting outside: feeling too busy, not being sure where to go, worries about the weather, forgetting where I put my (insert whatever item of outdoor gear I can't find that day), even just the general feeling of exhaustion that comes with navigating modern life.

At WTA, one of our biggest goals is breaking down barriers that prevent people from getting outside and enjoying the many benefits of time in nature. We do that in ways both large and small.

Our trails program links people with opportunities to get outside through volunteer trail maintenance.

Our Outdoor Leadership Training program and gear lending libraries train outdoor leaders and provide them with the equipment they need to be safe and have fun in any type of weather.

Our community programs help lower the barriers to getting outside that are faced by BIPOC and other historically marginalized communities, including offsetting the costs of transportation.

And sometimes the barrier is mental. It's being unsure where to go, or needing a reminder of the power and beauty of the outdoors. For those days, a visit to the WTA website or our Trailblazer app can be a way to spark that excitement. Some days I like to live vicariously, going to our trip reports page and seeing where folks are getting outside and what beautiful photos they are taking on trail.

Whatever the obstacle, one thing I know is that whenever I **do** manage to get myself over that hump and get outside — even if it's just making time for a neighborhood walk or visiting a nearby green space — I invariably get home feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. So here's to 2024 and to getting outside more regularly. I hope to see you out there too!

Jaime Loucky | Chief executive officer | jaimel@wta.org

20 Join us on trail

How we're making it easier to volunteer



Features

24 Volunteers to leaders

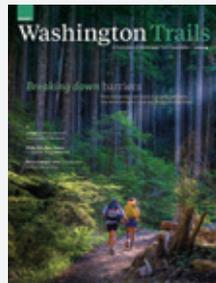
How two young volunteers got their start at WTA and later teamed up to lead their own trip of youth volunteers.

28 My Type 2 year

A torn ACL and a breakup derailed Martell Hesketh's summit goals in the Cascades, but the life detours delivered their own unexpected rewards.

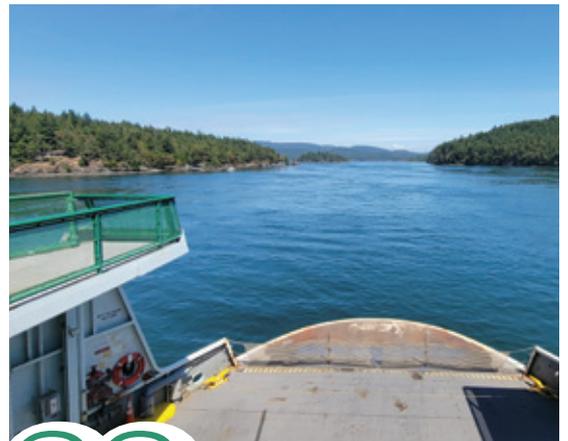
34 The Bronze Chapter

Denice Rochelle grew up in Washington's outdoors, and started a grassroots organization to help communities of color learn outdoors skills and share knowledge supported by peers.



On the cover

Inge Johnsson, inge-johnsson.pixels.com and [@photoinge](https://www.instagram.com/photoinge) on Instagram, captured this beautiful image of two hikers heading up the trail at Mount Teneriffe.



38

Shoulder season in the San Juans

Visit the "crown jewel of maritime Northwest Washington," inspired by one hiker's 3-day family adventure.

Photos by Toni Messer and Eric Allan

Departments

3 Front Desk

Greetings from our chief executive officer and Washington Trails editor

6 Community

Local parks and national parks are not as different as you might think. Experts tips on backcountry safety.

10 Trail Talk

Five ways to get involved with WTA this year. Suggestion on how to make time for hiking.

36 Trail Mix

Shoulder season travel to San Juans. How gaiters can help year-round hiking.

44 Hike It

Find inspiration for your next hike.

POWERED BY YOU

Washington Trails Association is a nonprofit supported by a community of hikers like you. By mobilizing hikers to be explorers, stewards and champions for trails and public lands, together, we will ensure that there are trails for everyone, forever.

WTA was founded by Louise B. Marshall (1915–2005). Ira Spring (1918–2003) was its primary supporter. Greg Ball (1944–2004) founded the volunteer trail maintenance program. Their spirit continues today through contributions from thousands of WTA members and volunteers.

Spring 2024 | Volume 59, Issue 1

Washington Trails (ISSN 1534-6366) is published four times per year by Washington Trails Association, 705 2nd Avenue, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104. Annual membership, which includes a subscription to Washington Trails magazine, is \$20. Single copy price is \$4.50. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA, and at additional mailing locations.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Washington Trails Association, 705 2nd Ave., Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104.



Making Trail Time Easier

Late last year, I went on a backpacking trip with a friend and, as we walked along, she started a story. “This is gonna take awhile,” she said, a tone of warning in her voice.

I was delighted. I love storytime. One of my favorite things about spending time on trails is the space it provides for long stories and rambling discussion.

My friend wasn’t joking. She had quite the tale and I loved every twist and turn of it, as we wound our way toward our campsite. Over the weekend, we hiked nearly 20 miles, but our conversation covered even more ground, from serious to silly. Something about being out on trail breaks down barriers, leaving room for so much.

I was thinking about that while working on this magazine. That ability to get outside means so much to me. I want other people to have that space. It’s one of the things I love about working with WTA. We’re working to break down the barriers that keep people from getting out on trail in the first place.

This magazine is full of stories about doing exactly that. We offer advice for finding more time to hike (page 14). And, if you’d like to join us on a trail work party, but haven’t yet, we explain the work we’re doing to make it easy and fun to volunteer for trails (page 20).

We also have beautiful personal stories. Denice Rochelle, who founded The Bronze Chapter, writes about how she is working to ensure other people of color can find the same joy she has found outdoors (page 32). And Martell Hesketh shares her story of recovery, and a return to the mountains, after a bad injury and heartbreak (page 28).

I hope these stories remind you of the many ways getting outside can be good for you. And that they inspire you to find time in nature, or maybe to explore in a new way. I know I will be hiking, and eagerly watching for the osoberry to start leafing out on my favorite trail.

Happy hiking!

Jessi Loerch | Washington Trails editor | jessi@wta.org

Photo: Elwha River by Jessi Loerch

What's in a Park?

Your local park and national parks aren't as different as you might think.

By **Joe Gonzalez**

From the top of Yosemite Falls to the end of your street, parks of all sizes provide healthy outlets for hikers.

I've made a career and lifestyle out of spending time in parks. I've been lucky. But my relationship with parks and all they offer has changed over time.

As a child, a park was the neighborhood playground. As a teen, a park was a regional green space where I'd day hike. As a young adult, parks were my office — nature's grandest temples, like Yosemite, where I served as a hiking and camping guide.

Working as a guide reframed my understanding of outdoor recreation as a commodity. Sure, I was selling outdoor experiences, but like a picnic at your local park, I was really providing fun.

Then COVID changed everything, especially our relationships with green spaces. I couldn't lift weights at the gym, so I ran in neighborhood parks instead. I couldn't travel for tourism, so I spent free weekends outside.

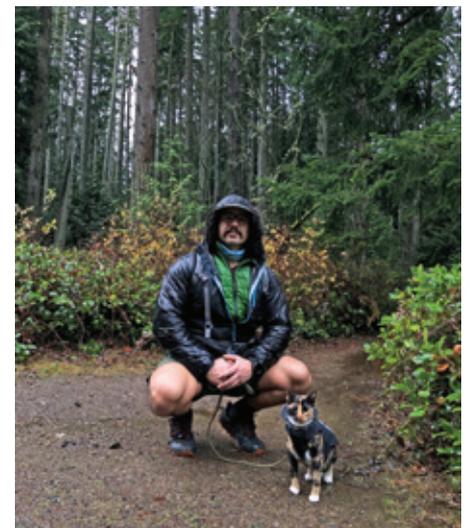
Once I had this "aha" moment, I realized urban parks and national parks were more similar than I thought. Both types of parks offer accessible opportunities for rest and relaxation, as well as chances

for adrenaline junkies to get their fix. Both are play-at-your-own-risk. Both are recreation rich.

I noticed that the way I occupied these spaces quickly changed. Places I usually pegged for my version of Type 1 fun — picnics and urban foraging — became racetracks for Type 2 fun — challenging but satisfying fitness. Their potential to serve my physical wellness on top of my mental well-being came into focus. My needs had changed, and these parks were there for me.

I was especially privileged in this regard during the pandemic. After all, Bellevue is a self-proclaimed "city in a park," boasting over 2,700 acres of trails and open space. At first, I explored local parks along the Lake to Lake Trail to learn my local neighborhoods. Later, I used WTA's Hiking Guide to explore more trails close to me, helping me care for myself through the depths of the pandemic. Sure, local parks didn't offer the grandeur of Mount Rainier or Yosemite, but the prospect of experiencing green spaces close to me was exciting all the same.

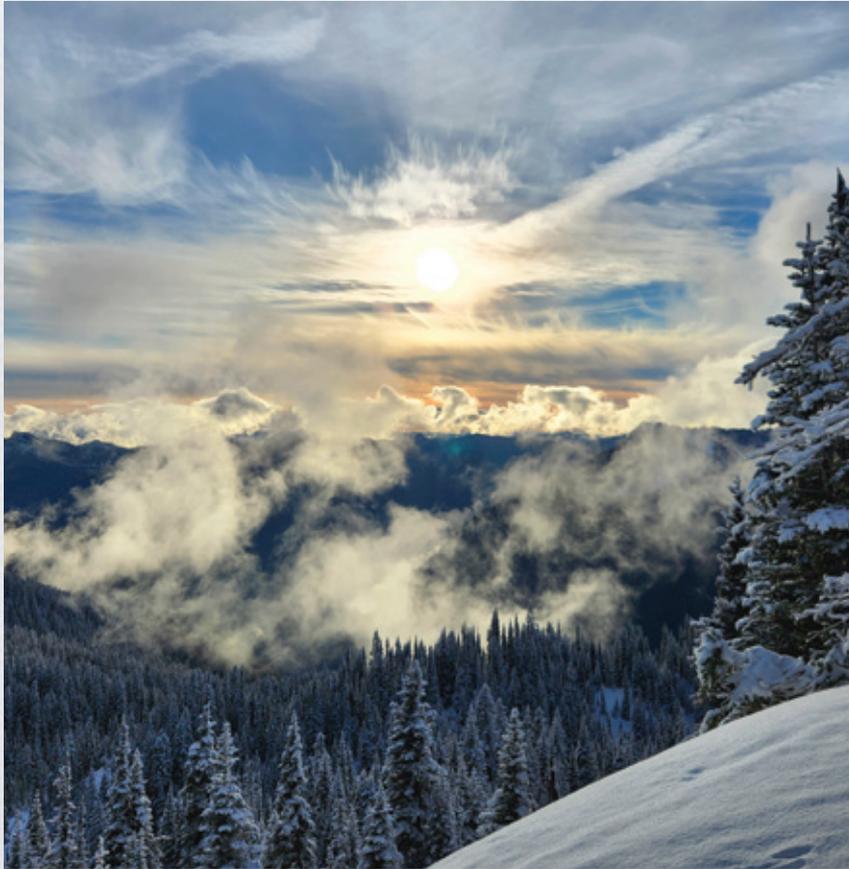
Washington's parks are exceptional on every level, but it's the proximity to urban green spaces that keeps me here. These green spaces are personal, diverse and ample in number, and best of all, are enjoyed by communities everywhere. It's why I appreciate WTA's Trails Next Door campaign, which is enhancing local trails across the state, because that little park down the street is just as important as that big park with The Mountain.



Photos by Joe Gonzalez and Tynesha Campbell

Share a story

Memorable moments from WTA's online community



I took this photo on a backpacking trip at Mount Rainier National Park, where I rang in 2024 by snow camping on Mount Ararat on New Year's Eve.

I love being immersed in the beauty of nature, and I find the solitude and peace of the wilderness to be incredibly soul-soothing. It's a place of simplicity and learning to live in the moment. It's also a place where I can

challenge myself and grow, pushing through all the physical and mental struggles that come along with hiking and mountaineering.

I researched WTA reports a ton when I first started hiking in Washington, and they helped me so much in planning hikes. As I got outside more and more, I figured writing my own reports was a great way to give back a little, and help

others the same way they had helped me (and still do!). They're also a useful documentary of my trips — sometimes I like to re-read my own reports to remind myself of the adventures I've had and the little details that I would have forgotten if I hadn't written them down!

— **Hwei Ling Ng**, @thenomadicartist on WTA trip reports and Instagram

Join us online!





TRAIL SMARTS

Know Thyself: The First Rule of Backcountry Safety

Whether you've been adventuring for a few days or a few decades, you can always learn more about staying safe.

By Loren Drummond

Taking time to make sure everyone is comfortable speaking and is heard — no matter their experience level — can help you all come home safely.

When you head into the backcountry, it can be easy to think that the individual decisions you make along the way will keep you safe. According to Tammy VuPham, an avalanche educator and mountain guide trainer with Alpine Ascents International, the key to staying safe in the outdoors starts with understanding human behavior and the outdoor culture we create as a community.

Tammy recently took the stage at the Northwest Snow and Avalanche Workshop, a gathering of leading avalanche professionals in North America. She made the case that understanding your own relationship to risk and creating positive group dynamics can help create a culture of safety for managing potential dangers and making decisions in the backcountry.

Your relationship to risk

According to Tammy, mitigating risk in the outdoors, for both beginner and seasoned winter recreators, mitigating risk in the backcountry starts with introspection. You need to understand your risk tolerance in the backcountry. You also have to understand why you're out there in the first place.

Before you head out, Tammy suggests asking yourself: What are my objectives? What am I looking to get out of this trip? Is it more knowledge-gathering or is it a fitness trip?

In addition to a group debrief, Tammy also suggests doing a mental debrief after every adventure, too. Tammy recommends a personal debrief as one of the most powerful tools for individuals of all experience levels to make better backcountry decisions. Here's how it works:

Back at the trailhead or parking lot, or even on your drive home, ask yourself questions like: What did I do well today? Did anything make me feel unsafe? How did I respond? How can I improve?

"Personal reflection and introspection are really important to our self-growth, no matter your number of years doing this. We have to keep learning. We have to keep growing, or the snow will come to get us. If you don't do this introspection, how will you know how small your margin was to an accident?" Tammy said.

Create a good group dynamic

Knowing yourself will also help you trust your intuition and speak up when something feels off, which is critical when adventuring in groups. Group dynamics can be tricky to navigate, especially outside of a class setting or when you might not know everyone else's experience level. To avoid a bad

Photo: Huntoon Point by Dulnath Wijayaratne.

experience within a group, use caution and trust your intuition.

“I think it’s really important to listen to that voice,” she said. “No matter how much time you spend in the backcountry, you really need to trust that you’re already a good decision-maker because you make decisions for yourself and your people all the time.”

That’s especially true when you identify as part of a community or gender identity traditionally underrepresented in outdoor recreation. As a climber, Vietnamese-American and Southerner-turned-skier who moved to the Northwest for a change of scenery, Tammy still occasionally feels like an outsider in the industry, despite her role as an outdoor education professional.

“I, like a lot of people, moved to Washington, and like a lot of other people growing up as an immigrant, saw snow for the first time when I moved to Washington,” she said.

Tammy emphasizes the importance of staying aware that newer group members or those who don’t have much experience in the outdoors might be well beyond their psychological safety zone. Other group members should make sure to listen to their needs. And if you’re new, speak up, even if it takes courage. Remember, your perspective as a person who is newer to the activity is valuable, too.

“The beauty of having a mixed-expertise group is that you have those fresh perspectives. Folks who are brand new can be extremely important because they can point out things you haven’t observed or have taken for granted, no matter how many times you have done that route or trail,” Tammy said.

A practical way to ensure all voices are heard is to make sure that everyone who spends time together in the backcountry helps make the plan. Go beyond checking conditions or route planning. Get on the same page about what everyone wants to get out of the trip and about individual risk tolerances. Understand the people and personal dynamics likely to play out in decision-making. If people feel like they have a say in what goes on, they are more likely to speak up if they feel something is off.



Tammy VuPham (center) leading a course on snow safety.

Create a safer culture

If human behavior is at the core of managing risk, we all have a role to play in creating a community that makes better decisions in the backcountry.

“Alpinism, mountaineering and backcountry skiing — it’s really about the people and the community,” Tammy said. “I am really a strong believer, based on my professional experiences and observing people in the outdoors, that all of us have a part to play in a culture we want to see outside.”

Beginners and experienced alpinists both need to keep learning new skills and evaluating how risks can be influenced by climate change, technology or even the increasing popularity of winter sports.

“Even as a professional, I have to go recertify, and every time I take a new course, I learn new practices,” Tammy

said. “For backcountry people who have been in this a while, are you making new goals at the start of each season to maybe learn a new snow science concept, to maybe learn about climate change and how it affects the Pacific Northwest snowpack?”

Perhaps most importantly, Tammy wants folks recreating to think about how they’re passing along and sharing the knowledge they’re acquiring. How are you positively feeding the systems that keep us all safer? Some ideas: Mentor others, submit a weather observation to NWAC or write a trip report for WTA.

“Knowledge is power and even the first-timer after their first winter hike now has the knowledge to share their learnings,” Tammy said.

Everyone has the power to mitigate risk and seed a culture of safety. Do the personal work, attune to each other, give back and the culture spirals out from there.



5 Ways To Connect With WTA in 2024

By Nicole Masih-Théberge



Now that 2024 is upon us, perhaps you are thinking about what you want to accomplish this year or simply what will bring more joy into your life. If getting outdoors brings you joy, WTA can help—we have a little something for anyone looking to enjoy the outdoors. Here are five ways to engage with WTA this year.

1 Mark your calendars. Hike the State is May 21 (wta.org/hikethestate) and Washington Trails Day is June 22 (wta.org/watrailday). These events include opportunities to engage with WTA and the hiking community across the state.

2 Stay informed. Subscribe to our newsletters—Trail News, Trail Action Network and Families Go Hiking—for hiking information and inspiration to get outside all year long. wta.org/news

3 Make a difference. Volunteer to help us build and maintain trails in 2024, whether it will be your first or 100th time doing so. Remember that work parties happen year-round, and there are some major perks, such as earning a free parking pass. wta.org/volunteer

4 Connect in person. Find an event to attend on our hiker events page. Consistently updated with current free or low-cost gatherings, classes and activities across Washington, the hiker events page can be an easy one-stop way to stay connected. wta.org/events

5 Go on a hike. Tell us about your latest adventure in a trip report. (If you don't have one, first make a My Backpack account, which lets you save hikes and get recommendations, wta.org/mybackpack.) Your report doesn't have to be elaborate. A short description of conditions goes a long way. wta.org/tripreports

Photos by Courtney Baxter, Donna Jeffery, Nicole Masih-Théberge

Highlights

A quick look at what WTA is accomplishing on trails around the state



◀ Emerging Leaders

In its fourth year, WTA's Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) cohort is about a month into 14 weeks of trail maintenance work and professional development. This program is designed for a diverse cohort of individuals — including Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) individuals and other shared identities — who want to form an inclusive community and build leadership skills to support future career interests in natural-resource stewardship and outdoor recreation. WTA aims to lower the barriers to entry into the outdoor industry for members of communities generally underrepresented in the outdoors by providing this paid opportunity and a supportive and safe community. The cohort's schedules are packed with on-the-ground field projects, meetings with local outdoor community members, professional workshops and more. Learn more about the program, and this year's cohort, at wta.org/elp.

#LoveLocalTrails ▶

Neighborhood green spaces and local parks put nature in reach — unplug after work, play with your kids, hike without a car or meet a friend for hot coffee on a blustery day. Our Trails Next Door work is focused on ensuring everyone in our state has easy access to nature close to home. Show your love for your local trails this month for a chance to win some fun giveaways! Here's how: Take a stroll at a nearby trail and post a trip report with #LoveLocalTrails included. Get more details at wta.org/lovelocaltrails.



What's at Stake for Trails in 2024

This year's Washington state legislative session — Jan. 8 through March 7 — is a key time for people who love trails to speak up. WTA is supporting state land managers' funding requests so that they are able to provide high-quality recreational experiences on their lands. Learn more at wta.org/2024legislature and stay updated by signing up for advocacy alerts at wta.org/tan.

Planning Ahead for Summer Hiking

If you're hoping to go backpacking in some of the more popular areas of Washington, now is a good time to start thinking about permits. The Enchantments and Mount Rainier National Park permit lotteries are already open. And new this year, vehicles traveling to Mount Rainier National Park will need a reservation for a specific time to enter. wta.org/backcountrypermits; wta.org/rainierreservations

NOTEWORTHY

How New Funding is Helping Hikers

A look at Great American Outdoors Act successes by the numbers

WTA was thrilled in 2020 when we rallied our hiking community and joined with partners to help pass the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). This landmark piece of legislation provides up to \$2.8 billion annually to protect public lands and improve opportunities for the public to access them. GAOA is funding projects across the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Indian Education. The funding lasts through 2025, when the act expires.

From calling for the needed funding to working on the ground to restoring trails, WTA is proud to be part of GAOA's success. GAOA helped fund WTA's first paid Lost Trails Found crew in 2021. That support increased WTA's ability to restore neglected backcountry trails that are at risk of disappearing due to shrinking land manager budgets and wildfire impacts.

The increased level of funding that the GAOA provides for our national public lands is having a major impact across Washington. Along with upgrades to trails, roads, bathrooms and campgrounds to help people experience the outdoors, there are many aspects of GAOA-funded projects that are difficult to quantify. These include protection of our natural resources, improved visitor safety, climate change resilience and increased accessibility of infrastructure. We are grateful for the investment in our public lands.

Here's some of the work that the **Great American Outdoors Act** has funded in Washington state, from 2021 through 2023, to help support millions of outdoor experiences.

Great American Outdoors Act

16.7 miles of road repaired

289 miles of trail improved



70 recreation sites upgraded

73,017

WTA volunteer and staff trail work hours

16 bathrooms installed

27 accessibility improvements

1 Lost Trails Found crew created

18 bridges restored

Sign up for WTA's Trail Action Network at wta.org/tan and receive action alerts to be part of big wins for the outdoors like GAOA.

Time on trail is good for your mind and body, which is why WTA provides so many resources to help you get outside.



Tips and Tricks to Hike More in 2024

By Allie Tripp

After paging through your 2024 WTA calendar, did you add “hike more” to your list of resolutions for the year? If so, we’re here to help. We know, however, that many folks can’t get out as much as they like. Over the years, WTA has gathered feedback from community members about what keeps them from hiking as much as they want to. We recognize those challenges — we have many of them, too — and we have tips and tricks to help make your 2024 hiking dreams a reality.

“I’m tired of the trails I normally hike.”

If you’re ready to break out of your hiking routines and find a new trail, our Hiking Guide has more than 4,040 hikes to browse. While that number can look overwhelming, our filters make it easy to find what you’re looking for (waterfalls, hikes appropriate for

dogs or kids, wildflowers and so much more). If you’re looking for some custom recommendations, save hikes you already like to your My Backpack account on wta.org and our recommender will share additional hikes similar to the ones you like for you to explore.

“I can’t find time to hike as much as I want.”

We have two approaches to handle this challenge, best used in combination.

First, look for close-to-home hikes. Especially in winter, nearby trails offer all the benefits of time in nature, with less travel time. Washington has an incredible variety of “trails next door.” It can also help to remember that walks in your local neighborhood or nearby parks count as hikes. Challenge yourself to look for new signs of nature on routes you visit often; the changing seasons can completely alter what plants and animals you see.

Our second bit of advice is to look for ways to minimize the preparation time for your adventures. Keep your pack stocked with the Ten Essentials (plus extra layers in winter). Pack your lunch or snacks the night before so you can get out the door quickly. wta.org/prepack

The Trail Next Door

For 3 years, WTA has been increasing our work on trails that are in or near urban areas through The Trail Next Door campaign. wta.org/trailnextdoor

“I don’t want to hike alone.”

You’re not alone in this sentiment, which means there are lots of groups dedicated to getting people outside together. WTA maintains a robust list of community hiking groups that are a great place to start when looking for people to hike with, wta.org/hikinggroups. Might we also suggest checking out a WTA volunteer work party as a place to look for your next hiking buddy? You’ll meet other folks who certainly have the interest in common. And, while you’re potentially finding a new hiking companion, you’ll also gain a better appreciation for how the trails you hike on get maintained.

“I want to take my youth or community group out, but it feels overwhelming.”

That’s great you want to get outside with youth, and WTA is here to help. Our Outdoor Leadership Training (OLT) program has 10 years of experience helping leaders take groups of youth outdoors. Whether you’re looking to take a Scouting troop snowshoeing for the first time or lead a science class of fifth graders on a camping trip, we can help. WTA offers workshops to help you and your fellow leaders feel ready to host a safe and fun outdoor experience for young people. After you’ve attended an OLT workshop, wta.org/olt, you can borrow gear for your group (for free!) so that everyone is well-equipped for your adventure.

Don’t see your challenge listed here? Email jessi@wta.org and we’ll help you brainstorm some ways to help you hike more in 2024. (We also might include your quandary in the online version of this story.)

Suggestions from WTA staff

“**Reframing how you think about hiking** or simply going outside can help you find more motivation to plan ahead. Reframe the walk as your ‘reset time’ or your hike as your ‘exploration-and-think-less space.’ Never forget that taking the time to hike or go outside is beneficial to your mental and physical health. Allow yourself to just do it the way you want to!” — **MJ Sampang**

“**Whenever I have a day** where my first meeting isn’t until 9 a.m. or later (especially in the summer, but this time of the year too), I reach out to my hiking buddies who have a similar start-work time to meet for a pre-work hike. I will almost always hit the snooze button if I’m planning a solo sunrise hike, but my accountability buddies make me drag myself out of bed every time.” — **Holly Weiler**

“**I have a standing calendar** appointment for a daily walk outside, no matter the weather.”
— **rza allen**

“**Staging your gear** — including extra layers — the night before is key! Getting dressed and loading up the car is half the battle. If you’ve made it that far, you’re definitely gonna hike.” — **Joe Gonzalez**



The monthly giving circle

WTA members are helping guide the way to a bright future for trails through dependable, sustainable monthly giving. Learn how you can join this community of supporters to power trail maintenance, hiking resources, this magazine and more at wta.org/monthlymember.

Photo by Stephanie Zamora



Enjoy the beauty of Washington, like this photo from Cispus Basin, paired with live music.

Music Inspired by Trails

Join us for a hiking-themed concert with photos from around the state set to live music.

By Brynna Counts-Morgan

WTA is excited to partner with the Northwest Symphony Orchestra for a concert this spring. Crescendo: A Symphonic Celebration of Washington Landscapes is on April 26. During the performance, musicians will play music inspired by images from WTA's Northwest Exposure Photo Contest. This event will bring together the outdoor community and support WTA through concert ticket sales.

Anthony Spain, the conductor and artistic director for the Northwest Symphony Orchestra, suggested the concert idea to WTA. The orchestra, which was founded 36 years ago, works to integrate closely with the music community in the

Northwest by featuring local composers and pieces.

One of the reasons the orchestra wanted to partner with WTA was our annual Northwest Exposure Photo Contest, where hikers submit photos from trails across the state. The photos capture the experience of hiking in Washington, from sunsets on mountain peaks to moments of quiet reflection along a wooded neighborhood trail. The feeling that each image evokes will correspond to music performed, resulting in a celebration of the harmony of nature and music.

Audiences can expect to hear pieces from Ludwig van Beethoven, Claude Debussy, Frederick Delius, Richard

Wagner, Antonín Dvořák, John Williams and more.

“Nature and music have always had a close relationship,” said Anthony, explaining that great classical composers like Beethoven were inspired by nature when crafting their iconic masterworks. “When Beethoven had a mental block, he went out walking in the countryside, which helped unlock his mind creatively.”

The solitude and reflection that nature offers can be powerful conduits for creating music. Anthony believes a concert like this can reflect the healing qualities that both nature and music can provide us when seeking solace.

Photo by Tim Nair.



“After a difficult experience in my adolescence, I went hiking in the Colorado Rockies,” he said. “I went up high into the Mummy Range and was completely alone. I found that being in nature, in solitude, was so needed during a challenging time and noticed that as I hiked, melodies started coming to me. In that moment of incredible beauty, that’s when we can find a healing process. Experiences like these have resulted in a lifelong love of hiking and sojourns into nature.”

We hope you’ll join us for this celebratory event. Get tickets and more information at wta.org/symphony.

The Northwest Symphony Orchestra and Washington Trails Association present ...

Crescendo: A Symphonic Celebration of Washington Landscapes

Friday, April 26 at 7:30 p.m.

Benaroya Hall

A concert benefiting WTA’s outstanding work for trails. Enjoy photographs from WTA’s annual Northwest Exposure Photo Contest set to beautiful music.

Tickets and event information: wta.org/symphony.

WTA also invites you to a happy-hour reception with staff and board as an opportunity to further your philanthropic support of our work.

Sponsorship opportunities are available! Contact Brynna Counts-Morgan at bcountsmorgan@wta.org for more information.



Winter Blues? Head to a Beach

This article is supported by your Western Washington Honda Dealers.

What's a hiker to do when some of their favorite Washington trails are blanketed in snow? Why, hit the beach, of course! Coastal trails provide a great alternative when hikes in the mountains are inaccessible. If you want big views during this time of the year, beach and coastal trails can't be beat.

Go for a winter getaway ...

Since coastal weather is unlikely to be as cold as inland or higher-elevation locations, you can plan camping and backpacking trips on the coast during the winter months. Campgrounds that are normally busy, like Moran State Park on Orcas Island or Deception Pass State Park on Whidbey Island, among others, are quieter in winter months, making a spur-of-the-moment trip more attainable.

Destinations on the Wilderness Coast on the Olympic Peninsula offer early-season backpacking options. Some great options include Shi Shi Beach, Second Beach and the — long, but worth it — North Coast Route. Be prepared for rain, though, and carry a tide chart to avoid getting stuck due to high tides. Ranger stations can

advise on the safest routes for your coastal adventure. And although snow is unlikely on these routes, winter storms can be dangerous and push tides much higher than normal. Make sure you check the weather forecast carefully before you go.

... Or find a day hike with coastal views

If you're located in Western Washington, chances are you're pretty close to a beach, like staff favorites Ebey's Landing on Whidbey Island, Carkeek Park in Seattle, South Bay Trail in Bellingham or the Lewis and Clark Discovery Trail in Long Beach. To find a great day hike, visit wta.org/hikes. From there, go to the "trail features and ratings" section and select the "coast" option to see a list of 200+ trail options.

Gear up to go out

While you might not need snow tires or chains to get to these trails, there's some gear, like a tide chart, that will make your beach hike, camp or backpack safer and more enjoyable. Winter on the coast is a great time to camp in the car — it'll help you stay warmer and be protected from the whipping wind that's so common on the Washington coast during this season. Our friends at Western Washington Honda Dealers suggest you prep your car with a nice sleeping area, starting with sleeping pads, which will help reflect your body heat back to you. After that, layer sleeping bags and blankets on top, and place towels over your windows and then roll the windows up for more privacy and insulation while you snooze.

Trip reports are valuable all year long, but especially in the winter and shoulder seasons, when trail conditions can change from day to day. Be sure to check trip reports before you head out, and when you're back, take a few minutes to share one of your own. wta.org/tripreports.

Photo courtesy Western Washington Honda Dealers

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

Find out if your company matches charitable gifts. Your donation could go twice as far! To learn more about supporting WTA's work, email bcountsmorgan@wta.org.

PRESENTING PARTNER | \$100,000+



Western Washington
Honda Dealers
Drive Good™

\$25,000+



\$10,000+



\$5,000+



\$2,500+





Our work parties build in plenty of time for critical snack breaks and a chance to chat.

Volunteering Made Easier

4 things that keep people from volunteering — and what we're doing about it

By Loren Drummond

Last year, 3,618 people volunteered on trail with Washington Trails Association. That astounding number is why we can call ourselves the largest statewide volunteer trail maintenance organization in the country.

We recognize that people's time and energy are valuable and scarce — when volunteers give their time to pick up a shovel and help maintain trails, we don't take that for granted. We are always asking ourselves how we can make it easier for people to join a WTA work party. Here are four reasons it can be hard to get out to volunteer — and how we're trying to break down those barriers.

1 Lack of time

Ah, time, the most relatable of reasons. Very few of us are swimming in extra time, and there are so many things we want to do. We want to relax, spend time with our friends and family, exercise, do something satisfying. With trail work, you can actually be incredibly efficient by doing those things at the same time!

Time that is not fully your own may also be a factor. Parents, especially parents of young children, basically work two full-time jobs, and they need to find or pay someone to watch the kids. Because of that, we offer family-friendly work parties,

where volunteers are encouraged to bring kids 10 and older along.

Shift workers who don't know their schedules more than a week in advance may not have the luxury of committing to a day or week on trail until the last minute. Recognizing the crunch of people's schedules is also one reason we offer different kinds of work parties during the work week and on weekends. We offer day work parties that are open for registration up to the day before and backcountry trips that can be planned months in advance.

Understanding that the long drive to or from a trailhead can be too much for some, we offer places to camp overnight on some work parties. That allows you to camp before with a work party — and also gives you an opportunity to hike in nearby areas before or after your work party.

2 Lack of transportation ... and gas money

Getting to a trailhead isn't always easy or affordable. Most often, you need a car and that car needs gasoline at \$5 a gallon. That's why, for more than a decade, we've offered a carpooling system to help create rides for folks who need them — or who just want to get into nature more sustainably.

Volunteers can also earn state and federal parking passes with a couple days of volunteering, helping to defray the cost of parking.



Photos by Elizabeth Storm and Emma Cassidy



Our crew leaders

love welcoming new volunteers out on trail work parties.



I think WTA's trail maintenance program has been so successful because welcoming anyone regardless of their identity or experience level has been a core value since day one.

WTA also works in more local parks and urban green spaces than we used to, putting the occasional work party in reach of public transportation or even by bike.

3 Outside the comfort zone

Will I feel out of place? Will I feel safe? Not knowing what to expect is such a deeply human source of hesitation about trying something new. Trail work is, after all, a social space full of strangers that takes place on often-unfamiliar terrain and involves some form of physical labor. Uncertainty is a primary reason keeping

many first-time volunteers away. Which is why so many aspects of our volunteer program are aimed at creating safe, inclusive spaces.

"I think WTA's trail maintenance program has been so successful because welcoming anyone regardless of their identity or experience level has been a core value since day one," says Andrea Waite, WTA's senior volunteer program coordinator.

We work hard to ensure our volunteer spaces are safe. Beyond the standard wilderness first aid and technical trail

skills training, crew leaders and assistant crew leaders receive training in group leadership and in recognizing and responding to implicit bias. We think carefully about the mental health needs among the most vulnerable communities who might come out with us, including LGBTQIA+ youth.

Perhaps one of the most successful aspects of our volunteer program is running a portion of our work parties for specific audiences. Shared-identity work parties, like women-only work parties, have been part of our work for years.

4 Fear of being a beginner

We know it can be intimidating to try something you have never done before. But we love having new volunteers join us on trail, so we try to make the process as easy as possible.

Photos by Ben Semer and Kenneth Wild



Safety, fun and work — in that order — are a key feature of every WTA work party.



Before work parties, we email you all the information you'll need to enjoy the day. We have resources for volunteers, including packing lists and videos that show what a basic day of trail work looks like.

"It was a little intimidating to walk in for the first time to one of these parties," said one volunteer after a day at LBA Park near Olympia. "No matter my desire to help out, I was worried I would be useless. I enjoyed how we were given opportunities to try tasks we had never performed before. It was amazing to be taught to do something as if I could, not *if* I could."

We also offer work parties specifically for first-time volunteers, and we have recently added introductory backcountry response team trips (BCRT) for volunteers who have not yet done a backcountry response team trip.

"I enjoyed most that this trip was for beginners, that's important," said a volunteer on one of the intro-BCRT trips

Join us on trail

We'd love to see you out on trail! We work all year and all around the state. To look for work parties near you, go to wta.org/volunteer.

And for information on what it's like to volunteer, go to wta.org/get-involved/volunteer.

last year. "I hope WTA continues this! Those of us who'd never done a BCRT really needed that extra bit of instruction and encouragement. ... My next BCRT (just 2 days from now) will be easier because I know some tricks now!"

Finally, whether if you are a brand-new volunteer or have been working with us for years, we encourage volunteers to take breaks, and we'll never ask you to do more than you're comfortable with.

One first-time volunteer wrote, after a day along the Annette Lake Trail, "Considering that this was my first time with WTA, I did things at my own pace and wasn't pressured to do anything beyond what my body could handle."



LEARN • LEAD • INSPIRE



Inspiring the next generation of outdoor leaders, one trip at a time.

Get ready to lead positive and fun experiences with your community and get youth outside. We offer workshops for educators and community leaders to build skills and confidence to lead safe, fun and inclusive outdoor trips. No experience is required. Our Outdoor Leadership Training workshop schedule for 2024 is now available online.

SNOWSHOEING

March 2 – Gold Creek Pond, Snoqualmie Pass

HIKING

April 27 – Point Defiance, Tacoma
October 19 – Tolt-MacDonald Park, Carnation

CAMPING

June 15 – Dash Point State Park, Federal Way

BACKPACKING

July 18–22 – Olympic National Park

Learn more and sign up at wta.org/olt



Kat (front left) and Anna (front right), leading a youth volunteer vacation. They also worked together on a Lost Trails Found crew (facing page).



Once Volunteers, Now WTA Leaders

Anna Pree and Kat Conley each began trail work with WTA as teenagers. Now, they're trail work professionals who are inspiring the next generation on trail.

By Tiffany Chou

Some folks find out early in life what they want to do when they grow up

— Anna Pree and Kat Conley discovered the outdoors could be their office as teenagers, when they joined their first WTA work parties.

Their paths paralleled each other's for years. They both started volunteering with WTA's youth trail work program as high schoolers. They met for the first time in 2021 as crew members on WTA's professional Lost Trails Found trail crew and worked together for two seasons, often spending full weeks together in the backcountry. In the summer of 2023, their work with WTA came full circle when they led a youth volunteer vacation together.

Volunteering with WTA inspired them both to find careers in the outdoors, including working on some of Washington's most challenging backcountry trails. Years later, making use of all they've learned through their trail experiences, they are inspiring the next generation of trail workers and stewards.

Starting strong

The similarities between their stories began right at the start. The first work parties for both Anna and Kat were weeklong youth volunteer vacations, Kat's in 2016 and Anna's in 2018.

Anna learned about WTA when a WTA youth ambassador started a hiking club at her high school. From there, she learned more about WTA's trail work program and signed up for a youth volunteer vacation at Packwood Lake.

"At this point, I didn't know much about the outdoor workforce and field work, but I was excited to give it a try," she said. "Camping and digging in the dirt for a week sounded like the best thing ever."

Like Anna, an outdoor career wasn't initially on Kat's radar, though her connection to the outdoors was strong from an early age. She learned about WTA after her sister went on a youth volunteer vacation. Kat's first work party was a youth volunteer vacation on the Wonderland Trail.

"I knew I liked hiking and wanted to meet other youth who enjoyed the



On-the-clock building materials: rocks.
Off-the-clock: humans.

outdoors, but like many youth who participate, I mostly wanted to fulfill my school's requirement for service hours," she said.

For both of them, that week in the woods was a bigger deal than they thought it would be — enough to kickstart an interest in working in the field. They both said that getting to spend an extended time with a group of other teens, having fun and working toward a common goal outside made the experiences more memorable and powerful — and kept them coming back.

Becoming professionals

After their first trail work experiences, both Anna and Kat kept volunteering with WTA. Kat went on two more youth volunteer vacations and Anna organized her own youth trail work party with her

friends as a WTA youth ambassador (a program currently on hiatus).

The two eventually transitioned to professional trail work. Kat with the Rocky Mountain Conservation Corps as she was starting college. The experience convinced her to focus on a trail-centered career. She even took time off college to work with the Washington Conservation Corps in Bellingham.

After a year of working on frontcountry trails, Kat was itching to head farther into the mountains. In 2021, she was hired as the assistant crew leader for WTA's inaugural Lost Trails Found crew (at the time, known as the "pro crew").

Anna was also eager to work in the field again after high school. She considered leading a youth trail crew. But she ended up applying to the Lost Trails Found crew, which turned

Photo by Zachary Toliver

Kat (front right) and Anna (front, second from right) spent a summer working together on WTA's Lost Trails Found crew.



out to be the right decision for the time.

“You can get paid to dig in the dirt and play with saws? No way. I’m so in. The Lost Trails Found crew just sounded like an ideal place for me. It was a cool opportunity to be outside all the time and get more experience with trail work,” Anna said. “I think that was a good call because I was not prepared to wrangle youth yet.”

Heading into the backcountry

Anna and Kat worked together all summer in 2021 on the Lost Trails Found crew. They and their crew accomplished an extraordinary amount of work throughout the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, including maintaining over 80 miles of trail, clearing over 1,000 logs and restoring over 2,500 feet of trails.

And they didn’t just work hard, they played hard too.

“We really fed off of each other’s silly energy and could often be found at camp doing cartwheels, having handstand-coaching sessions and dancing around,” Kat said. “The mosquitoes (on one trip) were horrible, so the whole crew

hunkered down in our tents side by side and read aloud passages from a book I’d brought.”

“I love my LTF buddies so much and I feel like we really became a little family,” Anna said.

Both Anna and Kat continued their work with the Lost Trails Found crew in the 2022 season, where their expertise from the previous year helped them clear more than 2,700 logs and maintain nearly 60 miles of trail in remote locations.

Coming full circle, together

In the summer of 2023, Anna and Kat worked together again, but in a new, special way.

The pair led a group of nine youth volunteers in trail work projects at Deception Pass State Park over a week in August as a part of WTA’s Trails Rebooted campaign. They worked on challenging projects, including building puncheon bridges. The crew found a good groove and became as smooth as a well-oiled machine. The crew built three puncheons, including ramps, and moved a lot of gravel.

Though both Anna and Kat separately led several youth

Photo by Zachary Toliver

trips over the summer, this one was particularly memorable.

“The youth volunteer vacation was one of my favorite trips of the summer,” said Anna. “The crew was super efficient and the gravel dump truck could barely keep up with them. We built three puncheons over the week and carried a lot of buckets of gravel. The kids were awesome.”

And the two leaders never forgot to have fun with their crew.

“Anna and I definitely brought our same goofy energy to the trip and I think it rubbed off on the participants,” Kat said.

“Leading with Kat was a blast!” Anna said. “Because we have been working together for so long, it was only natural to start the week already in forest-hooligan mode. I think this also made the kids a lot more comfortable to match our energy and get to know each other too.”

They made silly recipes, named their

buckets of gravel, played games (one young crew member taught everyone how to play Dungeons and Dragons) and spent their final night of the trip watching the water from the Deception Pass Bridge.

Starting with WTA’s youth program gave Kat and Anna a unique perspective when leading their own youth volunteer vacation.

“It’s definitely a lot more teaching, managing and answering questions than actually doing trail work,” Anna said. “I like to just dig sometimes, but it’s cool watching everyone learn throughout the week and feel confident in their skills and also teach each other.”

The work party was so much more than just a fun week at Deception Pass and a successful puncheon-building project. It was also a powerful story about how these two aspirational volunteers are now taking what they’ve gained from their own field experiences and sharing it with others — inspiring

young volunteers to keep pursuing opportunities in the outdoors.

“I think it was a great example for youth on the trip of where they might end up if they enjoyed the work we were doing,” Kat said.

What’s next?

Kat is completing her college degree in environmental science and geographic information services this year, and Anna is teaching snowboarding at Snoqualmie and Stevens passes this season while pursuing an environmental engineering degree at the University of Washington.

Kat is graduating from college this year, then will start work as a field coordinator with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy’s Conservation Corps program. Anna is planning to return to WTA this summer working again with the youth program, showing young volunteers the joys of working outside. Both are excited to continue their outdoor careers moving forward, building trails in nature and connections in the outdoors industry.

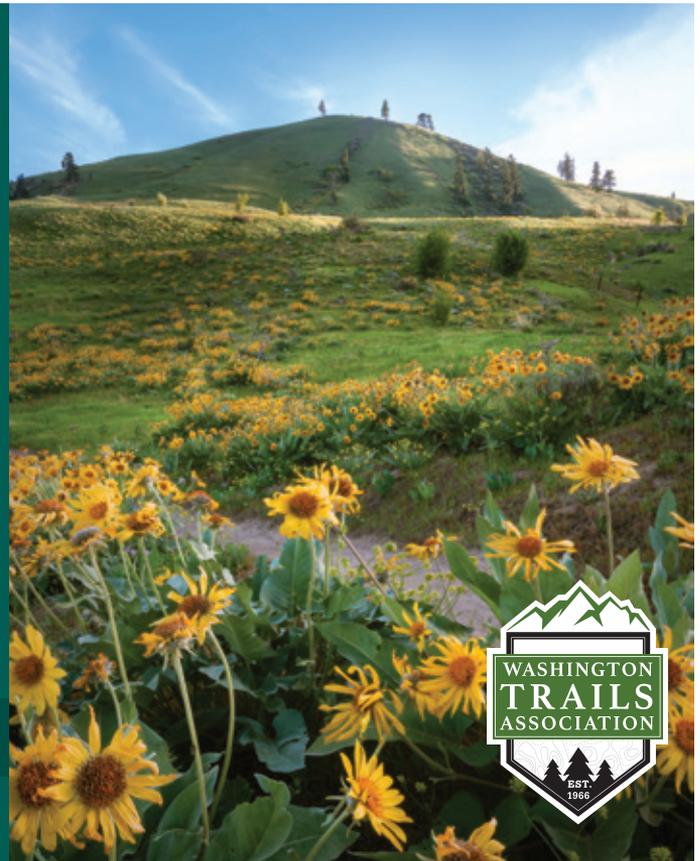
Recent Reports Matter

From rough roads to wonderful wildflowers, trip reports are vital when you plan a hike. Help hikers stay safe and in-the-know.

File a trip report after your next adventure.

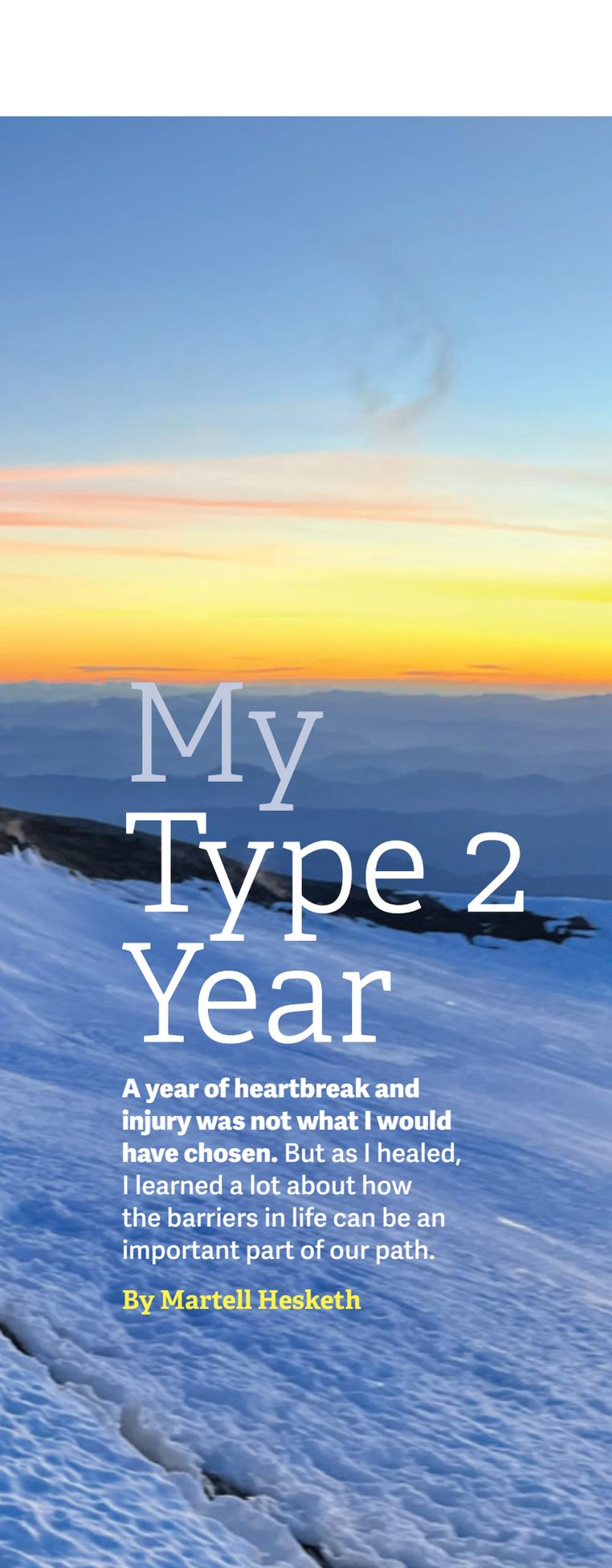
wta.org/filetripreports

Photo by Annette Jones



Martell Hesketh stands on the summit of Tahoma (Mount Rainier) in July 2022. The sign she is holding is a Lushootseed spelling of Tahoma. Lushootseed is the language of the coast Salish tribes in the southern Puget Sound area.





My Type 2 Year

A year of heartbreak and injury was not what I would have chosen. But as I healed, I learned a lot about how the barriers in life can be an important part of our path.

By Martell Hesketh

Type 2 fun is wholly unpleasant while it's happening, but in retrospect, you might call it fun (or at the very least, you're glad you experienced it). I'm no stranger to Type 2 fun. Many of my hobbies require a certain appreciation for some level of suffering, from waking up at midnight to reach alpine summits to lugging heavy packs over mountain passes. But last year my tolerance for Type 2 fun was put to the test with a broken heart and a broken knee. OK, technically my knee wasn't broken but a torn ACL, reconstructive surgery and 9 months of rehab were still pretty rough.

I don't recommend tearing your ACL. I also don't recommend going through a breakup immediately after surgery, when you can't walk or drive — never mind do any of the physical activities you normally might do to relieve stress.

The outdoors, specifically the Cascades, have always been a grounding space for me. I grew up in Blaine where I could see Kulshan (Mount Baker) on sunny days and spent summer afternoons hiking up to Oyster Dome with my friends.

When I moved back to Washington for graduate school in 2018, I quickly dove into my ongoing love affair with the Cascades. With classmates who shared my enthusiasm for the mountains, I went on colorful and crisp fall hikes, including the infamous Enchantments thru-hike in a single day. Spending time outside was exhilarating and rejuvenating for me. I tossed myself into learning more skills to move through the mountains, from backpacking to rock climbing and backcountry skiing.

I even got the wild idea to try to summit the five Washington volcanoes before my 30th birthday, which sent me down a rabbit hole of mountaineering. It felt fitting that the first volcano I made it to the top of was Kulshan, via the Easton route that wanders up the beautiful Railroad Grade Trail.

Spending time outdoors has also been an important way for me to connect with my Indigenous identity. I am a member of the Michel First Nation, a nation made of Nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) and Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) people. Our reserve is up by Edmonton in Alberta, where my maternal grandmother was born. I grew up physically far from my traditional lands but found that spending time in the mountains helped me feel closer to that part of myself.

My family have been guests on Coast Salish lands for a couple of generations. I often think about what it means to be a good guest on these lands. I feel like I have a relationship with the mountains here in Washington, and therefore, a responsibility to protect and care for them since they have protected and cared for me throughout my life. But sometimes being an Indigenous woman in outdoor spaces can be challenging — from ski areas named after the same derogatory word that racists would spit at my female Indigenous relatives, to the Indigenous erasure that happens when recounting settler explorers “discovering” this “untouched” wilderness. People often don't know I'm Native unless I tell them, and sometimes in these outdoor circles, it's easier not to.



Martell hikes down the Railroad Grade Trail after a successful visit to the summit of Kulshan (Mount Baker) via the Easton Glacier.

Below: A short walk in Birch Bay a few weeks after ACL reconstruction surgery.

But as I gained both confidence and experience these past few years, I have felt more empowered to take up space as a Native woman in these predominantly White and male-dominated spaces. At the beginning of last year, I was finally reaching a place where I was beginning to feel confident in my outdoor and mountain skills. I had spent so much time feeling uncomfortable, slow or scared. Finally, I felt like I belonged and found a great group of friends with whom to adventure. I had even summited three of the five volcanoes, including the tallest one, Tahoma (Mount Rainier). The once “wild” idea of summiting the Washington volcanoes before I turned 30 suddenly seemed within reach! But as it sometimes goes, life had other plans for me.

It wasn't a huge fall or big wipeout on my skis that got me. Just a bad turn in some bad snow at the wrong angle for my knee while skiing back from Chain Lakes in the Mount Baker backcountry. I felt a pop and suddenly my right knee was

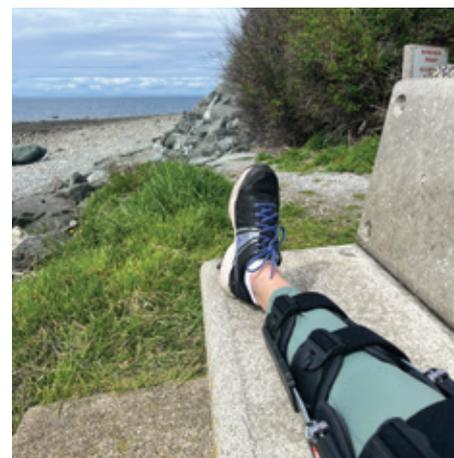
disturbingly loose. I was thankfully able to ski and walk back to the parking lot with support from friends. A few weeks later, an MRI confirmed the last thing I wanted to hear — I had a fully torn ACL.

My doctor recommended ACL reconstruction surgery with the warning that recovery took an average of 9 to 12 months. I'll spare you the details of the surgery, but let's just say it involves drills and screws and a couple of leg bones. I immediately started doing the math in my head: “Maybe I would be able to hike by the fall? If everything goes well, maybe I could still get a full season of skiing?” I decided to get surgery in April of 2023.

During the week leading up to surgery, my 3-year relationship with my partner (whom I lived with) hit a sudden and unexpected impasse. A week after surgery, I decided the best thing I could do for myself was to end the relationship. It would be hard to imagine worse timing for a breakup, considering I couldn't drive myself or walk without crutches.

And I would have to continue to live with him for at least 5 more weeks, until I was mobile enough to move out.

So there I was, months before my 30th birthday, faced with a long recovery for both my knee and my emotions — instead of standing triumphantly on snowy summits as I originally imagined. In the aftermath of a breakup, I would have normally drowned my sorrows with long days outside hiking or skiing with friends,



Photos by Sunny Stoerer and Martell Hesketh.



Martell on the summit block of Hibox Mountain in September 2023. It was her first alpine hiking adventure with her new ACL. And enjoying the larches in the Enchantments (below).



where the mountain air cleared my mind and the rhythm of walking through the forest helped me process my thoughts. Instead, I was stuck at a physical therapy office trying to get my leg to do a full rotation on a stationary bike.

During those first months after surgery, I made an effort to focus on what I could control and ask for help when I needed it, including finding a therapist. I spent time visiting smaller parks near Lake Washington and taking short and slow walks through my new neighborhood. When I could comfortably bike again, I would ride my bike around the loop at Seward Park or meet up with a friend to ride along the Sammamish River Trail.

Slowly but surely, and with lots of physical therapy, my knee began to heal. I was able to do things again like jump or simply cross my legs when I sat. When I was trying to get cleared to rock climb on top rope again, I felt like a kid trying to hedge bets on which parent would say yes. I was almost begging my physical

therapist, who eventually just told me to go ask my surgeon.

Then, at the end of September, about 5 months after my surgery, friends invited me on a fall hike up Hibox Mountain. I would be lying if I said I wasn't a little nervous. Would my knee be able to handle the steep downhill? Would I be fit enough to make it to the top, since I hadn't done any hiking or running since I tore my ACL? But I missed the mountains so much, so I knew I needed to try. Thankfully I was with a great group who were incredibly supportive. Being in the crisp fall air, surrounded by streaks of fiery fall colors, washed away my fears. After a while, I just felt excited to be in the mountains again. Even when the trail hit the steep climb to the peak, I discovered that my knee felt stable and strong. On the final scramble to the summit block, as I carefully navigated across the rocks, I realized that I trusted my knee again. After so many months of feeling uncomfortable, both physically and emotionally, it felt like the proof I needed that I would make it through this

injury and this year. Standing on top of Hibox Mountain, I felt a bigger sense of accomplishment than any volcano summit could have ever given me.

Like Type 2 fun, most of this past year wasn't fun while I was experiencing, it but I am still glad it happened — and some part of me thinks it needed to happen. Last year gave me a deeper appreciation for my ability to heal and for the four ligaments holding my knee together. It also taught me that sometimes barriers in life aren't broken; instead, they're part of the path we are traveling — a steep snowfield, dense slide alder or a slippery ravine. At some point, we just have to trust that we have the skills, courage and grit to get to the other side.

***Martell Hesketh** (she/her) is a member of the Michel First Nation from Treaty 6 Territory in Canada. She grew up and lives on Coast Salish lands, where she loves spending time visiting snowy summits, moving through the mountains and befriending neighborhood cats.*

Relaxing in a camp at Deception Pass State park. Denice loves spending time outdoors, and is working to spread that joy.



Championing Diversity

I grew up in the outdoors — and I started **The Bronze Chapter** because I want more people of color to have that opportunity.

By Denice Rochelle

Back in 2018, something struck me during a solo road and camping trip along the Pacific Coast. In almost 2,500 miles, I didn't see any people of color recreating.

I enjoy how solo travels allows me the freedom to poke around spontaneously and meet people I normally wouldn't. On the trip, I camped near the Pacific Ocean, explored marine habitats, flew my kite and marveled at the mind-blowing geology. In Northern California, I camped and hiked among the great redwoods for

the first time. Spending time communing with these forest giants that have lived for thousands of years, and imagining how they communicate with each other and other organisms deep in the soil, felt like a transcendent experience. Beneath the canopy of these redwoods, embraced by their wisdom, a seed was planted that would eventually become The Bronze Chapter.

A few years later, in the beginning of 2022, The Bronze Chapter started offering our first programs. Our goal: to lower barriers to outdoor recreation and offer a place where communities of color can learn skills and share knowledge supported by peers.

We support families, kids and adults by teaching basic outdoor skills, including camping skills, mindfulness of impact and environment-climate awareness. Safety is key for us, so we offer wilderness first aid as well as self-defense classes for women and those who identify as nonbinary.

Our approach is all about valuing every outdoor experience equally. We're challenging the idea that some activities are more credible than others and celebrating all ways people connect with nature, whether it's enjoying birds from your porch or heading off into the wilderness.



Denice Rochelle enjoying time at Hood Canal (left) and the Mount Baker Wilderness area (below), and with her mom (right).



We're challenging the idea that some activities are more credible than others and celebrating all ways people connect with nature

Some limits, but no fear

Growing up biracial with a White mom and a Black dad, and in the fluid environment of a restaurant, shaped my ability to feel at ease in various spaces. My dad's move from Louisiana to Seattle, a change made for his health, came with stories of limitations due to racism and Jim Crow laws.

In contrast, my own childhood in Kirkland, a then-rural suburb of Seattle surrounded by dairy farms and woodlands, was a natural playground. Living in this predominantly White community wasn't without the challenges



of racism and harassment, but I was never afraid of the outdoors. My childhood bestie and I were free-range kids with abundant freedom. With that autonomy, we adventured fearlessly on our own terms, even internationally.

Family: the foundation of my outdoor narrative

My dad and great aunties were amazing inspirations, fueling my love for travel and the outdoors. These lively, music-loving great aunties of mine were into Seattle's buzzing Black music scene and owned Seattle's first Creole restaurant, a

place where travelers and locals found comfort in authentic food and tunes.

Our frequent train trips to Canada were my first international travel experiences. Staying at our favorite hotel, we'd explore restaurants and wander around Stanley Park. They introduced me to traveling and taught me the ropes of navigating trains and cabs, the etiquette of room service and tipping and how to be a gracious tourist.

Working at their restaurant was another adventure. It was a melting pot where people from around the world interacted, and it inspired my interest in diverse cultures.

Then there's my dad, who was into waterskiing, scuba diving, dirt biking, boating, fishing and camping, learned mostly from his White friends. These weren't typical activities for a Black man in the '70s. His stories about scuba diving and spearfishing in Puget Sound inspired me to learn to dive with the hope of meeting a giant Pacific octopus.

Photos by Freya Fennwood Photography and Denice Rochelle



The Bronze Chapter hosts campouts, including this one in Eastern Washington.

Successes and challenges

The Bronze Chapter has come a long way as a grassroots organization, achieving some amazing accomplishments in just a couple of years. Since we started, we've offered our wilderness first aid certification and "self-defense for the outdoors and beyond." We've hosted campouts, toured a formerly Black-owned island in the San Juans and gone paddling, sailing and snowshoeing. We've expanded our offerings to more initiatives and programs, and in more areas. In 2023, we had 24 events and nearly 400 registrations.

Family-focused programs at The Bronze Chapter hold a special place in our approach. These programs thrive on the involvement and support of parents, and create a robust foundation for ongoing engagement with nature. Youth-only programs, while valuable, may not be as effective at getting kids outside after

the program. By centering families, we not only engage young people but also empower the entire family, which fosters a lasting culture of outdoor activity and environmental stewardship.

Our classes, campouts and activities are more than just fun — they're chances to learn about nature with mindfulness and respect. Conservation and caring for natural resources are key topics. We also create a place where folks can kick back, learn, share and embrace their adventurous spirit. Most importantly, it's a space to experience joy and community, free from judgment or scrutiny.

Reading accounts of people who've joined our classes and campouts is incredibly moving, a mix of heartwarming moments, laughter, inspiration and motivation. It's deeply satisfying to know we're providing a space where those who once felt uncomfortable or unwelcome in outdoor

How to get involved

As The Bronze Chapter continues to grow, so do our needs. Right now, we're on the lookout for a volunteer coordinator to mobilize our helpers.

We're also in need of experienced grant-writing assistance, wizards of words and numbers, to help us fund the mission. And we could really use a hand in the graphic art, audio and visual departments to bring our stories to life with visuals that capture the heart of what we do.

And we're here for sponsorships and partnerships that align with our mission and can bolster our community and our range of experiential and skill-building programs.

And please check out our fundraiser, Unity in Action: A Call to Support BIPOC Outdoors, pledge.to/the-bronze-chapter. It's a big deal for us, focusing on three of our key programs. There are plenty of ways to be part of this exciting journey with The Bronze Chapter team. Join the adventure!

Find us online

Website:

thebronzechapter.org

Instagram:

@The_Bronze_Chapter

Facebook, YouTube, TikTok:

@TheBronzeChapter



Before Denice started The Bronze Chapter, she hosted a first campout on her own.

settings now feel a sense of belonging and empowerment.

What really touches my heart is hearing from parents about the freedom and joy their children experience with us. Knowing they can run, explore and just be kids in our safe and trusting environment means the world to me. Freedom to roam was a cornerstone of my childhood, shaping the way I navigate the world today.

Growing up, I didn't have a place like The Bronze Chapter to learn outdoor skills among others who looked like me. Apart from what my dad taught me, I learned mostly in predominantly White spaces. While that was OK for me, I get that many people prefer learning in environments where they see themselves reflected. That's exactly what we aim to provide at The Bronze Chapter — a welcoming space to learn and grow.

In 2024, we look forward to nourishing our collaborations and partnerships, continuing to offer quality programs that open doors to the outdoors, and dialing in on our mission of reigniting the timeless bond between communities of color and the embrace of nature and the natural world through skill-sharing, knowledge-sharing and the thrill of outdoor recreation.

***Denice Rochelle** is the founder of The Bronze Chapter. WTA is proud to have partnered with The Bronze Chapter through our Outdoor Leadership Training program and supported their trips through our gear lending library.*

Safety and representation in wilderness first aid

From the beginning, I knew wilderness first aid (WFA) certification was going to be a fundamental offering for The Bronze Chapter, because it aligned with our mission to equip outdoor enthusiasts of color with essential safety skills. The outdoor education sector lacks diversity in its instructors, and wilderness medicine classes are no exception — as I learned when I began researching options for The Bronze Chapter courses. This lack of representation can lead to negative experiences for people of color due to cultural insensitivity and a curriculum not tailored to melanated skin or diverse needs.

I had to look beyond our state, and for our 2022 and 2023 WFA classes, we brought Dr. Eddie Hill, an instructor from Medic SOLO, which is based in Charlottesville, Virginia. They stood out for their commitment to communities of color.

My personal journey with wilderness medicine deepened in 2022, when I completed wilderness first responder training in West Virginia, under the guidance of Medic SOLO's founder. In 2023, I became a certified WFA instructor at Medic SOLO headquarters in New Hampshire and, as you read this, I've just completed my wilderness EMT training.

I am eager to share what I've learned. If you're interested in wilderness first aid certification training for yourself or your group, email Denice@TheBronzeChapter.org for details.

WTA also knows that representation matters, particularly for classes such as wilderness first aid. For several years, we've worked to coordinate classes specifically for BIPOC participants. The classes have been popular and always fill quickly. It's showed us the immense value of having people of color who can lead trainings like this. We're delighted that Denice is now able to lead wilderness first aid courses in Washington and beyond.

A close-up photograph of a person's lower legs and feet on a rocky hiking trail. The person is wearing dark blue, multi-pocketed gaiters with elasticated cuffs and black straps with buckles. They are also wearing brown and grey hiking boots. The background shows a grassy hillside and a rocky peak under a clear sky.

Good Gaiters, Happy Feet

All year long, a pair of gaiters can make your hiking a lot more comfortable.

By Sandra Saathoff

One of the best parts of hiking is stopping to remove the little pebbles and bits of earth junk that collect in the bottoms of our shoes or boots, right? No? Not the best part? OK, I don't like it either. It's annoying and inconvenient.

Luckily, gaiters — protective fabric worn over the shoe and lower leg — were invented to save us from this task, no matter what time of year we're hiking.

A gaiter is essentially a tube of material with some way to keep it snug around our legs and attached to our footwear of choice. But the exact design depends on a bunch of things.

Height: Gaiters come in different heights ranging from ankle to knee, each designed for a different function. For winter travel through snow, when we're wearing boots, a knee-high gaiter may be most appropriate to keep snow from sliding down into our boots, getting our socks wet and making us cold. During the other three seasons, a mid-calf or ankle-height gaiter keeps the detritus out just fine.

Material: Gaiters come in a variety of materials, each suitable for different conditions. Lightweight and breathable materials like nylon are ideal for summer hikes, while more durable or waterproof materials like Gore-Tex are more suitable for winter excursions.

Closure systems: Winter gaiters typically have a front closure system, often using Velcro, but sometimes zippers or snaps. Summer gaiters most often slip over the foot prior to putting on one's shoes. Both types generally include a hook at the front for connecting to laces. Gaiters may also have an instep strap that fits under the shoe to hold them down and Velcro at the back to attach to a piece of corresponding piece of Velcro on the back of the footwear. These options ensure the gaiters stay in place.

Winter gaiters

Gaiters designed for winter are fairly robust, providing some additional insulation as well as debris management. They are often waterproof, which helps keep your feet drier in wet snow, slush and on waterlogged trails. They even can be used as a piece of rain-shedding gear, allowing rain to flow down rain pants and onto the ground instead of being soaked up by your socks and boots.

As part of the research for this article, I tested a pair of Outdoor Research Crocodile Gaiters while snow hiking and snowshoeing in a few inches of fresh snow. I had never used winter gaiters and was impressed. This design attaches using a long piece of Velcro running down the front, allowing for some customization of fit. It has an instep strap that fits around the bottom of the boot, as well as a hook on the front and Velcro on the back. The gaiters had a small learning curve, but my hiking buddy was patient and they were easy to put on once I figured it out. They did a great job of keeping the snow out and kept my lower legs warmer in 25-degree weather. The one caveat for this style is that, if grip strength is an issue, you may find them difficult to take off or put on, as the Velcro is quite robust. These will definitely stay in my winter kit going forward.

Gaiters for warmer weather

I first discovered gaiters for non-winter travel when looking for ways to avoid painful little stones in my boots and shoes. Summer gaiters are generally lightweight, breathable and easy to put on and take off. They may be made from Lycra or other stretchable material and generally come with a hook at the front and a piece of Velcro at the back for attaching to your footwear. They may, depending on the design, have an instep strap to help keep them in place.

Gaiters keep dust and debris from entering the footwear, preventing discomfort and potential abrasions. This is particularly useful in regions with loose soil or gravel, where every step can kick up particles that might find their way into hiking boots or trail runners. Gaiters also help keep your socks cleaner, and cleaner socks mean fewer blister issues. On trails that include more undergrowth and vegetation, gaiters act as a shield against scratches and other irritants. Though they are not generally waterproof, gaiters can still help to shed some rain and dew off your legs and shoes instead of capturing moisture in your footwear.

I've been using Dirty Girl gaiters for several years and love not having to stop to remove trail junk from my shoes. Their design uses stretchy Lycra, which you pull over your foot before putting on your shoe. You then attach it with a hook to the laces and Velcro to the rear of the shoe. They come in a bunch of fun designs, allowing you to choose what fits your personality. The one annoyance I've found actually has nothing to do with the gaiters and more to do with the shoes and boots I've hiked in — the Velcro does not stay affixed to the back of the shoe for long enough. It's generally OK for part of a season, but then starts losing its stick, which likely could be solved with a stronger glue.

For this article, I also tested a pair of Outdoor Research Ferrosi Hybrid gaiters, which have a bit different design than the Dirty Girl gaiters. They are made of stretchy, breathable fabric and have a hook at the front and Velcro at the back. But they also come with an instep strap and elastic around the top to hold the gaiter in place. The fabric has SPF 50 sun protection — always welcome. The gaiters were easy to put on; the strap can be disconnected if not needed. They were lightweight and comfortable and I look forward to using them more during the summer. They seem a worthy competitor to my favorites.

Gaiters are a great accessory for hiking in any season. From snowy winter landscapes to gritty trails, gaiters help keep our feet happy, and happy feet let us enjoy all those beautiful vistas we go out to see. So, whether you're embarking on a summer trek through dusty canyons or a winter expedition into snow-covered mountains, consider the role of gaiters in elevating the enjoyment of your hiking adventure.



Island Beauty

Enjoy a long weekend during the quieter season in the San Juans, one of the gems of the Northwest

By Eric Allan



Watmough Bay
on the south end
of Lopez Island.

Rising out of the Salish Sea between Anacortes and Victoria, the San Juan Archipelago is a highlight of maritime Northwest Washington. With over 400 islands and rocks and 478 miles of shoreline, the islands provide a bounty of recreation for hikers, boaters and bikers alike. Of the islands, four are accessible to vehicular traffic via the Washington State Ferry route out of Anacortes. Though summer typically sees many visitors, visiting in the shoulder season, from late winter into late spring, provides a much quieter atmosphere.

Day 1

Just before the calendar rolled from spring into summer, my wife and I spent several days trading destination ideas for a 4-day getaway with our then 5-month-old son. With some unexpected sunshine in the forecast, we jumped on a last-minute ferry reservation opening to the San Juan Islands and also scored one-night camping stays on San Juan, Orcas and Lopez islands. We loaded up our car and headed from Arlington to Anacortes to catch a foggy morning ferry. Shortly into the crossing to Friday Harbor, the fog lifted. We marveled at the homes perched on bluffs or private beaches, gazed out to the other passing vessels and even spied a pod of whales breaching at a distance.

Upon disembarking in Friday Harbor, we immediately headed for kid-friendly San Juan Island Brewing, home to my favorite extra-special bitter, plus an incredible seasonal pumpkin ale. For food, I highly recommend the CBJ burger with bacon onion jam and smoked gouda or the No. 2 Schoolhouse pizza with local sausage and Mama Lil's peppers. Post-beer, we hit up Serendipity Used Books, with so many options that some books were stacked nearly to the ceiling.

Our next stop was the San Juan Island Sculpture Park in Roche Harbor, where you can check out approximately 150 sculptures in various media, spread across 20 acres of flower beds and meadows perfect for strolling. I was especially a fan of "Grumpy Man," "Dog One" and "Dog Two," and "Big Bird." This is also a great spot for spying rufous hummingbirds, swallowtail butterflies and various waterfowl.

Just a few paces north is a simple trail to the John S. McMillin Memorial Mausoleum, an enchanting fixture in the woods sure to please all ages. It's about a mile roundtrip, and parking is by the intersection of Afterglow Drive and Cessna Avenue.

Photo by Eric Allan

Post-wandering, we popped on down to the Roche Harbor community to grab a couple donuts at the Lime Kiln Cafe before perusing the gardens at Roche Harbor Resort.

For our overnight accommodations, we headed to San Juan County Park. (Look for reservations online.) Just about every site here comes with a view of the water, along with both beach access and an incredible sunset view along the bluff. As dusk fell, we were visited by the unofficial welcoming committee, a red fox who first sniffed about our campsite and fire pit before making the rounds through the rest of the campground. (The foxes reminded us to keep our food safely stored in our car.)

Day 2

The next morning, after we broke camp, we made stops at both portions of San Juan Island National Historic Park. English Camp near Roche Harbor features scenic waterside parade grounds, picturesque gardens and a couple of short hiking options great for kids. At the south end of the island, American Camp offers more extensive hiking, with a web of trails through meadows and along bluffs.

Rounding back through Friday Harbor, we lunched at Tina's Place, with a great variety of tacos and burritos, which you can enjoy from the patio above the ferry holding lanes. Just before boarding the ferry, be sure to make a quick stop into Salty Fox Coffee for an iced americano or seasonal latte.

The ferry ride from Friday Harbor to Orcas Island is even more scenic than the initial trip from Anacortes, as the vessel winds through narrow passages between evergreen-coated islands and islets. After landing, we spent the early afternoon visiting local farms, with stops at Warm Valley Orchard for hand-spun Corriedale sheep yarn and Lum Farm for delicious cajeta (Mexican caramel) swirl goat milk ice cream. On your visit, be sure to spend a few minutes wandering their paths to spy some of the goats up close. In Eastsound, we snagged a four-pack of K-Pod kölsch from Island Hoppin' Brewery and drove to our campsite at Moran State Park.

The park encompasses over 5,000 acres and is home to Mount Constitution, the highest point in San Juan County at 2,407 feet. The campground offers 124 campsites and is just steps from Cascade Lake, where you'll find great options for hiking, swimming, stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking and fishing. In the evening, we made the winding drive up to the top of Mount Constitution, with the Ellsworth Storey tower perched on top. The 53-foot lookout tower provides a breathtaking 360-degree panoramic view

of the San Juans, the Salish Sea and beyond. Even on a partly cloudy evening, we could see Canadian Cascade peaks to the north and as far south as Three Fingers Mountain and Mount Pilchuck. Mount Baker dominates the view to the east. Back at camp, we enjoyed our beer and homemade chili by the campfire with peek-a-boo views of the lake and lingering color from the sunset.

Day 3

In the morning, our first step was to head back into Eastsound and join the queue at Brown Bear Baking, a place so popular that you'll likely be waiting on the front walk even on a weekday. The pain aux jambon and kouign-amann were exquisite, and we barely missed out on the coveted croque monsieur with asparagus, snagged by the gentleman just ahead of us. For coffee, we stopped by Olga Rising, with a reputation as rich and bold as their shots of espresso. Back in the park, we stopped at the Cascade Falls trailhead, which offers several hiking options to four different waterfalls and connections to other park trails. Our little one loved staring up at the old-growth evergreens and the tumbling falls. We walked a total of just over 1.5 miles, before putting in another 1.5 along the shores of Mountain Lake just up the road.

With a bit of an appetite built up, we followed a

recommendation to Buck Bay Shellfish Farm, an unassuming roadside facility that offers some of the best seafood we've ever had. The daily chowder variety is a chef's choice, and our day happened to be a tomato-filled Manhattan-style with just a kiss of spice. We also shared melt-in-your-mouth halibut with chips and sweet and briny oysters harvested just steps away. I couldn't resist taking some smoked salmon and smoked cod to go, which essentially ruined store-bought smoked fish for me! If you visit Orcas Island and love seafood, Buck Bay is a must-visit!

For our next stop at Lopez, we joined a handful of vehicles and passengers on the interisland ferry, first making a stop at tiny Shaw Island to let six cars and a crowd of walk-ons disembark before our own stop at Lopez. For our camping, we were treated to a surprisingly uncrowded Spencer Spit State Park, which is commonly at capacity during peak months. Our spacious campsite featured mixed forest and underbrush on three sides, providing great privacy and





The tower on Mount Constitution (this page). **Mountain Lake** in Moran State Park (facing page).

an enjoyable evening campfire spot. Our little guy enjoyed watching the fire from his stroller at a distance, bundled up in a thick sleeper and alpaca wool hat.

Day 4

The next morning, we enjoyed a campsite breakfast of eggs and smoked ham from an island farm, then headed to the popular Lopez Island Farmers Market, open every Saturday from mid-May until mid-September. The market features a variety of local vendors and farmers, selling a variety of goods such as freshly harvested snap peas, meats, fabrics, crafts, pottery, wine and plants. We noshed on doughy bagels from North Star Farm, sipped espresso from Wanderlust Coffee Roasters and took home handcrafted salad tongs made by a local teen with Lopez-sourced yew wood.

We wandered the rest of the main Lopez town, with stops in Lopez Bookshop (thrifty minds like me will love the discount room!) and neighboring Holly

B's Bakery for croissants. Heading southeast to the far corner of the island, we spent midday hiking in San Juan Islands National Monument, a little-known protected space of waters, headlands, beaches and forests. We made a figure-eight loop along a network of trails to secluded Watmough Bay and Point Colville, totaling about 3 miles through peaceful woods, featuring stunning Salish Sea views. Being on a lesser-visited island, the national monument trails are often quiet. We passed only a handful of others. Other nearby options include jaunts to Iceberg Point or Shark Reef.

For lunch, we stopped back in town for some amazing tacos from El Taco 'Bout It food truck (trust me, you'll want seconds), and then headed early to the ferry line. We parked about 90 minutes before sailing, and walked up the hill and across the street to the trailhead for Upright Head, a forested property once slated for luxury home development and

now owned by the San Juan County Conservation Landbank. With just over a mile of hiking and only a few areas with elevation gain, Upright Head is the perfect place to stretch your legs or let the kiddos get some energy out before the ferry ride. The bluffs provide great views of the passing ferries and picturesque forests. The overlooks do have steep drop-offs, so keep little ones close. With our floating chariot awaiting, we left the pastoral slowness of the islands and headed back toward the hustle and bustle of mainland life, vowing to not wait so long before returning once again.

Eric Allan writes a travel and outdoor recreation blog, *The Corner of 1st and Adventure*, and has been a WTA member for more than 10 years. He and his wife have visited all 50 states and are working to visit every national park. They now travel extensively with their 1-year-old son.

Photos by Eric Allan

WHERE TO HIKE



San Juan Island

English Camp/Bell Point: Walk through the historic site of an 1860s Royal British Marines Outpost and garden.

Young Hill: Moderate climb from English Camp leads to expansive views, with a side trip to a cemetery.

Mount Grant Preserve: Ridge climb through old-growth and wildflower balds with view of the Cascades.

American Camp/South Beach: Multiple meandering trails with prairies and beach access, you may see foxes and orcas.

Mount Finlayson: Multiple length loops with scenic views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, dense forests, lagoons and meadows.

Orcas Island

Turtleback Mountain: Moderate hike to an expansive viewpoint plus mosses and wildflowers as well as birds of prey.

Cascade Lake: Loop trail near the Moran State Park campground featuring old-growth trees and consistent lake views.

Twin Lakes/Mount Pickett: Moderate length but gentle gain on this forested loop hike with two small lakes.

Mountain Lake: Loop trail that is good in a variety of weather, and a great place to view wildlife, especially birds.

Lopez Island

Point Colville: Quiet trail system in San Juan Islands National Monument, with bluffs, forestland and a secluded beach.

Iceberg Point: Short, kid-friendly loop hike with trees, cliffs, wildflowers and whales.

Upright Head: Above the Lopez ferry terminal with hemlock, cedar and madrone, plus multiple water viewpoints.

WHERE TO STAY

San Juan Island

San Juan County Park: 35 campsites overlooking Haro Strait. May-September reservations strongly recommended.

Roche Harbor Resort: Historic site with multiple accommodations including the Hotel de Haro, condos and cottages.

Snug Harbor Resort: Cabins and suites in a quiet corner of the island with an on-site coffee shop. Guests have access to paddleboards, kayaks and bicycles.

Orcas Island

Moran State Park: Four campgrounds (130 total sites), plus multiple hiking options and Mount Constitution. Paddleboard and kayak rentals available at Cascade Lake.

Rosario Resort & Spa: This 40-acre resort offers a variety of accommodations, plus upscale dining and a spa.

Doe Bay Resort: Cabins, yurts and campsites spread across 38 acres with water

views, dining from the on-site garden, outdoor soaking tubs, massage and yoga.

Lopez Island

Spencer Spit State Park: Popular park with 37 reservable sites, three group camps, moorage buoys, paddle sport rentals, trails along the saltwater lagoon and sandy spit.

Odlin County Park: One mile from the ferry terminal, this 80 acre park has 30 campsites, many next to the sandy beach.

WHERE TO EAT/DRINK

San Juan Island

San Juan Island Brewing Co.: Family-friendly brewpub blocks from downtown Friday Harbor.



Lime Kiln Cafe: This cafe in Roche Harbor Resort is known for house-made doughnuts and breakfast and lunch classics.

Tina's Place: Family-run spot, combining fresh Mexican ingredients and Spanish home cooking.

Salty Fox Coffee: Full-service coffee shop above the ferry terminal, offering coffee, baked goods and quick breakfasts.

Orcas Island

Lum Farm: Home to various livestock, with pastured meats for sale, plus cheeses, wool products and goat's milk ice cream.



Island Hoppin' Brewery:

Microbrewery with handcrafted rotating beer varieties utilizing local ingredients, plus select appetizers.

Brown Bear Baking: This justifiably popular bakery offers a wide range of baked goods, featuring locally grown food.

Olga Rising: On an old homestead and orchard with patio and garden seating, plus sandwiches, pastries and coffee.

Buck Bay Shellfish Farm: Working shellfish farm with an outdoor bistro and fish shop, featuring their own shellfish and fresh catch from local fishermen.

Lopez Island

Lopez Island Farmers Market: Seasonal market featuring local growers and artisans, mid-May through mid-September.

Holly B's Bakery: 47-year old bakery with a variety of pastries crafted with Skagit Valley grains and many local ingredients.

El Taco 'Bout It: Weekend food truck with tacos, burritos and quesadillas, made with local organic and non-GMO ingredients.

FERRIES

Reservations are recommended; wsdot.gov/ferries.



Trails for Everyone, Forever

At WTA, we envision a future where everyone who seeks nature's splendor can quickly find themselves outdoors. A future where trails are so abundant and high quality that anyone can use them safely and enjoyably. A future where our shared wild spaces are cherished and protected by all.

Help us secure this vision for the future. Join the Legacy Circle by including WTA in your estate plan or will — it's never too soon to start planning your legacy.

To learn more about your giving options, contact Corinne Handelman at chandelman@wta.org or go to wta.org/legacy.

Photo by Erynn Allen



Breaking Down Barriers

Hiking Trails For All

At WTA, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to go outside. That belief is at the core of everything we do, whether we are building trails, creating resources for hikers new and old or advocating for trails and trail accessibility. We are working to ensure that local communities have access to green spaces or expanding the definition of a hiker. A hike doesn't have to mean driving your car hundreds of miles into the mountains to climb to a destination — a hike can be taking a bus or a short drive to a nearby trail that is accessible by a wheelchair or with little ones.





**Wheelchair
Friendly**

Take Transit

Cordata Park

Bellingham area

This park has something for everyone! There is a large, fully accessible shelter with picnic tables, barbecues, sinks and electricity. In addition, a pump track, playground, splash pad and exercise equipment are sure to provide some fun for all who visit Cordata Park.

By Liz Rainaud

At the trailhead, you will find plenty of paved parking and restrooms. There are lots of concrete areas for wheeled equipment, including at some of the playground equipment. The trails here are wide, packed gravel trails suitable for walking, wheelchairs and strollers. There are also wheelchair-accessible restrooms with full plumbing.

Several gently sloped bridges cross streams where you can stop and enjoy the views. Well-placed benches are available, too. Many birds — including eagles and waterfowl — may be seen along the way. There are approximately 14,000 trees in this 25-acre park, with more being planted for future hikers to enjoy.

Tip: During the spring and winter, areas of the trail may have shallow standing water. During the warmer months, the fully accessible splash pad is open for many to enjoy!

Distance: 1 mile of trails ♦ **Elevation gain:** Minimal
Highest point: 190 feet ♦ **Permit:** None
Dogs: Leashed ♦ **Map:** bit.ly/cordataparkmap

Info: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/cordata-park-trail

Trailhead: The park is a 15-minute drive from downtown Bellingham. From I-5 north, take exit 256A. Continue north on Meridian St for about 1 mile, then go east on Kellogg Rd. Take the first exit at the roundabout and Cordata Park is 0.4 mile ahead on your right.

If you want to take the bus, take Whatcom Transit Authority route 24 or 29 to stop 3226 (Cordata Parkway at Horton Rd).

NEARBY HIKES

Julianna Park: Formerly known as Cordata Neighborhood Park, this park has wide hiking trails and picnic tables, right in the city. (0.8 mile of trails, minimal elevation gain)

Fouts Park: This wheelchair-accessible walking loop takes urban hikers around a small grassy park and a playground, a great spot for a leg stretch or an afternoon picnic. (0.15 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain)

Photo by Liz Rainaud



Palouse to Cascades Trail — Beverly Bridge

Yakima

This section hike on one of Washington’s longest rail trails includes an impressive vantage point of the nearby Saddle Mountains on a pedestrian-only bridge over the Columbia River.

By Holly Weiler

The full length of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is 287 miles from Cedar Falls in the Cascades to Tekoa near the Idaho border. This short section south of Vantage offers the perfect section hike for I-90 travelers, with its easy-access location just a few miles south of the freeway. The unique feature of this hike is a non-motorized trail bridge spanning the Columbia River, offering an impressive vantage point of both the river and the nearby Saddle Mountains.

The trail can be accessed from either side of the Columbia River, with the most developed parking area located on the west side. This access point includes a porta potty but no potable water and a large gravel parking area. The eastside access area is a small gravel turnaround adjacent to the trail on the edge of the town of Beverly and offers no amenities. However, it does offer additional recreation nearby in the form of several recreation and informational sites developed by the Grant County Public Utilities District. The Beverly access point is also just a short drive away from the not-to-be-missed Wanapum Heritage Center, a free museum near Wanapum Dam on the east side of the Columbia River.

The trail surface consists of packed gravel closest to each parking lot, and the bridge surface is concrete. ADA accessibility is fairly good, although the gravel can be loose in some areas closest to the parking lots. There are several benches along the trail, both on the east side of the bridge and also directly on the bridge, inviting visitors to sit and take in the view.

It’s easy to extend this hike in either direction, although to travel west requires registering for a free permit to enter the Yakima Training Center, owned and operated by the U.S. Army. There is a kiosk with instructions west of the parking lot. To travel east beyond Beverly requires advanced registration for a free permit with Washington State Parks.

Distance: 4.5 miles roundtrip
Elevation gain: 150 feet
Highest point: 550 feet
Map: bit.ly/palouse_cascades_map
Permit: Discover Pass
Dogs: Leashed
Info: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/palouse-to-cascades-trail-beverly-bridge

Western trailhead: This trailhead is about a 40-minute drive from Ellensburg. From I-90 at Vantage, take exit 136 southbound to Huntzinger Road. Continue 8.2 miles and just slightly past the point where the road crosses the trail to the Army East Trailhead for the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail.

Eastern trailhead: From I-90 at Vantage, take exit 137 southbound to Highway 26. Continue for 1 mile, then turn right to remain southbound on Highway 243. In 7.2 miles, turn east onto Lower Crab Creek Road SW in Beverly. In 0.2 mile turn north on Seattle Street and continue to where it dead-ends in a small pullout that provides access to the trail.

NEARBY HIKES

Wild Horses Monument: This short trail allows hikers to get up close to a yet-to-be-completed sculpture of life-size galloping horses with the Columbia River in the background. (0.4 mile roundtrip, 150 feet of elevation gain)

Ginkgo Petrified Forest Interpretive Trails: Check out Washington’s state gemstone on this leg stretcher. (3 miles roundtrip, 200 feet of elevation gain)

Photo by Holly Weiler



**Wheelchair
Friendly**

Take Transit

Olympic Discovery Trail — East Central

Port Angeles to Blyn

This section of the Olympic Discovery Trail, from Blyn to Port Angeles, offers an appealing mix of forest, farms, rivers and waterfront views.

By Jessi Loerch

The Olympic Discovery Trail offers multiple options for a hike — from a few minute stroll to an all-day adventure. The full route is 130 miles, more than half on non-motorized trail. The East Central section of the trail is almost entirely on paved trail, with 2 miles of trail along roads and three sections of gravel.

You can hop on or off the trail at multiple points — olympicdiscoverytrail.org offers a great map with options. Most of the trail is gently graded, with a few steeper sections. The website's map includes an elevation profile, and shows whether the route is paved.

To begin at the east, start near the Jamestown S'Klallam's campus. You'll begin at the south end of Sequim Bay and, in less than 2 miles, reach Sequim Bay State Park, where you can take a side trip to the water. The trail continues to parallel Highway 101 until it veers away in Sequim. As the trail nears Sequim, it passes through more open areas before heading into town and passing through Carrie Blake Park. A small section of trail follows roads, before returning to dedicated trail.

West of Sequim, the trail continues through farming areas and then reaches Railroad Bridge Park. If you have time, the Dungeness River Nature Center is a fabulous stop. As you head farther west, the trail becomes more forested and rolls up and down before dropping to Morse Creek and another long bridge. (Watch for salmon in the fall.)

From here, the trail heads toward the water and then along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. (Beware that, as of early February, a section of the trail about a mile from Morse Creek was covered with debris from a winter storm. It's accessible for walkers, but not for wheelchairs and cyclists will need to walk.) You'll have an excellent chance of seeing river otters and eagles on this section of trail, in addition to plenty of other birds. This section of trail ends at the Port Angeles City Pier.

Tip: Large sections of this trail are wheelchair friendly, in particular several miles heading west from the eastern trailhead is mostly flat with one short section of packed dirt and gravel. The sections of trail in and around Sequim are also wheelchair friendly.

Distance: 26.1 miles, one way
Elevation gain: 943 feet (for whole section)
Highest point: 250 feet
Map: olympicdiscoverytrail.org
Permit: None ♦ **Dogs:** Leashed
Info: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/olympic-discovery-trail-east-central

Eastern trailhead: Take Highway 101 to Blyn, about a half hour drive from Port Angeles. There is parking along the north side of the highway, near restrooms. For transit, if coming from the east, take Jefferson Transit Authority (JTA) #8 to the S'Klallam Tribal Center. If coming from the west, take JTA #8 to the tribal center or Clallam Transit routes 50 or 52 to the casino.

Western trailhead: This trailhead is in downtown Port Angeles. Travel 101/East Front Street to Port Angeles, and head north on North Lincoln Street. Park near the intersection of N. Lincoln Street and E. Railroad Avenue. You can take transit to the trailhead — any line that gets you to the Gateway Transit Center will drop you off just a block from the trailhead.

NEARBY HIKES

Living Forest Trail: This short, sweet trail begins right behind the Port Angeles ranger station. It's a lollipop loop and the park describes it as wheelchair accessible with assistance — the first section is well graded but somewhat steep. The rest is mostly flat. (0.4 miles roundtrip, 80 feet of elevation gain)

Larry Scott Trail: This wide trail makes for a great day hike with views of the water, has sections that are wheelchair-accessible and is also the eastern terminus of the ODT. (7.3 miles one-way, 641 feet of elevation gain)



Take Transit

Saddle Rock

Wenatchee

Popular with locals year-round, this short but steep trail through shrub-steppe rewards hikers with views of Wenatchee and the Columbia River.

By *Kimberly Huntress Inskeep*

The Saddle Rock Natural Area is part of the growing system of Wenatchee Foothills Trails built by the Chelan Douglas Land Trust (CDLT). The trailhead has ample restrooms and water (off in colder months), four ADA parking spots and several sheltered picnic tables.

Hop on the trail at the northwest corner of the parking lot by the restrooms. At a fork about 0.25 mile in, decide between the Main Trail (left) or East Trail (right). The 1.3-mile Main Trail follows an old jeep road and climbs 920 feet, often steeply, to the top of Saddle Rock. About 1.1 miles in, find a fine viewpoint to the east and a short spur to the right. To loop back to the trailhead, turn left away from the spur, onto the Saddle Rock Traverse Trail. In another 0.4 mile, turn right, connecting to the East Trail.

If you start via the East Trail, you will head toward a stand of Ponderosa pine and climb 1,228 feet over 1.75 miles to approach Saddle Rock from the north. About 0.3 mile up, at 1,450 feet, find a viewpoint. To loop back via the Main Trail, turn left at the intersection with the Saddle Rock Traverse Trail.

The shrub-steppe habitat endures hot summers, a lot of wind, and snowy, cold winters that deliver most of the area's annual precipitation via snowmelt. Springtime visitors will enjoy the abundant wildflowers; in winter, look for Geyer's biscuitroot, sagebrush buttercup and woolly-pod locoweed. Resist exploring any of the small informal side trails to avoid disturbing this critical habitat.

On your return to the trailhead, look for seedling Ponderosa pines, transplanted as part of CDLT's restoration efforts. Signage asks hikers to offer leftover water to these young trees to help them endure the hot, dry summers.

Tip: Spikes or other shoe traction is a good idea on the steep grades during snow or ice, and trekking poles will come in handy for descents.

Distance: 3.1 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: 920 feet

Highest point: 2,000 feet

Map: bit.ly/saddlerockmap

Permit: None ♦ **Dogs:** Leashed

Info: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/saddle-rock

Trailhead: From Wenatchee, drive south on South Miller Street. Drive until the end of the street. The road curves right and becomes Circle Street. Stay on this road, passing some horse stables, until the road curves left and you reach an entrance to two large paved parking lots. Turn right for Saddle Rock trailhead parking lot.

Link Transit route 3 stops at the trailhead on request. Tell the driver you want Saddle Rock Trailhead when you board. For your return, call 509-664-7639 before route 3 is scheduled to leave Columbia Station to get picked up. A call box is provided at the trailhead bus stop, but cell service is typically good. If you don't want to wait for the bus, you can walk about 0.75 mile via Circle St to S Miller St and Crawford Ave to catch route 3 or 24.

On busy weekends when the lot is full — and some weekdays — the bus may be the easiest way to get to the trailhead.

NEARBY HIKES

Jacobson Preserve: Adjacent to Saddle Rock and recently connected via the Saddle Rock traverse, hikers will find the same shrub-steppe environment in a less-demanding hike. (2 miles roundtrip, 340 feet of elevation gain)

Dry Gulch: The main trail in the Dry Gulch area is open year-round and shares a parking lot with Saddle Rock, making it great for a warm-up/cool-down or an easy outing in its own right. (1.2 miles roundtrip, 1,680 feet of elevation gain)



Take Transit

Sakai Park

Bainbridge Island

Enjoy this forest walk from the Bainbridge Island Ferry Terminal featuring forest, a pond and one of the new trolls.

By Jennie Flaming

Sakai Park is named for the Sakai family, who farmed this land as a strawberry farm until they were sent to an internment camp during World War II. After the war, they returned to the land and ultimately sold it to the Bainbridge Island School District.

From the ferry terminal, you can get there with a 1-mile walk on a paved, separated trail alongside State Route 305 that is smooth and barrier-free and gains 200 feet of elevation. Turn left and cross the street at the junction with High School Road NE. At the next intersection, turn right onto Madison Avenue N — the park will be on your right.

It's a short walk on a woodchip trail to Pia, one of the new trolls across the greater Seattle area.

From there, you can do a short loop around the park, or head down across the creek to the pond and across to the intersection by the Safeway shopping area.

All the trails are wide, wood-chipped and smooth, with no roots or rocks. Watch out for deep water on some trails during times of heavy rain. The trails in a loop around the troll on the Madison Avenue side of the park are flat. If you go down to the pond you will lose and then gain about 40 feet (80 feet if you continue to the trail on the east side of the park).

The trails near the troll are more open meadow surrounded by forest, and deeper forest is around you near the pond and the creek.

There is a wheelchair-accessible port-a-potty near the parking and the troll (within 200 feet).

This is an excellent year-round hike! But beware that some low parts of the trail near the pond may be underwater during times of heavy rain.

Pro tip: The Plate and Pint has good pub food and drinks and is about a quarter mile away in the Safeway shopping area. Many coffee shops, bakeries and local restaurants are in Winslow, just 1 mile away.

Distance: 3 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: 280 feet

Highest point: 200 feet

Map: bit.ly/sakaimap

Permit: None ♦ **Dogs:** Leashed

Info: wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/sakai-park

Trailhead: The park is about a 10-minute drive or 15-minute bus ride from the ferry terminal.

From the Bainbridge Island Ferry Terminal, head north on SR 305 for about a mile. Turn left onto High School Road NE and continue for 0.3 mile. At the roundabout, take a right onto Madison Ave N. The park will be on your right. The trailhead has very limited parking (three spots on Madison Ave, the only official parking for the park).

To take the bus, take the 95 bus from the ferry terminal, which runs every hour, and get off at Safeway about a quarter mile from the park.

NEARBY HIKES

Grand Forest: An excellent alternative for a longer, forested trail. There are several access points on both the west and east sides of the park. The west entrance is more straightforward on the bus. (7 miles of trails, up to 350 feet of elevation gain)

Gazzam Lake Nature Preserve: Another larger trail system that is forested and has a small lake or large pond. There is also an option to walk downhill to the beach on these trails. (7 miles of trails, up to 500 feet of elevation gain)

**Wheelchair
Friendly**

Take Transit

**Trails Less
Traveled**
with **Craig
Romano**

Washougal Waterfront Park

Vancouver area

Amble on a paved path along the Columbia River, admiring stately cottonwoods and aahing at breathtaking views of Mount Hood. The trail is short, but graced with art displays, interpretive signs and a playground sporting a lifelike Sasquatch.

It's hard to picture now that from 1953 to 2010 this lovely stretch of shoreline was occupied by the Hambleton Lumber Company mill. In 2016, the Washougal Waterfront Park opened on this former industrial tract.

The wheelchair-accessible trail through the park is a mere 0.6 mile with a 0.7-mile extension to Steamboat Landing Park. But you can continue hiking or running east from there for 2.6 miles along the Columbia River Dike Trail through Cottonwood Beach to Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge.

The new park is a key parcel to connect the Columbia River Gorge to downtown Vancouver through the Friends of the Gorge's Gorge Towns to Trails initiative.

Before hitting the trail, check out the park's solar-powered, wheelchair-accessible restrooms. Then take the short loop to the compass viewpoint, enjoying a sweeping view of the river and Oregon's Larch Mountain and Mount Hood. Now follow the Waterfront Trail east, passing interpretive signs. The concrete trail is lined with benches and lampposts, making it a good place for an evening stroll. Note the distinctive Sasquatch markers in the trail. Follow them to the Northwest-themed play area featuring a 9-foot-tall kneeling Sasquatch.

The trail continues past the play area, eventually bending north and reaching its eastern terminus at 0.6 mile on South A Street. From here, continue east on the 0.7-mile Columbia River Trail, paralleling South A Street for a stint before traversing a patch of riparian forest and reaching Steamboat Landing Park and its dike trail.

Pro tip: Winter and early spring sunsets over the river from the park are divine.

Distance: 2.6 miles roundtrip

Elevation gain: Minimal

Highest point: 25 feet

Permit: None

Dogs: Leashed

Trailhead: The park is about a 20-minute drive from the center of Vancouver. Head east on SR 14 to exit 14. Then continue straight on Frontage Road. At the second roundabout at 0.4 mile, continue south (first right) on S 2nd Street and proceed 0.1 mile to parking and trailhead.

Alternatively, if you're hoping to take public transportation to get to the water, you can take the C-Tran 41 or 92 to the corner of Pendleton Way and C Street, where it's a 0.3-mile walk to nearby Steamboat Landing Park.

Craig Romano is a guidebook author, craigromano.com.



THE BEAUTY OF HIKING

Trip reporter Katie McGregor, KatieJM, spotted this eagle while hiking along the northeast side of Lake Quinault. She shared this gorgeous moment in her trip report for Kestner Homestead–Maple Glade. She was hiking with a friend on New Year’s Day. They saw so many eagles and repeatedly stopped to watch them. This one was watching a large female eagle taking a bath in the river below, and Katie captured this image from a distance, just before he took off.

Katie grew up in the area and loves it for its lush scenery and plentiful wildlife. She’s usually a

landscape photographer, but it’s always a treat to capture a photo of wildlife.

“I write trip reports because they were integral to my introduction to hiking,” Katie said. “As a teenager just discovering the joy of exploring our outdoor spaces, organizations like WTA were a huge help with discovering new places and understanding the logistics of safely and responsibly enjoying them. Now that I’m more experienced, I like to share my own adventures to provide that information for others. Plus, it’s fun to have a personal log of all of the trails I’ve hiked in our beautiful state!”

To enjoy more beautiful images from trip reports, or write your own, go to

wta.org/tripreports



Camp + Volunteer = Fun

Registration for backcountry trips opens Feb. 24

Join us for a variety of volunteer backcountry experiences statewide — from intro trips to weeklong excursions.

Check out all of our work parties at wta.org/volunteer.

