

# Washington Trails

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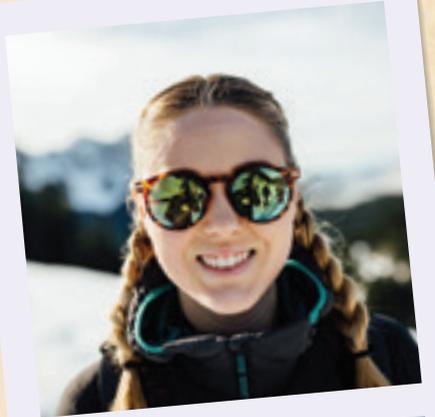
## Powered by people

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How to plan a  
DIY thru-hike

Making friends  
and learning skills  
through trail work

Building a more  
welcoming trail  
community





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# Washington Trails

A Publication of Washington Trails Association

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# Our Collective Voices

**S**pring is once again in the air, and with it a sense of renewal and rejuvenation. I've been spending a lot more time out on trail these days — with members of our community, staff and program participants — and it's always so inspiring to hear stories of how people came to be involved with WTA and what the outdoor community means to them.

WTA was founded with a vision of hikers being able to change the world, and over the years we have grown and found new ways to connect people with opportunities to give back to trails and public lands. From our expanded advocacy efforts to our statewide trail maintenance program to our growing community partnerships, there are so many examples of the power of people coming together to change the world for the better.

Last month, more than 100 hikers signed up for Hiker Rally Day. It was amazing to see people from across the state speak up in support of policies that protect and improve our public lands and outdoor spaces. We had more than 100 virtual meetings with elected officials from 40 districts across the state, giving them an opportunity to hear firsthand the transformative power of trails. We celebrated last year's legislative wins — including the \$30 million in annual funding we were able to unlock for trail maintenance — and we rallied support for key policies to continue that positive momentum. So many of our elected officials mentioned how helpful it is for them to see and feel the support of the hiking community around these priorities.

The efforts of WTA's advocates are being noticed all the way to the other Washington. In February, I traveled to Washington, D.C., for a number of meetings with our federal and congressional partners, including the heads of both the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service. In almost every conversation, people pointed to the work being done in Washington state as an example of what can be achieved by a strong, connected community of people passionate about and willing to speak up for the outdoors.

The legislative session recently came to an end and we are delighted that our top two priorities were fully funded (page 9). Our collective voices showed that people care about trails here in Washington. By supporting WTA, you are a vital part of this growing hiking community. You are a part of these solutions and a part of their success. So thank you!

And I hope you, too, are feeling that sense of energy and revitalization that spring brings. Because together we can — and do — make a positive difference for trails.

With gratitude,

**Jaime Loucky** | Chief executive officer | [jaimel@wta.org](mailto:jaimel@wta.org)

# 18 Inclusion & Authenticity

A member of this year's Emerging Leaders Program cohort talks about their experience — and explains why inclusive spaces like this are so critical.



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### On the cover

Cover photos by (counter-clockwise from top left) Jamie, Ben Semer, Jack Nemiroff, Lorie Limson Cook, Collin Tasaka, Daniel Rice and Max McDonald. Read about the photos at [wta.org/may2023cover](http://wta.org/may2023cover).



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Craig Romano reflects on how personal encounters shape his time on trail.

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Macro photography lets us see the tiny intricate details of our natural world. Here are some tips on how to get that perfect close-up shot.

Photos by Charlie Lavides and Doug Diekema

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## 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.

### Summer 2023 | Volume 58, Issue 2

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# Putting it All Together

**O**ne of my favorite moments of creating every magazine is when it finally starts to take shape as a real thing. At some point, the stories and photos we've been working on for months start to come together on the page. It always feels a bit magical — I love seeing an amorphous concept begin to transform into physical form.

I also love how the stories start to feel different when put in context of all the others in the magazine. They're more powerful together, just like the WTA community. In this issue, it's a joy to share stories from individuals in our community, about how they've shaped WTA's work, and how WTA's work has shaped them. All these individuals' stories add up to create an incredibly powerful impact across the state.

Thank you for being part of that community. And thank you for reading! In this magazine, you'll find volunteers writing about how their time on trail has enriched their life off the trail as well (page 14). You'll also get to know some of the people who make our invaluable Hiking Guide possible (page 22).

We also have stories of people who are working to make the outdoor community more inclusive. One of the participants in WTA's Emerging Leaders Program explains why that experience was so powerful (page 18). And you'll get to know several professionals who are working to make the fitness and wellness industry more welcoming to everyone (page 28).

We also have hike suggestions (page 42), gear tips (page 34), photography tricks (page 40) and more. I hope you enjoy!

Happy hiking!

**Jessi Loerch** | Washington Trails editor | [jessi@wta.org](mailto:jessi@wta.org)



# Take Transit to the Trails

By K. Huntress Inskeep

**Kim Huntress Inskeep** uses transit to get to many of her hiking and backpacking locations, including this trip to Third Beach.

**My introduction to hiking and camping** started in the foothills outside my hometown, San Diego. When I moved up to Washington for college, I started tagging along on trips with friends. I was immediately taken by Washington’s lush landscape.

I would have liked to explore even more, but without a car or a driver’s license, it was hard. Transit is how I got around, however, and eventually I realized it could even get me to trailheads. Since then, I’ve learned just how much hiking (and some backpacking) can be done by transit. And I’m trying to encourage others to give it a try — and show it’s worth it.

I like how safe buses and trains feel, especially at faster speeds. I appreciate that transit is by far the most climate- and salmon-friendly way to travel. Especially in transit systems that serve rural communities, the drivers often know their regular passengers well and the bus is its own town square. I often catch bits of local news and color I’d never hear otherwise.

Transit can take time — but it can give it back, too. Someone else is driving, so you can relax. Take in the views. Enjoy quality time with friends or family — younger kids seem to love the bus. Catch up on email. Call a friend. Read up on the natural history of the trail you’re

headed to. Leave behind worries about full parking lots, break-ins or the cost of gas. Traffic jam? Your bus will glide right past in the HOV lane.

My favorite transit trek? A backpacking trip to escape June 2021’s heat dome. The closest bus stop left me 5 miles short of the Rialto Beach trailhead. The hike along Mora Road was only a minor slog — I loved getting to see sections of the Bogachiel, Dickey and Quillayute rivers and observing some extraordinary bald eagle activity that would have been impossible to see from a car. I also lost cell service almost immediately, allowing me several luxurious days to commune with the beach and the sea.

Seeking out transit hikes has strengthened my belief that investing in transit expansion is one of the most effective things we can do to promote the overall quality of life for rural and urban Washington — and more equitable access to the outdoors.

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*Kim has a deep resume of helping improve access to transit. Currently, she’s writing “The Transit Trekker Manual” to help nondrivers more easily access the outdoors near and far, and to make it easier for people who want to drive less to enjoy car-free recreation. Read more about Kim’s tips and transit adventures at [wta.org/kimtransit](http://wta.org/kimtransit).*

## Tips for trekking via transit

### **Start close to home!**

Chances are your city’s largest parks are served by transit.

**Know your transit schedule** and plan your trip accordingly.

**Check if cab service**, if necessary, is available — ride-sharing apps are less likely to serve rural communities.

### **Practice bus etiquette.**

Let folks with mobility aids, kids and heavy loads go first, and yield ADA seating. Thanking the driver is always a good idea, too!

**Prepare your fare** by loading your transit pass or app or having small bills and change. Pro tip: Many smaller transit systems have gone fare-free, and kids under 18 ride free on most transit systems.



— **Emilio Santiago Suarez**,  
@emiliosuarez\_photography

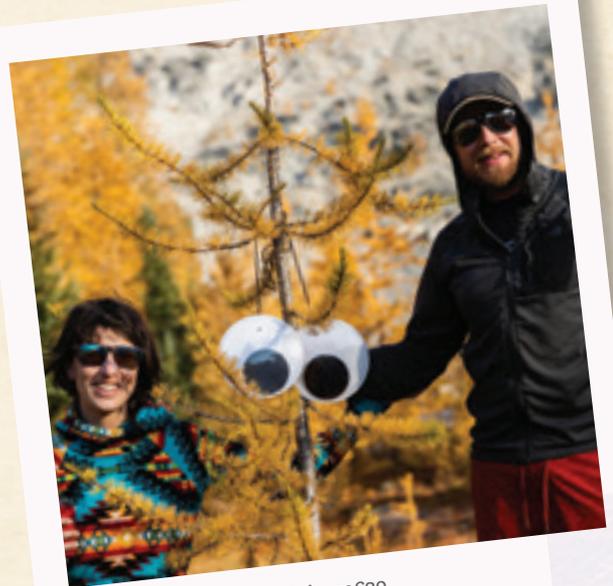
## Share a story

### Show us how you connect on trail

📷 Memorable moments from WTA's Instagram community

◀ **We went out for the day to Kubota Garden** in South Seattle. This particular day was in early November and the trees were still very colorful. We walked around, admired the scenery and serenity. Talked about life and love. I love taking pictures of my friends whenever we go on hikes or trips. In this picture, I feel like my friend Solo and his girlfriend Hyatt each give off their own individual emotion and aesthetic but produce a feeling of oneness and togetherness at the same time. Time outside brings me closer to my community through shared experiences — I've mixed quite a few of my friend groups and they've gone on to have friendships outside of my connection.

**My husband and I love larches** and do a larch march every year. We thought it would be hilarious to bring out giant googly eyes and take photos of the larches, which we think look like Muppets. Last year, we convinced friends to go larch hunting to Star Lake, where this photo was taken of my husband and me. I love to share backpacking with people because there are no other distractions and you can just simply be together and enjoy the experience. I always feel a great sense of connection after a beautiful hike and adventure. My husband and I have always connected and grown by learning new skills and enjoying the outdoors together. Adventure is our family value. ▶



— **Claire Kellogg**, @clairem639.  
Photo by **Brandon Mark**, @bmarks73



— **Kristy Canright**, @Trailkat.and.tribe

◀ **This photo is from an urban hike** at the amazing Dishman Hills Natural Area in Spokane Valley, aka The Wild Heart of Spokane. In the photo is myself, Therese Roberson and Jenny McMaster. These two ladies are my amazing friends and we try to get out one night a week after work. Dishman Hills has been part of my life since I was a Girl Scout in the 1980s and camped there. It is also my go-to place with my grandkids to wander and let them pick the trails; they all connect sooner or later. Nothing makes me feel more connected to my community than trail time with friends.



TRAIL SMARTS

# How to Cross Rivers and Streams Safely

By Joe Gonzalez

**Snow runoff can make spring and summer water crossings** intimidating and sometimes dangerous. These tips can help make your next crossing a safe and enjoyable one.

## Know the conditions before you go

Check the weather, read a WTA trip report or call the land manager to learn the latest on precipitation and water levels in the area. Remember to check the weather not just for the area you'll be visiting, but also areas upstream. Keep in mind that when rivers are swollen in spring and early summer, it takes time for snowmelt at higher elevations to roll downhill. Creek volume is highest in the afternoon and evening (since snow upstream has had hours to melt in the sun); it's usually lower in the morning.

## Assess the risk

Water crossings can be dangerous, so take a moment to evaluate the external factors of the river as well as your own abilities before crossing. Factors like visibility to the stream bottom, where the trail is on the other side, how many people you are hiking with and your own experience are key.

Warning: Look out for snow bridges over water in the shoulder season. Beware of the risk of falling through, and test the path ahead with a trekking pole.

## Make a plan

If you're hiking with others, cross together. If necessary, you can consult your map and walk up or downstream to find a safe crossing. Scan the river for the route you plan on taking — sometimes the safest way zigzags to shallow sections rather than cutting directly across.

## Dial in your gear

Hiking poles are extremely helpful. Always make water crossings in stable footwear. Protecting your feet and having good traction is important, particularly on backpacking trips where you're farther from treatment in the event of injury. Remember to unhook your backpack straps before approaching a water source and don't be afraid to ditch your pack and gear if you fall — it isn't worth your life. Consider lining your pack with a trash bag to keep the contents dry, throw your electronics and other valuables into a waterproof bag, and keep compartments on the outside of your pack cinched tight so nothing snags.

## It's all about technique

Keep three points of contact at all times (two feet and a pole or two poles and one foot). If you decide to rock-hop or balance on a log, test the stability of the surface before committing your full weight. Using a hiking pole or a single foot will help you determine if your next step will be stable. If you decide to ford the creek, keep your body facing upstream, or at a 45-degree angle between upstream and the bank you're trying to reach. If you do lose your footing, maneuver yourself onto your back with your feet pointed downstream. This allows your legs to take the impact of any hazards in the water and keeps your arms free to reach out and slow you down.

Photo by Joe Gonzalez

# Highlights

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



## ◀ We Love Our Members

WTA was thrilled to celebrate our 26,000 members for a week in April. We created a special sticker for members who wrote trip reports with #MemberAppreciation included, and interviewed members on why they give back to trails. We also hosted a happy hour with some longtime WTA donors at the REI in Seattle. It was wonderful to connect with the hiking community in person. WTA's gratitude for our members isn't just confined to one week — we truly couldn't do our work without you. Thank you!

## Come join us! ▶

It was all smiles on the Duckabush, our first backcountry trip of the season! Even in unpredictable early season conditions, the team did a fantastic job prepping the trail by removing over 12 logs, clearing brush and creating new drainage. Backcountry response teams and volunteer vacations are a great for building a closer connection with trails and your fellow crew members. We're in for a busy season. We have plenty of amazing options to choose from. Find your backcountry trip at [wta.org/volunteer](https://wta.org/volunteer).



## Helping hikers hike responsibly

WTA is partnering with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to launch a pilot trailhead ambassador program in Central Washington to improve visitor experiences and reduce recreation impacts. The program will recruit and train volunteers to welcome visitors at popular points of entry to WDFW lands, provide information about the area and offer education so that visitors can recreate safely and responsibly. [wta.org/wdfw](https://wta.org/wdfw)

## Big wins for trail in the Legislature

Washington's state Legislature ended with great news for trails! WTA's top two priorities are fully funded. WTA's Emerging Leaders Program, a partnership with Washington State Parks, is funded in the 2023-2025 budget. And \$30 million per biennium for maintaining our state recreation lands — \$10 million each for Washington State Parks, Department of Natural Resources and Department of Fish and Wildlife — is funded ongoing, which means that money will be there for years to come. [wta.org/2023legislature](https://wta.org/2023legislature)

NOTEWORTHY



## Help Us Celebrate 20 Years of Giving Back to Trails

By Leina Seeley

**W**TA's annual fundraiser, Hike-a-Thon, is back this August. Hike-a-Thon is a community fundraising event that gives hikers the opportunity to raise funds for our work. Throughout August, Hike-a-Thon participants hit the trail, share stories of their outdoor adventures and raise funds that directly support trails in Washington. This year is extra special — it's the 20th anniversary of Hike-a-Thon! We're really excited to celebrate with you, but for now, we're taking a look at some of the highlights from the past 20 years of community, hiking and fun.

- **15 participants registered for the first Hike-a-Thon in 2004.** They hiked 700 miles and raised over \$5,000 for trails. One of the prizes WTA offered was National Geographic's Back Roads Explorer, a 17-disc set of map software for the U.S.
- **Hike-a-Thoners hit a big milestone in 2012** — it was the first time more than 10,000 miles were hiked and logged! Hike-a-Thoners have been ambitious ever since.
- **Miles the Marmot joined Hike-a-Thon in 2015 and hasn't stopped hiking** — well, unless he's hibernating.



### Get ready for the 20th annual Hike-a-Thon!

**Hike-a-Thon is a community fundraising event** that gives hikers the opportunity to raise funds for Washington Trails Association.

Throughout August, Hike-a-Thon participants hike, share their outdoor adventures and raise funds that directly support trails in Washington. You can participate as an individual or a team. Registration will open on July 1 and the fun begins on Aug. 1. Once you register, you will receive a welcome packet in the mail that will set you up for a successful and fun Hike-a-Thon.

We're celebrating this special anniversary year by bringing back past prize categories like "most hikes on volcanoes" and "environmental MVP."

We also have a great assortment of prizes from WTA's partners!

There will be opportunities to connect with your fellow Hike-a-Thoners — like WTA-coordinated group hikes throughout the state. And at the very end of Hike-a-Thon, we will host a fun closing event celebrating your contributions to trails. You can also share your Hike-a-Thon adventures in the active Facebook group throughout the month.

We can't wait to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Hike-a-Thon with you in August.

**Please join us when registration opens on July 1.**

[wta.org/hikeathon](http://wta.org/hikeathon)

# 5 Ways to Get Involved With WTA This Summer

## Hike the State

Kick off your summer trail season with WTA! Get hike recommendations, tips and local knowledge from WTA staff at this free event.

**June 22 — Online**

## Washington Trails Day

Celebrate our state's trails by becoming a trail advocate on this official state holiday.

**June 24 — Online and at trailheads throughout Washington**

## Hike-a-Thon

Get out, give back! Registration for WTA's biggest annual hiking event begins on July 1. Then, hit the trail all August to help us raise essential funding for trails.

**August — Statewide**

## Northwest Exposure

WTA's annual photo contest kicks off on Aug. 17 and features a new bonus category: East of the Cascades. Grab your camera and get ready to enter!

**Aug. 17 to Oct. 17 — Statewide**

## Work parties

Join us for work parties across the state, from the backcountry to the trail next door.

**Almost daily — Statewide**

Get more information on how to take part in the trail community all summer long.

**[wta.org/2023summer](https://wta.org/2023summer)**

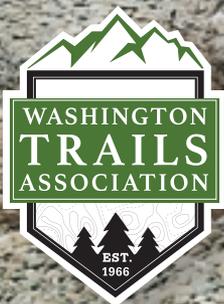


Photo by Rico Tabligan



# Speak Up for the Trails You Love

By **Linnea Johnson**

**D**id you know that Washington has an official holiday that's dedicated to trails? Gov. Jay Inslee has proclaimed June 24 as Washington Trails Day, in honor of our state's spectacular outdoors and WTA's stewardship of and advocacy for trails.

This year, WTA is celebrating Washington Trails Day by inviting everyone who loves the outdoors to join our advocate community, Trail Action Network!

Trail Action Network is a statewide network — over 60,000 strong — of people who love trails and want to speak up on their behalf. When you sign up, you'll be the first to know about opportunities to protect the public lands you cherish.

With the collective support of our Trail Action Network members, WTA has led the way in bringing major wins to Washington's trails on the federal, state and local levels. Here are successes from just the past few years:

- Co-founding the Recreate Responsibly Coalition, a group of Washington government agencies, nonprofits and outdoor businesses collaborating for an inclusive outdoor future.
- Advocating for the Great American Outdoors Act, a landmark piece of legislation that provided a surge of funding for federal public lands.

- Securing game-changing investments for trails and public lands in the 2022 state operating budget, which led to ongoing funding for maintenance on state recreation lands.

But we aren't stopping there. The maintenance backlog on our shared lands is still millions of dollars, and the need to continually care for trail infrastructure only increases as more people discover the joys of our trails.

On June 23 and 24, WTA staff and volunteer ambassadors will be stationed at trailheads across the state to invite outdoor lovers to be a voice for trails. Meanwhile, throughout June, we'll be encouraging the WTA community to invite friends and family to join the movement to protect trails.

Once you're part of our advocate community, we hope you'll take a moment on your next hike to pause, appreciate your surroundings and feel the peace of mind that comes with the knowledge that you've chosen to speak up for your favorite places. You're doing your part to ensure that trail, its trailhead and the roads you took to get there are cared for — not only for your own future use, but for generations to come.

What could be a better way to celebrate?

Get involved at [wta.org/watrailsgiving](https://wta.org/watrailsgiving).



Drive Good™

## How to Make the Most of a Car Camping Trip

Presented by your Western Washington Honda Dealers

**Whether you spend every weekend in the backcountry or you're just figuring out your camping needs,** car camping is a great in-between option. It allows for an immersive outdoor experience as well as flexibility and added comfort — you can either sleep in your car or drive up to a campground and pitch a tent. We chatted with our friends from Western Washington Honda Dealers about some helpful tips for car camping.

### Choosing your camping location

The hardest part of camping might be choosing where you want to go. Especially in Washington, you can't go wrong. That said, there are some things to keep in mind:

- Developed trailheads and picnic areas on U.S. Forest Service land are closed to camping.
- Most national parks won't allow you to sleep in your car unless you're in an established campsite.
- Dispersed camping is allowed in some places. It is best to contact the land manager or the nearest U.S. Forest Service ranger station directly to confirm that your chosen spot's a go.
- Camping is popular in Washington. Make camping reservations well in advance or have a backup plan (or two!) in case the campground is at capacity.

Wherever you go, make sure you and your vehicle are ready to handle any rough roads that you might encounter on your

travels. Also, especially if you don't know the area, plan your travels so that you get to your destination while it's still light out and can set up your campsite before dark.

### Packing your car

One of the luxuries of car camping is that you can bring more than the necessities. You can bring extra layers of clothing and bedding, firewood if your camping area allows for it or bulky gear like a cooler or camping chairs. If you're sleeping in your car, consider bringing window covers for privacy.

Think about what you might need specifically for your car, as well, such as a jump starter in case your battery dies or an air compressor to fix a flat tire. It's also a good idea to bring a physical map and note where the closest gas station or auto repair shop is in relation to your campsite.

Once you get to your campsite, make unloading easier on yourself by packing your car strategically. Store your supplies in bins to corral your belongings, and make sure your tent is easily accessible, if you plan on using it, so you can set it up first and unload straight into it.

### Experiencing the outdoors

You're outside! There's nothing quite like waking up and getting to spend the whole day in nature. Find hikes to explore with WTA's Hiking Guide or simply sit back, relax and enjoy the outdoors. When you're ready to hit the road again, clean up any trash from your site and look around to make sure you have all of your belongings.

We'd like to thank our friends at Western Washington Honda Dealers for discussing car camping with us. Happy trails!

# A Space to Learn & Grow

Just as our beloved Washington trails are shaped by WTA volunteers, volunteers are shaped by their experiences on trail. Whether finding a sense of belonging and making new friends, developing skills that translate off-trail or gaining confidence in their work, volunteers across the state have found that their experiences provide them with more than just a day spent on trail. We asked those volunteers to tell us their stories.

## Whitney Allar

For years as a Washington state resident, I relied on the WTA website for trail information and trip reports. About 5 years ago, I joined my first WTA work party to repay a little of what I had gained. After the first day, I was hooked. It was great fun to “work” outdoors, a refreshing change from my exclusively indoor and highly academic profession. I have been volunteering with WTA in various capacities since. I believe in WTA’s mission and values — which parallel my own — and its impact on my community.

WTA strengthens my connection to my community. I have met like-minded people who enjoy hiking, backpacking, cycling and Nordic skiing who have become dear friends. I can also help those who are new to outdoor activities. My volunteer work with WTA has taught me how to connect with those individuals and to help foster their romance with the outdoors — including



Whitney’s relationship with trails has evolved over the years. Now, she’s not only a trail user, but also a volunteer trail maintainer, advocate and ambassador.

by directing them to WTA resources. And, for those wanting to get involved, I can introduce them to tangible ways WTA makes it possible to be a champion for trails.

Nowadays, I am a WTA ambassador. I attend outreach events in my Eastern Washington community, I do trail work on single-day and multiday trips, and I participate in advocacy work to ask our lawmakers to preserve and maintain public lands. Seeing young families, dog owners, beginner hikers and serious trekkers all on trail reminds me to celebrate

what we have in common. We Washingtonians are so fortunate that the next hike is in our neighborhood or a reasonable drive away.

Volunteering with WTA allows me to share my love of the outdoors in a meaningful way. I get to be outdoors and swing some tools to help build a brand-new trail or to revitalize a beloved existing trail. Learning a little about the expertise, collaboration and labor that go into building a trail has greatly enhanced my own appreciation for trails. It is wonderful to be a small part of something good.

Photos courtesy Whitney Allar, Karen Bean



**Working with WTA**, Karen says she's not only gained trail work skills, but she's also learned about how to listen, approach problems in different ways and teach skills to new folks.

me realize that what I do — on and off trail — is special. I now talk about my work more and take pride in what I create as a photographer and museum digitization specialist — I'm saving history for future generations.

Now, I'm a WTA volunteer crew leader and assistant crew leader. I am almost 275 days deep into volunteering. I have a couple of really good friends I've made through WTA that I hike with, hang out with and confide in. They understand my need to be out in the woods getting dirty!

WTA helped me find myself here. It gave me a community and a purpose. I want to help keep the outdoors accessible to everyone. ▶

## Karen Bean

**I signed up for my first work party, at the Old Sauk River Trail, about 6 months after moving to Washington.** I was looking for ways to meet people with outdoorsy interests. I used a crosscut saw that first day. I hadn't thought I'd get to touch the giant saw, but I did. I was stoked as a woman to be doing things that were out of my comfort level.

### **I was hooked.**

Working with WTA has helped me see small details. It's not about quantity, it's about quality. Building structures, using a

“ Trail work helped me realize that what I do — on and off trail — is special.

crosscut saw, developing trail eyes — working with WTA has shown me the complexity that goes into creating and maintaining trails. It has also helped me take pride in my work, not just on trail but in everything I do, and to push myself in ways I didn't know I could. It changed my perspective. I didn't really have pride in what I did at my job — it was just what I did. I didn't think I had special skills, but trail work helped



**Karen likes being part of a tight-knit community.** And on some of her work parties, that community even includes pack animals!



## Dallas Damianick

**I started using the WTA website when I was looking for hikes and checking trail conditions, and soon learned about WTA's volunteer opportunities.**

I was also looking into colleges at the time and had learned that they like seeing volunteer work. I decided to volunteer with WTA because I wanted to help trails because of how often I use them.

My first work party was a youth volunteer vacation last July. Volunteering has changed my perspective on how things get done on trails. It takes days to finish even short sections of complicated trails. It's also shown me how things get done a lot faster when everyone is working together.

Working with WTA has helped me develop collaborative and critical thinking skills, especially when our crew has to work together to problem solve.

Last year, my crew was building stairs at Snow Lake and we were trying to get a huge rock out of the ground. We started digging and discovered there were actually two really large rocks, one over the other, with a stump holding them into the ground. They were way too large to move alone, so the task required really good collaboration and communication between members of the crew.

Although I expected to gain trail work skills with WTA, I was surprised to gain leadership skills too. I expected that volunteering would mostly be getting told what to do. As I've gained experience, I've started telling others what they can do, too. I've taken on leadership roles, like when I'm working with kids or when I'm the most experienced on a type of project.

Now, in groups at school, I'm able to lead and help everyone figure out what to do.

I'll be heading off to college soon and I'm thinking of leaving the state to try something new, but I'll miss working with WTA if I do!

Dallas signed up for his first trail work party for some volunteer experience last year. Now, you'll find him at a trail work party almost every weekend — sometimes even twice in one weekend.

Photo by Zachary Toliver

## Jane Baker

**I moved to Spokane from the Midwest in 1984 to be near the mountains.** I began doing service trips with the Sierra Club in 1987 and I really took to trail work — it kept me fit, connected me to the wilderness, let me meet great people and gave me a way to make a difference in my community.

I found WTA in 2005 after my boss showed me the website. I was delighted to discover volunteer vacations. “You mean there’s a trail work organization right here in Washington that has wilderness trips to gorgeous places that take only one week so I can get the time off?” I signed up for one right away.

When I became an assistant crew leader, I wanted there to be more

“The best days are when I can teach and share what I have learned — in the best office ever.”

trail work opportunities in Eastern Washington. When I was asked to become a crew leader, I felt too new but realized that role was necessary for the program to be successful here. I asked myself, “If not now, when? If not me, who?”

With that in mind, I became a crew leader in 2009 and helped start WTA’s Eastern Washington volunteer program. The work we have done, the places we’ve been and the people we’ve met have made it worthwhile. There is almost no park or trail around Spokane that we have not touched. We have taken trails in bad shape and made them the best. We have built miles of new trails that



**Jane is not only a member of WTA’s Crosscut Saw Club** — made of volunteers who have completed over 500 trail work days — but she was integral in starting up the volunteer program in Eastern Washington.

have opened up outdoor recreation for an ever-increasing population of nature lovers.

I’ve taken part in over 550 work parties. The best days are when I can teach and share what I have learned — in the best office ever. I respect WTA’s culture of learning, following sustainable trail practices and honoring volunteers. I have been appreciated and respected. When I lost my personalized handsaw — awarded to volunteers who complete 50 work parties — WTA presented me with a brand-new saw shortly after.

I still remember my first day with WTA.

It was a volunteer vacation, and the packers had mistakenly dropped our supplies over a mile away from camp. After a little problem solving, we spent the day schlepping supplies. It was a grueling start, but I quickly learned about the resolve, toughness and good-natured humor of WTA volunteers.

The state of Washington is blessed with thousands of these people: WTA volunteers who love the beauty and inspiration of our wild places and are willing to give their time, energy and knowledge to keep our trails open for everyone. It has been a privilege to be one of them. ■

Photo by Holly Weiler

# Inclusion & Authenticity

A welcoming approach to learning and growing in the outdoor community

By Charlie Lavides

I stand at the shore, looking out at the horizon as my eyes follow the blurred lines where the water and sky collide into the sunset, with the magnitude of the forest behind me. Though, here, I don't have a body. I'm simply a floating consciousness witnessing brilliant shades of orange, yellow and blue dancing on the water's surface. The colors flirt with the boundaries of the water and the sky, waiting to connect, merge and create boundless possibilities. An abundant feeling of inspiration and empowerment courses through me. This place transcends time, grounding me in the present moment. As I stare at the power of nature's gift, my bird's-eye perspective shifts to the oranges, yellows and blues reflected on the water. Here, above the water, I hear a message.

"Even when you cannot see beneath the water's reflection, you must plunge into the unknown to discover what's there."

This moment was all within a dream, but a dream whose immense impact follows me to this day. A deep part of me

knows that voice was some form of an internal guidance system reminding me of the depths within myself. The message, conveyed clearly and directly from nature's ancient knowledge, reminded me to take reasonable risks outside of my comfort zone.

That entreaty to "enter the unknown," is how I ended up in this year's 2023 Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) on my first-ever backpacking trip. Working on a paid WTA trail crew consisting of all BIPOC members gave me a sense of inclusion and comfort that I hadn't really realized was missing in my life. Through this program, we found community among one another without having to code-switch and self-regulate. Instead, we upheld respectful cultural sensitivities for each other in outdoor spaces where our historically marginalized identities have been erased, where we've been told by societal norms that we don't belong.

I have always been curious about hiking, camping and outdoor recreation, but life circumstances kept me from



The ELP cohort enjoyed playful time together at Dungeness Spit before heading to Cape Alava — part of the Ozette Triangle — where they shared a meal.

opportunities to explore the outdoors until adulthood for a variety of reasons: lack of representation, lack of access and lack of awareness of BIPOC communities in the outdoors.

It was only through deep determination and intentionality that I found a way to work outdoors with the Emerging Leaders Program: a ragtag team who carry shared identities and who allowed a space for safety, respect and a curious exploration of life paths to open between us. Coming from an education and operations background with tutoring, research assistantships and odd jobs that paid the bills, I wanted to try something new. I found WTA during the summer of 2022 and worked as an assistant crew leader for the youth volunteer vacations. I stayed connected with WTA and later applied for the ELP cohort to continue learning about working outdoors, trail maintenance, DEI work and discovering the many possible paths to take.

After months of getting to know each other, on trail and off, our lovely team put boots on the boardwalk early on a March morning this spring. We were traveling the Ozette Triangle on the ancestral lands of the Makah Tribe.

Our ELP leadership team, MJ Sampang, Angelic Friday and Beatriz “Bea” Vazquez, prepared and taught us about safety, personal preferences regarding backpacking comforts and fun activities to stay engaged during our time together. The cohort members included me, Shanice Snyder, Michelle 美薇 Mouw, and L Kravit-Smith, all on the search to satisfy professional endeavors through this program — whether that meant discovering trail work positions, outdoor education roles for underserved communities, farming trades or diversity, equity and inclusion work.

Nervous jitters and excitement for new experiences gathered before this trip, but transparent communication, group agreements and discussions about safety on all levels — including the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels — helped us to collaboratively create a meaningful, fun and, at times, surreal experience. I must say, if you want to be open to spontaneity and the unknown, then a backpacking trip with a trusted and cherished group of people is a good place to test it out yourself.

The ELP leadership team cultivated an atmosphere of encouragement and inspiration,

## WTA’s Emerging Leaders Program

In its third year, WTA’s Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) is a diverse cohort of individuals who want to form an inclusive community and build leadership skills to support careers in natural-resource stewardship and outdoor recreation. WTA hopes that by investing in paid development opportunities for future leaders in the outdoor industry, those leaders can build upon professional and personal aspirations while contributing to an outdoor community where all people feel included and valued.

Learn more at [wta.org/elp](https://wta.org/elp).

along with a group agreement to “show up as you are.” This atmosphere set a tone for inclusivity and vulnerability. That, in turn, helped genuine connections form and allowed us to play, learn and explore professional aspirations together.

I’ve heard so many BIPOC and LGBTQ+ stories about survival, resilience and trauma. Although those stories are important, I want to shift the narrative to center our joys, hopes and visions for healing, processing and self-care so that we may all move toward a more equitable future. I want to center our multifaceted and intersectional identities as human beings on a spectrum of experience, where different is just different. Not bad or good. Not black or white. Rather, we are a kaleidoscope of possibility. Representation is needed on trails, in outdoor spaces and in all walks of life because we are here and have always existed.

The snapshot moments imprinted in our minds’ eye are those of beach dinners with our feet in the sand — accompanied by a sunset very similar to the one in my dream. Hues of orange and blue colored the sky while our laughter and companionship filled the air. Our inner children came out to play and make connections, freed from the hetero-normative and White gaze that follows us everywhere outside of these shared spaces. We were simply a group of friends listening to the ocean through the night, witnessing seal heads curiously popping up in the morning, sitting among the sea stacks with deer nearby as bald eagles and ospreys soared in the wind.

We took in the present moment, inspired by the scenic views. We danced and sang along the coast for miles. We laughed through the physical pains that backpacking can bring, but we lifted one another up when needed. When packs were too heavy, we shared the load. When social batteries waned, we allowed solitude. When emotions arose, we leaned in. When we were thoughtful, we looked at the waves.

The push and the pull of the tide reminded us of the coming and going of these moments together. It highlighted the impermanence of things and how the changing currents of our physical and conceptual worlds are always shifting. So how can we shift narratives into a more inclusive, diverse and equitable direction? There are as many ways to do so as our creative minds will allow.

On our trip, we navigated coastal tide patterns for windows of safe crossing in the same way we navigated our emotional landscapes with one another: with an attentive and caring eye to the shifting dynamics of our situation. The cold windy nights will pass. With the right gear and company, we can empower each other on our respective journeys, with a reminder that our connection to the outdoors is simply right outside of our door.

I’ve learned from my cohort that backpacking is but one way to experience the outdoors. If you enjoy walks in the park, sitting in your backyard, camping, climbing, hiking, swimming in lakes or even just sitting outside with a warm beverage on your porch, then you are “outdoorsy.” We define how we build our own relationships to the land and what communities we want to embrace, respect and grow.



**The ELP cohort** hikes the beach between Cape Alava and the Sand Point campground.



## **We define how we build our own relationships to the land and what communities we want to embrace, respect and grow.**

In the little moments — when we shared our cultural backgrounds, past experiences and inside jokes — we wove our identities into the fabric of our community. Bringing cultural familiarity into our shared space, like being called “ateh” (an endearment for older sisters in the Philippines) by a fellow Filipino team leader, MJ Sampang, brought so much personal cultural joy to me. Hearing the other members reference BIPOC musicians or artists expanded my pop cultural perceptions and seeing everyone relax into themselves brought an unfamiliar peace I’d been unknowingly looking for.

At the end of this backpacking trip, while nearing the end of the ELP’s time together, cohort members talked about moving forward and utilizing their developing trail maintenance and leadership skills for outdoor careers, DEI work, environmental education and farming trades.

Whether it was through shared worries, a love of music and movement, endearing cultural nicknames or a revitalized passion to move through the world as wholly ourselves, I’ve found us all to be emerging leaders across our intersecting communities by showing up in the moment and working together.

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*Learn more about ELP and our 2023 ELP cohort at [wta.org/elp](http://wta.org/elp).*

# 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](https://wta.org/filetripreports)

# Meet the Hikers and Writers Behind Our Hiking Guide

WTA's Hiking Guide correspondents are hikers just like you. They're also volunteers who work with WTA staff to research hikes all across Washington and provide you with the information you need for your next hike. They write those great driving directions, and they give you turn-by-turn directions once you're on trail. They're responsible for those great little pro tips at the end of Hiking Guide entries. You can see an author credit on each hike on our website, but we'd like to introduce you to a few of them right now.



**Aaron Czechowski**

**Favorite type of hike:** One that I have to plan and dig into the map for. I love hard-copy maps!

**Favorite hike write-up:** Ravensdale Retreat Natural Area — one of my first, and a nice local park. I remember running into some park stewards, having a chat and learning more about the history of the park and area.

**Number of hikes written:** Eight.

**Why he became a Hiking Guide correspondent:** I love getting outdoors and hiking, I enjoy writing and I love to volunteer, so it's a great intersection of those things and it allows me to improve the outdoors experience for others in the community.

**Favorite hiking snack:** Bobo's coconut oat bar.

**Personal hiking goals this year:** I like hikes where I can justify buying a new Green Trails map for the area.



**Shannon Cunningham  
Leader**

**Favorite type of hike:**

A hike less traveled.

**Favorite hike write-up:**

It is hard to pick just one. Maybe the Cispus Braille Trail because I hiked that one with my eyes closed!

**Number of hikes written:** 30.

**Why she became a Hiking Guide correspondent:**

I love learning and writing about trails and outdoor spaces, so sharing with WTA just made sense.

**Favorite hiking snack:**

Dark chocolate and dried fruit.

**Personal hiking goals this year:**

More hiking in Olympic National Park and Eastern Washington.



**David Hagen**

**Favorite type of hike:** A day hike in nice weather to one of our (many) favorite locations with my good friends and hiking companions Ethan, Karen, Brenda and Jonah.

**Favorite hike write-up:** Snow Mountain Ranch.

**Number of hikes written:** 15.

**Why he became a Hiking Guide correspondent:** I wanted to bring more attention to the wonderful hiking here in the shrub-steppe and I find that write-ups tend to be more accurate and interesting when written by a local who knows the hike well.

**Favorite hiking snack:** You can't beat a good Fuji apple.

**Personal hiking goals this year:** Just to keep hiking and to hopefully gain more strength and stamina after undergoing some medical treatments last summer.



## Tiffany Chou

### Favorite type of hike:

Any hike where I get high enough to see over the trees. Bonus points if I get to sit above the clouds.

### Favorite hike write-up:

China Lake in Tacoma. It was my first write-up and it's a beautiful short urban hike. I've been spending a lot of time within city limits these days due to high gas prices and I've appreciated having all of these green spaces to explore close to home.

**Number of hikes written:** 15.

### Why she became a Hiking Guide correspondent:

I've used the Hiking Guide for years to find my hikes and know what I'm getting myself into before hitting the trail. I wanted to give back to the community the same way it has given so much to me.

### Favorite hiking snack:

Dried mango slices dipped in almond butter.

### Personal hiking goals this year:

Circumnavigate a BIG mountain. (Loowit, Wonderland or Timberline, perhaps?)



## Rolan Shomber

### Favorite type of hike:

A day hike, 12 to 16 miles roundtrip, with an elevation gain of 3,000 to 4,000 feet.

**Favorite hike write-up:** Eagle Lakes in the Methow.

### Number of hikes written:

54, with significant contributions made to at least three more.

### Why he became a Hiking Guide correspondent:

Having seen how valuable the "100 Hikes" books from the early 1970s have been, I wanted to contribute to the descriptions of trails to help hikers have sufficient information for a hike.

### Favorite hiking snack:

Safeway Mountain Mix, augmented with dark chocolate M&Ms.

### Personal hiking goals this year:

As I am slowly recovering from a significant medical issue, I hope to be able to do short hikes late in the season.



## Wes Partch

### Favorite type of hike:

A long ridge with views over meadows and lakes, with peaks all around.

### Favorite hike write-up:

Main Fork Dosewallips River — it passes through deep Olympic forest with historic shelters, foraging bears and breathtaking views.

**Number of hikes written:** 40.

### Why he became a Hiking Guide correspondent:

I enjoy field research and want to provide an accurate assessment of trails and their conditions. It also forces me to hike in new places and lets me see more of our beautiful state.

### Favorite hiking snack:

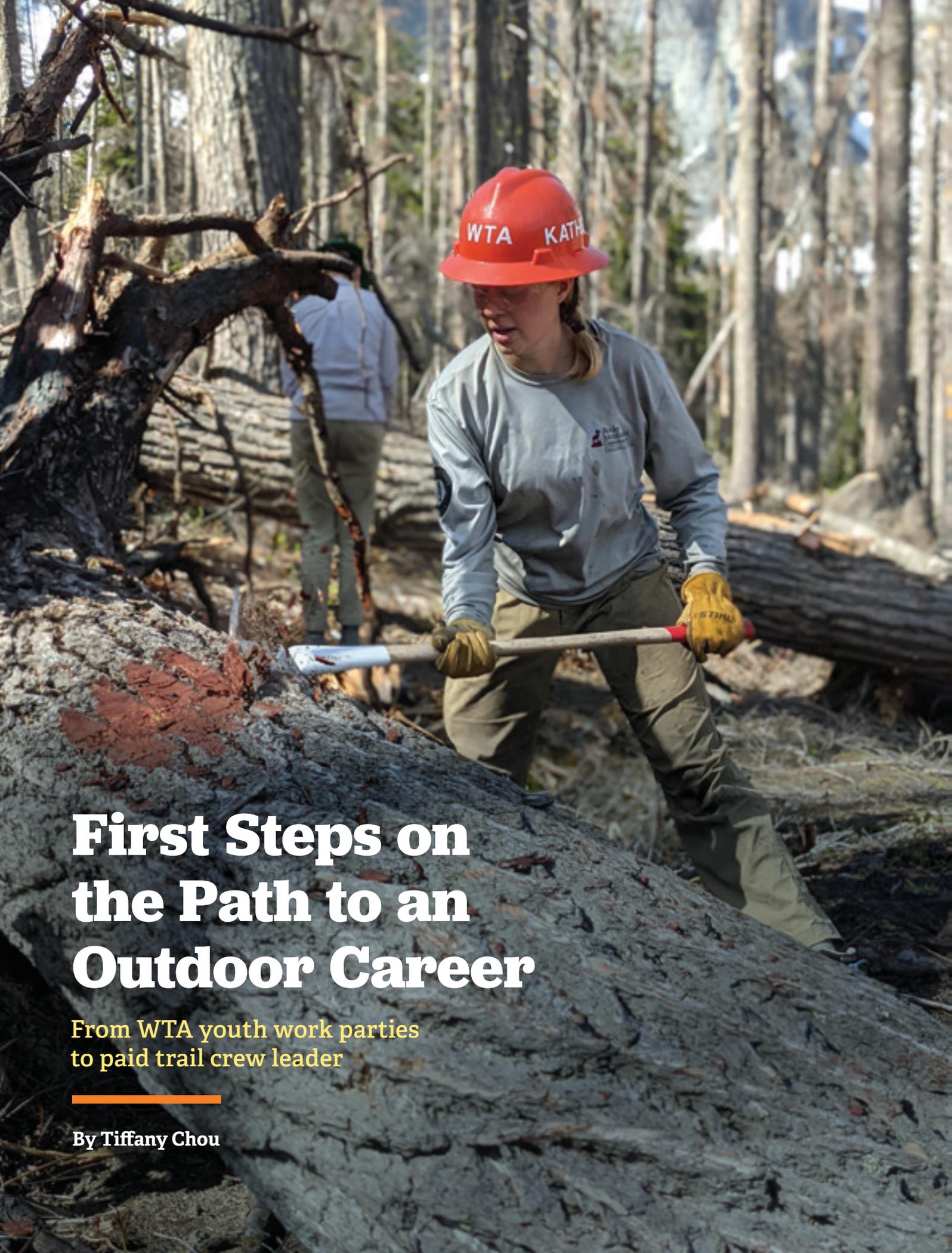
Mixed nuts, dried fruit and stroopwafels — and if it's an overnight hike, Drambuie.

### Personal hiking goals this year:

Summitting both Mount Adams and Mount Daniel.

“ Bonus points if I get to sit above the clouds.

— Tiffany Chou



# First Steps on the Path to an Outdoor Career

From WTA youth work parties to paid trail crew leader

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By Tiffany Chou

**I t takes a seed to grow a passion. WTA gives many people their first exposure to trail maintenance. For some young people, that time working on trail sparks a passion for trail work and pushes them to pursue more personal and professional ways to care for outdoor spaces and the hiking community. This year, we'll be telling the stories of several young adults who got their start on trail with WTA — and of the transformative moments that inspired them to get further involved as stewards of trails and public lands.**

**Kathryn Conley became acquainted with the outdoors early on in life.** She grew up hiking with her parents, who often used WTA as a resource for trail information and current conditions.

In high school, her older sister signed up for a youth volunteer vacation with WTA, which prompted Kathryn to try it out too. It would also fulfill the community service hours she needed for school.

For a rainy week in the summer of 2017, Kathryn and 13 other teenagers camped and worked in the Carbon River Valley at Mount Rainier National Park, recovering a section of the Wonderland Trail.

“I definitely enjoyed my experience as a youth volunteer. At that point, the trail work skills hadn’t quite clicked, but it was fun to be outside and do the work,” Kathryn said. “I remember hanging out at camp and having that community aspect, being around people who loved to hike and loved to be outside.”

Even though the work was hard and the weather wasn’t ideal, Kathryn enjoyed her first trip enough to return for more WTA work parties over the next few summers. Volunteering with WTA was the jumping-off point for her to seek more outdoor work opportunities.

The summer after her first year of college, Kathryn spent 5 months doing trail work and maintenance with the Rocky Mountain Conservancy in Colorado. Immediately after, due to the pandemic moving classes online and her hopes to continue working outside, Kathryn took a year off school to do frontcountry trail work with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources.

During her year of conservation work, Kathryn honed her trail work skills and realized her love of backcountry work, so she looked for a way to work in more remote areas again. She found it in the WTA Lost Trails Found (LTF) crew, a professional trail work crew whose goal is to work on difficult-to-reach backcountry trails needing maintenance. In 2021, she joined the pilot LTF crew as an assistant crew leader (ACL).

“I never necessarily thought I would be back working with WTA, but it’s been a really incredible experience. I’ve loved being able to work in the outdoor industry and have it feel like a welcoming workplace,” Kathryn said. “There’s effort being put in to do things in a way that feels equitable, and the crews I work with are (made up of) different types of people from different places.”



**Kathryn Conley** got her start on trail crews with WTA youth trips. Now she leads trail work parties in Northwest Washington and will lead youth volunteer vacations this summer.

The summer of 2022, Kathryn worked her second season as an ACL on the LTF crew. Over those two trail work seasons, her crews worked on every trail in the Entiat drainage, improved their trail work skills as a team enough to complete technical rock work on the Melakwa Lake Trail. They also heard from hikers about their positive hiking experiences on the Mineral Creek Trail as a result of the crew’s hard work. And these are only a small subset of a long list of impressive accomplishments.

Kathryn thinks that any youth curious about trail work should give it a shot, even if they’re unsure they’ll like it.

“If anything, the connections and people that you meet make it a fun time, even if it doesn’t end up being your forever thing,” Kathryn said. “For me, it did end up being something I wanted to pursue, so you just never know.”

Now a student at Western Washington University, Kathryn is pursuing a degree in environmental science — along with a minor and certification in geographic information systems — which she hopes will help her land a career in the outdoors. This winter and spring, Kathryn has been leading volunteer crews in Northwest Washington, which she’s found to be a fun change of pace from working on the LTF crew. She enjoys developing leadership skills and meeting new people every trip. And this summer, she’ll be leading youth volunteer vacations, bringing her right back to the start of her own story with WTA.

“It’s cool to make that full-circle move of starting out as a volunteer for WTA and then coming back, after having done some trail work away from WTA, as a staff member and being able to feel like I know what I’m doing,” Kathryn said. “I’m excited to get to teach all the trail work skills I’ve learned in the past few years to others and to be a part of creating empowering outdoor experiences for youth.”

# Strength in Community

How Golden Bricks Events is building joy and inclusivity in the outdoors

By Chrisha Favors



**C**ommunity is at the heart of the work we do at Golden Bricks Events (GBE). Creating welcoming, inclusive events is one of the most important ways we build community. As the community manager at GBE, I see the value of our work in realtime.

Last year was my first time at many of GBE's events, including our annual Refuge Outdoor Festival. I rode bikes and I danced at the silent disco with the incredible people I met at Refuge Fest. I led a hike and bird walk with other Black people at our Sundaes Outside campout. And I tried double dutch for the first time at Refuge Day: Pride Edition. I made new relationships, felt a sense of community and created positive memories.

As a Black woman who loves getting outside, building inclusive, equitable and diverse space for folks to have safe and memorable experiences in the outdoors is one of my most important life goals — and it matches up perfectly with the work of GBE.

At our events, we invite diverse people to come together to discover shared values and learn in an environment

that focuses on joy. This allows for genuine connections and for like-minded organizations to discover each other and learn in a space that is about collaboration and building a better outdoor community together. At our events, people are building new connections, and these shared experiences deepen understanding and trust.

Historically, social and institutional barriers have prevented many Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) from safely and comfortably getting outside. We want to counteract that. It's hard to feel welcome when no one looks like you. So we are increasing representation by bringing together a diverse group of outdoor enthusiasts, from cyclists to birders to climbers.

Building intentional, meaningful partnerships is a vital part of our work. Over the years, we have seen the impact of our collective efforts on the community by working closely with our partners. For instance, in 2022, we saw a number of unique collaborations from partners including Bike Works and Young Women Empowered's girls and non-binary bike

## Powerful partnerships

**Friends on Bikes** is a community-based group for cyclists living at the intersection of Black, Indigenous, people of the global majority and trans, women, intersex and gender non-conforming identities. They host social rides, gatherings and summertime bike campouts. They also offer workshops and leadership coaching to get more folks outdoors by bike. [@fob\\_sea](#) on Instagram or [friendsonbikes.com](#).

**QPOC Hikers** is based in the Pacific Northwest and connects queer people of color with hiking and the outdoors by creating space to share stories and experiences; increasing visibility, representation and awareness; and organizing opportunities for learning and growth. [@qpochikers](#) on Instagram or [qpochikers.com](#).

camp, where youth participants were able to learn riding and maintenance skills and earn a bike. Making connections like these is important. To date, we have worked with over 40 community groups, nonprofits and businesses, hosted 25-plus events and brought together people from various walks of life. When we create our events, we do so in a way that advances our collective missions. We believe that a thoughtful, collaborative approach to planning, executing and engaging in events yields positive results in the communities that we serve.

“We are grateful for the participation of our partners in every step of the process; building these inclusive community spaces has to be driven by true community input,” said Chevon Powell, GBE founder.

Two of our newest partners are Friends on Bikes (FOB) and QPOC (Queer People of Color) Hikers. Last year, FOB partnered with Ampersand Bike Club (ABC) and us to lead a ride to Refuge Outdoor Festival and to get a number of our group participants to the festival via bikepacking. Last summer, QPOC Hikers had a table for the first time at Refuge Day in June, and they camped out and facilitated a workshop at Refuge Outdoor Festival in August. I recently chatted with them about why partnerships are important, and how they help us build community and work toward our shared goals.

Roxanne Robles told me that, in successful partnerships, their partners understand that the work is ongoing. FOB has found it really valuable to share resources.

“We make sure to loop in other like-minded organizations so we don’t gatekeep knowledge, sponsorship or mentorship, and so that our partners can grow their reach,” Roxanne said. “Being part of an inclusive community is the bedrock of everything that we do. We are all about making a safer space for cyclists that are not represented in mainstream cycling culture.”

Events like Refuge and the other GBE events are important because they bring a wide variety of groups together. Those groups, like FOB, can share what has worked for them and help point other groups to potential resources. Together these groups know so much, and when we come together, we can really share knowledge that helps everyone move forward.

“The best partnerships have had open communication, planning and keeping the community and the community’s needs in the forefront,” said Jas Maisonet of QPOC Hikers. “Since queer people and people of color have been systemically marginalized for generations, it is important to be a part of and feel included in a community.”

Thank you to FOB and QPOC Hikers! We are excited to continue our partnerships with them — and so many other groups — as we collaboratively get more people outdoors! We are incredibly proud of our ongoing partnerships with organizations and individuals whose missions, values and work align with our own. We take pride in building our intentional community with our partners because we believe the outdoors should be for everyone. It’s incredible to see how far we’ve come in my first year working with GBE, and I’m looking forward to what we can achieve together in the years ahead!



## Golden Bricks Events

### Join us!

#### Are you looking for a more inclusive outdoor community?

Join us at one (or all) of our 2023 events for outdoor education, environmental stewardship and community building in an inclusive environment. Check out our upcoming events and festivals happening this year and be a part of our growing community! All of our events take place in or near Seattle.

#### Sundaes Outside: A Celebration of Black Folks

An event series celebrating nature, Black folks and their various skills, artistry, talents, cuisines, cultural practices and influences.

**May 28** | Be'er Sheva Park | Seattle

**July 17-19** | Camp Out | Deception Pass State Park

**Sept. 15-17** | Camp Out | Sequim Bay State Park

#### Refuge Day

A seasonal event series with resources for outdoor recreation beginners, activities, outdoor-focused community organizations, healing practices, DJ sets and flash learning sessions.

**June 10** | Pride Edition | Seward Park

**Aug. 13** | Festival Prep | REI Flagship

#### Refuge Outdoor Festival

The signature Refuge Outdoor Festival, a 3-day camping weekend centered and led by the BIPOC community including justice conversations, recreation activities at various levels, healing practices, art creation and musical experiences.

**Aug. 18-20** | Tolt-MacDonald Park | Carnation

**Follow us** on Instagram and Facebook **@goldenbricksevents** and **@refugeoutdoorfestival** to learn more about our mission and goals.

Find more details about events at **goldenbricksevents.com**.

*WTA is thrilled to sponsor Refuge Outdoor Festival and related events this year.*

### Climbing Mount St.

**Helens** helped Tasheon Chillous decide to become a personal trainer to help other people feel good in their bodies.



# Wellness Should Be for Everyone

Meet three professionals who are making the fitness and nutrition industry more welcoming

By Ashton Weis

At WTA, we firmly believe in trails for everyone, forever. And even as we work toward that goal, we know aspects of the hiking community can feel unwelcoming. Hiking is good for us, physically and mentally. But that idea of “wellness” gets complicated when it gets tied into unrealistic standards that most people could never live up to.

Hiking can encourage folks to look for new ways of moving or embracing new forms of nutrition. Finding new ways to move off trail can make you more comfortable on trail, and vice versa. But finding a wellness space can feel daunting if you don’t see yourself represented in these spaces. The “wellness” industry (which hiking can be considered a part of) has standards that are impossible for most people.

Some in the health, movement and wellness world, however, are working to change that. From inside the industry, these professionals are trying to make the world of movement more open and accepting. No matter your size or your ability, they want you to be able to move your body in a welcoming place.

### Movement can be life-changing

Tasheon Chillous originally found the movement and fitness world through a diet-culture lens. She was hoping to lose weight and hit her idealized body goal. But then, in the fall of 2012, she started going to the gym and teaching as a dance instructor, and she discovered the joy that movement brought her.

Tasheon decided to challenge herself — and what it means to be fit. She started

Photos courtesy Tasheon Chillous



Tasheon encourages her clients to find a place to move where they feel safe and welcome.

Find Tasheon on Instagram @chilltash

working with a trainer to prepare for hiking Mount St. Helens in 2018.

“I was working with a trainer for the first time,” she said. “We worked together to get me really ready for that climb, because it was going to be the hardest thing I’d ever done in my body.”

That work paid off when Tasheon and her group safely finished the climb.

“It was great; it was hard. It took way longer than we expected. Two of us were plus-sized and one of us was a tall man. And it was really hard. We started at 9 a.m. and didn’t finish until 9 p.m., 10 maybe. ... But we made it. We got to the top; we were safe. It was hard as hell, and my favorite thing I’ve ever done,” Tasheon said.

Based on that experience, Tasheon decided to become a trainer herself. She now works for her trainer-turned-boss Marissa Lyons, at Ascent Fitness, a queer-owned gym in Tacoma.

Tasheon became a certified personal trainer through the American Council of Exercise in 2018. She helps her clients find ways to move their bodies

in ways that feel good, even if it’s only for 50 minutes in her class. She teaches group dance classes and does one-on-one personal training. She encourages her clients to discover movement and fitness spaces that they can love.

An important part of her work is updating the understanding of who is “healthy” and “fit.” Those standards are narrow, and they use body size as an inaccurate, restrictive and stigmatizing measure of fitness. It’s a harmful misperception that thin equals healthy and fat equals unhealthy.

Tasheon also is deeply aware of, and owns, her identities when she enters a space.

“I show up as myself, which is fat, mixed, in a bigger body, queer, all of these,” Tasheon said.

She encourages her clients to own their own identities, as well, which can help them feel more welcome and able to celebrate all aspects of their identity.

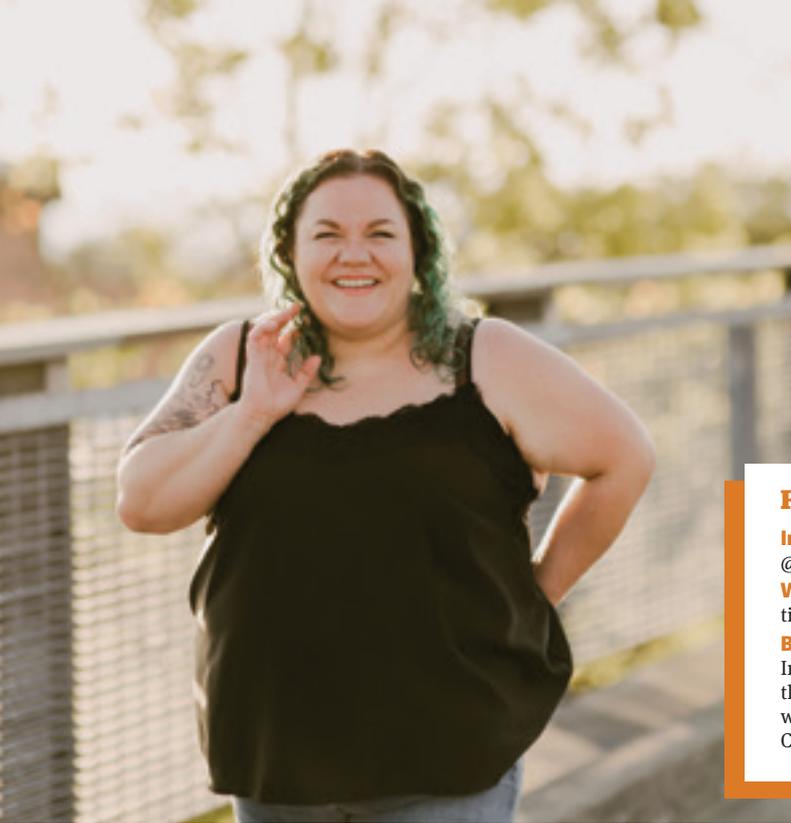
“You’re allowed to label yourself however you want,” she said. “If

you feel ‘fit’ is a word for you, those are the words you are using for you at that time. Most of my clients are plus-sized, and they’ve never had an enjoyable fitness opportunity or fitness space. ... Most of my clients have said, ‘I didn’t know how this was going to go. Even if you’re a plus-sized trainer, a fat trainer, I didn’t know. You could be really hard on me.’ I’m not here to do that.”

It’s also important to find welcoming spaces to move beyond gyms. Tasheon hikes with Unlikely Hikers, which works to make a welcoming space on trail for folks who are fat, disabled, LGBTQ+, people of color or anyone who doesn’t feel they fit in the dominative narrative of who is a hiker. These types of groups can encourage community building and allow entry into worlds that appear unattainable.

“It’s really powerful to take up space with people who look like you in some way,” Tasheon said. Then you can come back to that trail and be like, ‘yeah, I can take up space on this trail the same way I did as a group.’ And you get to meet people. I met one of my best friends via a group hike and we did the 52 Hike Challenge together. You can meet like-minded people that can change your life. I think that’s really cool, it brings community into the hiking world that seems so elusive and hard to obtain.”▶





I am seeking joy and fun and life and everything in this body now. And not waiting until it's good enough or I look better or I'm at a different part in my life to pursue the things I want to pursue.

### Find Amee

**Instagram:**  
@ameeistalking

**Website:** prospernutritionwellness.com

**Book:** "How to Raise an Intuitive Eater: Raising the Next Generation with Food and Body Confidence"

**Above:** Amee Severson is trying to help people trust their bodies.

**Below:** Amee on a hike at Artist Point with her daughter, Kahlan.

### All food is nourishment

"I think I started having an interest in the industry in the same way a lot of dietitians find theirs," dietitian Amee Severson said. "I had my own eating disorder. I had my own toxic relationship with food and with my body. I was already super interested in nutrition, because you kind of have to be. It happens naturally when you're in an eating disorder. I also thought becoming a dietitian would actually help me do my eating disorder better."

Amee now has her own practice, Prosper Nutrition and Wellness in Bellingham, where she has been a dietitian, a certified intuitive eating counselor (a health professional who partners with clients to develop a healthy relationship with their bodies and with food) and a certified body trust provider (an approach for healing body shame and disordered eating) for over 5 years.

When Amee was beginning her career and realized that she didn't want to engage in restriction and food rules anymore, she found herself with conflicting beliefs. Her new nutrition philosophy was much more accepting

of food in comparison to her profession, which can encourage people to be restrictive.

"Luckily, my therapist and some people in my life convinced me that there is actually a need for dietitians who believe in (intuitive-based eating). I leaned into that," Amee said.

"(This work) is important because it's too easy to find information everywhere about how the food you're eating is wrong, how you are wrong, how your body is wrong," she said. "How can I be the dietitian that I wish I would have had — and not the one that I did have? How can I not be used as a tool for diet culture, but used as a way to help people get out of it?"

She's not trying to change her body. And she's hoping that her life can also show people how that's possible. And that "they can eat the food in this world safely."

"I am living in my body, existing in the world," Amee said. "I am seeking joy and fun and life and everything in this body now. And not waiting until it's good enough or I look better or I'm at a different part in my life to pursue the things I want to pursue."

Ultimately, she is working to put herself out of a job.

"I want to ... foster a community of people who can trust their bodies and who believe that they can — and can — navigate some of the weird, cruel messaging about their bodies or bodies in general," she said.

### Move without judgment

Sophia Walker, a certified personal trainer, hopes to make her field accessible to everyone. She participated in sports as a child and played on her collegiate soccer team. Once she graduated, she stopped going to gyms, because they felt toxic rather than healthy. When her partner asked her to work out with her, she relented. But Sophia found gym culture much the same as when she left.

Sophia wanted to bring fun and safety to the fitness world as a personal trainer. With that in mind, she opened No Judgment Fitness in White Center in April 2022. She offers small-group classes and personal training programs that are designed for folks who don't feel



Photos courtesy Amee Severson



**Sophia Walker** welcomes people to her gym by encouraging them to put judgment aside.

**Find Sophia**  
**nojudgment**  
**fitness.com**

safe or welcomed in big box gyms. She emphasizes form and fun. And she offers free classes to those who can't afford them.

"My thing about fitness is that gyms are specifically designed for the people who already like working out. And that isn't most of us. Most of us are not catered to. I don't think you need to pursue fitness through a gym. I think we've lost the sense of fun," Sophia said. "Whatever you want to do, it's about moving and feeling comfortable. Nothing should hurt; you shouldn't ever be in pain. You certainly shouldn't have to be in a space that makes you feel anxious or unsafe."

All bodies are welcome at No Judgment. People are encouraged to leave all judgment of their bodies behind. Being in a space that celebrates all bodies can create a radical shift in how people feel about their identities and bodies.

"I am trying to find a way to convince the people that have been let down by my industry continuously that it doesn't have to be like that," Sophia said.

That same mindset can translate to

the trail. If you're not judging your own body, you can have more fun out on trail. Sophia believes that training in the gym should make sense for your life. Training can make hiking easier and more comfortable. It can also make it easier to run after your toddler or unload boxes after a Costco run.

"The joy of functional movements, which is the kind of training that I do, is that it's all stuff you do in normal life," she said.

### **Finding a better way forward**

Changing the fitness and wellness community is important for all stigmatized or marginalized people who have always wanted to hike or run or lift weights, but haven't felt comfortable. The dominant narrative — thin, traditionally attractive people in perfect clothing — isn't welcoming to all body types and all people. Pressure to change your body or be thin can be overwhelming, discouraging and even actively harmful. To foster a community that is a safe and welcoming, we must create spaces that welcome all bodies and identities. ■

## **Tips from the pros**

Tasheon, Sophia and Ameer are all working to disrupt the health, movement and wellness industries from the inside. They want to get rid of the negative images and messaging about what to eat, what to wear or what it means to be "fit" that run rampant through the health and wellness industries. They have some tips if you are looking to move and eat in a way that is supportive, not restrictive.

**Look for resources or professionals who use language like "body trust" or "weight-neutral."** Ameer suggests looking at Center for Body Trust in Portland, Oregon, as a good place to start.

**Search out folks on social media who encourage positive relationships with your body and are relatable to you.**

Tasheon suggests @kanoagreene, @rozthediva, @brandihikes, @iamlshauntay, @movewithmarcia and @iamchrissyking on Instagram.

**Find affinity groups** with people who have shared experiences to your own. Tasheon suggests Unlikely Hikers, Fat Girls Hiking, Disabled Hikers, Trail Mixed Collective or Latino Outdoors. If those groups aren't relevant to you, check out [wta.org/hikinggroups](http://wta.org/hikinggroups) to find more suggestions or do a web search.

**Give a new movement time.** Tasheon recommends trying a new way of moving at least three times. She said it takes at least that long to begin to understand how your body reacts to a movement and if you enjoy it.

**Look to your basic needs first;** then you can consider movement. Tasheon emphasizes that your basic needs for sleep, hydration and food need to be addressed but can often be overlooked in the fitness industry. Once those basic needs are met, it's easier to begin a movement practice that can help you feel more comfortable in your own body.

**Look for a trainer who will work to understand** your unique body and situation, Sophia recommends. If you have a history of disordered eating, it's essential to look for a trainer who has experience working with that community.



# It's the People You Meet on the Trail!

Some of my most memorable and joyous occasions on the trail have involved unexpected human encounters

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**By Craig Romano**

**Craig Romano** met Bronka Sundstrom, a renown hiker and the oldest woman to summit Rainier, while out on a hike. He'd interviewed her before, but a chance in-person encounter on trail was a delightful surprise.

Photo courtesy Craig Romano

**A** certain interaction on trail has become a familiar ritual for me. I'll meet a fellow hiker and we'll stop for some friendly banter. Then my new acquaintance will pause, looks at me kinda funny and say that I look familiar. That's usually followed with, "You're not Craig Romano?" or "Are you Craig?" I am always flattered when this happens — although I'm tempted to occasionally say something like, "No, never heard of him!"

To be honest, I love being recognized on trail. Yes, it strokes my ego a bit, but what I love is that it gives me trail cred. Something to the order of "Romano does hike all of these trails!" And it gives me the warmest fuzzy when my new acquaintance tells me that they love my books and that I have helped them get out and discover new trails. That last part really makes me happy, as so much of my mission is to help people find the trail less traveled.

A few summers past, I was heading up one of the loneliest trails off the North Cascades Highway, the Canyon Creek Trail. I've hiked it several times and have never encountered anyone. On this warm sunny weekday, I ran into a solo hiker several miles up the canyon. We started chatting and I found out he was from Illinois on vacation. Perplexed that he would be on such an obscure trail, I asked him how he found it. He pulled my book out of his pack and said he found it here and was looking for something remote and with solitude! He was thrilled when I revealed who I was and I was delighted to see how my book did its job.

Two summers ago, I had a similar experience hiking Estes Butte in the Chiwawa River Valley. This trail usually sees no one! But on my third trip up this lonely trail, I encountered a young trail runner. We started talking and I mentioned that, since this trail sees so little maintenance, there were better options nearby for runners. He concurred but then said, "But I have this book by Craig Romano and I'm trying to do all of the trails in it!" I was honored to see my book helping this hiker discover such a wide array of trails and get him off the beaten path.

Then there's the time I was recognized when I wasn't even there! I was on a 2-day solo backpacking trip in the Enchanted Valley in Olympic National Park and set up my tent in a sweet spot near the East Fork Quinault River away from other campers. When I returned several hours later, after exploring the valley, I was shocked to see a handful of tents set up nearby. Trying to maintain my composure, I approached the party and was pleasantly surprised when one of them — Mike, a person I knew through The Mountaineers — told me he saw my name on the permit attached to my tent and hoped I wouldn't mind some company. I spent what would have been a damp, lonely night sitting around a campfire with familiar faces and new acquaintances, enjoying a wonderful evening of camaraderie.

Which leads me to this — many of us seem to be intent on getting away from everyone once we hit the trail. But truth be told, some of my most memorable and joyous occasions on trail have involved unexpected human encounters. Some of these encounters have even led to friendships. Alan, a hiker I met while camping at Image Lake, wanted to later show me some off-the-beaten-path hikes. We stayed in touch and he

showed me trails I wasn't familiar with and guided me up Sumas Mountain. On a solo hike up Driveway Butte in the North Cascades several years ago, I met Tom, another solo hiker, and we instantly hit it off — it was our East Coast upbringings, attitudes and many other commonalities. We spent the day hiking together. Every summer since, we get together for a kick-butt North Cascades hike or two when he is out here from upstate New York. Tom has even become a loyal Washington Trails Association member.

I think there's an advantage to staying receptive to human interactions on trail. It may even enhance your hike. Sometimes folks offer up tips, trail secrets and important travel info or perhaps even snacks, drinks or more. On one solo backpacking trip to Corral Lake deep in the Pasayten Wilderness, I said hello to a group of backpackers before I vanished to set up my camp. They were a friendly lot and invited me over afterward for shared grub and conversation. What would have been another lonely night in the wilderness (which I do welcome on occasion — but often prefer some company) was instead a night of bonding and storytelling about our favorite passion — hiking!

I am an extrovert raised in the East and on trails and mountains that can be quite social. In the mountains of Washington, folks can be a little reserved. For some folks, I understand this default as a form of protection. And if I meet someone who makes me uncomfortable, I quickly move on. But, overwhelmingly, the folks I've run into are good people and I make it a point to smile and say hello. If the hello evolves into chatter, I go with it. And if I am not running low on time, I may let the conversation go on for some time. I've met some fascinating and inspiring folks on trail by just slowing down for a moment and turning the focus away from me.

Eight years ago on the Dry Creek Trail in Olympic National Forest, I was floored by my encounter with two 90-year-old hikers. Turns out one of them was Bronka Sundstrom, a Holocaust survivor who became the oldest woman — at age 77 — to summit Mount Rainier. Years earlier, I had interviewed her by phone for a magazine article shortly after her accomplishment. And 13 years later, I finally got to meet her on trail. I never would have known it was her if I hadn't taken the time to say hello and strike up a conversation.

I also have fond memories of a hiker named Reese from Texas. I met him last October on the summit of 12,633-foot Humphreys Peak, the highest summit in Arizona, which requires an 11-mile hike and 3,300-foot climb. Reese, who has cerebral palsy, was accompanying his lifelong best friend on his pursuit to hike all of the states' highpoints. Reese wasn't able to climb every peak, but he reached the highest point in Arizona. I spent a good hour talking to him as we gazed out over the stunning northern Arizona landscape. While the views were jaw-dropping, what I really remember is the hiker who shared those views with me. My impressions and memories of climbing Arizona's highest mountain will forever include my encounter with him. It's the people you meet on trail that sometimes make the hike even more amazing. ■

# Home Away From Home

How to find the right tent for your backpacking and camping adventures

By Sandra Saathoff

## Picking the right tent

can help you have a more comfortable and easier time on your next night under the stars.

**Home is where your tent is! Whether car camping or backpacking, our shelters are our base, the spot where we lay our weary heads for the night.** There are so many to choose from — sold by both big-box stores and cottage industry designers — that it can be overwhelming. Not to fear — we're here to take a look at the major options, so you have a place to start the next time you're in the market for a shelter.

## Free-standing versus trekking pole

Tents come in two basic varieties. A free-standing tent can stand up whether it has stakes in the ground or not. A trekking pole tent requires stakes. So, why the difference? It basically comes down to weight.

A **free-standing tent** includes the tent fabric and poles, which give the tent its structure. Stakes are generally added to keep the tent in place. Free-standing tents come in a variety of sizes

and can get quite fancy, with separate rooms and integrated lights for car campers. They can also be minimalist and lightweight for backpackers.

A **trekking pole tent**, on the other hand, uses a hiker's trekking poles to help in the pitch. The stakes are an integral component, providing support and tension to keep the fabric in place. This can cut quite a bit of weight from the setup. These tents also come in various sizes and a number of designs. The need for stakes can be challenging, depending on the ground at your campsite. In rocky soil or sandy soil, it can be difficult to keep stakes in the ground. This issue can be mitigated by the use of different types of stakes or well-placed rocks.

## Single-walled, double-walled and hybrid tents

A **single-walled tent** is a light, easy-to-put-up tent that, instead of having a separate rainfly, uses its material properties to keep the occupant dry.



**Double-walled tents** come with a separate rainfly. In addition to the rain-shedding properties, the fly allows for more airflow, meaning less condensation inside the tent.

**A hybrid design** uses a partial rainfly connected to a single-walled tent. Often the inside walls are mesh netting, allowing for good airflow, while the rainfly also acts as the vestibule or can be rolled up and attached to the tent wall to allow good airflow in dry weather.

### Tent materials

The big three for backpacking are silnylon, silpoly and Dyneema.

**Silnylon:** Short for silicon-coated nylon, silnylon is used in many light-weight backpacking tents. Its strong suits are durability and waterproofing, though seams do need to be sealed. Silnylon is hydrophilic, meaning it absorbs water in a downpour, but I've camped more than one night in an extreme downpour and my silnylon tent has never leaked.

**Silpoly:** Short for silicon-coated polyester, this fabric is a bit heavier than silnylon and less durable, but it is also less stretchy and more waterproof, being hydrophobic – though honestly, unless you're camping for a week in springtime on the Olympic Peninsula, you probably won't have a problem with either option.

You can see the difference in stretch between silnylon and silpoly more readily. The silnylon tent will tend to relax a bit after setup and you will likely need to tighten the cords a bit for a taut pitch, whereas this should not be necessary with the silpoly tent.

At times you will see combo tents, with silnylon being used for the floor due to its durability and silpoly used for the sides and rainfly to capitalize on its greater waterproofness.

**Dyneema:** Dyneema, also called DCF or Cuben Fiber, is a very strong and lightweight fabric that has made its way into backpacking tents as well as all sorts of other gear. The fabric is created by laying out fibers in a grid pattern and then gluing them inside a plastic sandwich, resulting in a fabric that is very strong in line with the fibers. Dyneema is low-stretch and low-sag and is rain resistant, though on the diagonal, where the fibers are weakest, there will be some stretch. Tent-makers continue to tweak designs to maximize the fabric's strong points. Dyneema is designed for backpackers wanting the lowest weight tents. Like any, there are some cons of the fabric:

- Expense — tents constructed of Dyneema can easily be two to three times as expensive as other fabrics.
- Abrasion and puncture resistance is low, so tents must be treated with care.
- Tent walls are semitransparent. If privacy is a concern, you'll want to time clothing changes and such.

### Weather resistance: 3-season versus 4-season tents

**Three-season:** For most of us, a three-season tent is the only thing we need. It's designed to protect us from wind and rain, while providing a comfortable shelter for the night. For spring, summer and fall, a three-season tent will likely be exactly what you're looking for.

**Four-season:** A four-season tent has a more robust design, heavier material, stronger poles and a separate rainfly (a three-season may or may not have a separate rainfly) and it is built to withstand falling snow. But a four-season tent maybe should be called a one-season tent. The weight from all that extra robustness and the clamminess from a more weather-tight design mean that this tent may not be comfortable in the summer. So if you don't plan to camp in snow, you'll likely be fine with a three-season tent.

### Tent features

**Doors:** Some tents come with one door, some with two. Depending on whether you plan to sleep solo or with a buddy, this can make a difference. Even a single-person tent with two doors can be a luxury, giving you options for setup that can come in handy, including potential for better views.

**Ground cloths:** Many people consider a ground cloth optional. The benefit is that the ground cloth – also called a footprint – protects the bottom of the tent. If weight is a concern, there are lightweight options, including Tyvek and Polycro if you don't want a manufacturer's footprint. Just make sure that the whole thing is under the edge of the tent, or it can funnel rainwater under your tent – no fun, trust me!

**Ventilation ports:** A person breathes out up to half a pint of moisture overnight. Without good airflow, fully-closed tents can trap condensation, which can then drip on your sleeping bag or quilt. Many tents have small ports or the ability to set the rainfly so it's not touching the ground. Both options help with condensation by giving air a chance to flow through. ▶

### If you're in the market

for a new tent, it helps to think carefully about the features you care about most, and what you're willing to pay for.



**Vestibules:** The fabric of most tents covers some ground over the tent door where you can store things like water bottles or your pack and shoes. The size of the vestibule differs by tent design. The vestibule also protects the tent door when entering and exiting in rain, keeping the tent floor drier.

**Bathtubs:** No, we're not suggesting that you lug an actual tub into the mountains. A bathtub is the bottom of the tent. Many lightweight tents have sides mostly or almost entirely made of netting. This is great for weight savings and airflow, but not so good for staying dry in the rain. That's where the bathtub comes in. The nylon floor extends upward a number of inches, keeping you out of the water, should there be any. It's important to be sure the tent is set up properly, so the bathtub doesn't sag.

**Inside ceiling loops:** Many tents come equipped with loops inside, and you can tie some cord to store or air out your smelly socks or even hang a light for reading.

### Tent care

**In the field:** A badly placed sharp rock, sharp stick or broken pole can quickly make your home away from home way

less cozy. It's a good idea to have a small stash of repair items. Tenacious Tape can quickly repair a tear, duct tape will stabilize a broken pole, dental floss and a needle can fix a rip in netting. More substantial repairs can be done once you're home.

**At home:** It is vital to care for your tents if you want them ready for action when you need them. This means you need to take the time to clean them and set them up to air out after a trip, even if you think they are dry and clean. Moldy tents are no fun. And zippers with dust and dirt in them don't function well over time. Taking care of rips or tears right after you get home sets you up for a good trip next time. I generally do a decent (but not thorough) cleaning between trips and then a complete clean — dunking the tent in a tub of water to get all the dirt out — at the end of the season.

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**A shelter is one of the larger expenses** associated with adventuring. While we can't cover everything about tents and shelters, I hope we've given you some things to consider if you're in the market for one. You owe it to yourself to be well-educated, so you'll be comfortable and cozy in the wild. ■

## Other shelter options

**Tarps:** If you don't mind getting up close and personal with nature, a tarp can be a great way to cut pack weight and save pack space. You'll use a couple trees or trekking poles and stakes for setup, making sure to get a taut, secure pitch so it doesn't come down in the night. Sloped sides give the rain a place to run off — just make sure you're not in a depression. With a tarp, air flow is never an issue, but bugs might be.

**Bivies:** A bivy is like a little weather-resistant burrito shelter you can fit your sleeping pad and bag into. While it doesn't have space for a pack, it does give you options where the only flat spot happens to be the size of your body. They're lightweight and breathable. They're also a good safety measure if you end up having to spend an unplanned night outside or if the weather suddenly turns bad.

**Hammocks:** If you prefer sleeping on actual air and plan to camp where trees abound, a hammock may be the way to go. In addition to being your bed, it can double as a luxurious spot to read or just watch the birds. If you plan to sleep in cooler, wetter weather, you may wish to add a tarp and an underquilt to keep you dry and warm — and these items can add up, in cost and weight. In summer, a bug net will keep you from being eaten by mosquitoes and black flies.

If you're dreaming of a longer hike, some careful research can let you craft a trip that's perfect for you.

## How to Plan a DIY Thru-hike

If you'd like to create your own longer hike, here are tips to get you on the right path on a lesser-known route. **By Lauren Lake**



**I**f you'd like to do a long hike like the Wonderland Trail, the Pacific Crest Trail (or sections of it) or the Oregon Coast Trail, you can find neatly organized map sets and itineraries. But if you have a route in mind that doesn't have a clear guide, you can also do the planning yourself.

I'm working on a project to hike the beaches of the entire West Coast. I've completed Oregon and decided to tackle Washington next.

Though I found a few trail notes from hikers who did this back in 2004, there were no documented routes. Here's how I built my plan — you could use this same technique to plan your own DIY thru-hike.

### Pick the route

First, I needed to decide where I would start and end. I decided to hike from Cape Disappointment on the Columbia River to Cape Flattery on the Olympic Peninsula. My route would include the beaches and

coastal headlands but not the inland detours around Willapa Bay, Grays Harbor or Puget Sound.

Ideally, I wanted to hike on the beach as much as possible. But there are places where I'd need trails to get over headlands and around rivers or tide pinch points. I started by using Google's satellite views to identify places where I would have to get off the beach.

### Research the trails in the area

Then, on WTA's Hike Finder Map, I zoomed in on each of these spots to see my options. As an example, looking at Cape Disappointment, I could see that there was a significant headland I'd need to climb. On the WTA site, I found the connecting North Head Trail and Discovery Trail. I read the hike descriptions and scanned the trip reports to be sure that the trails had been hiked recently and were passable.

### Build a map

Finally, I started building a map with these options. I used Caltopo, but Gaia and Garmin also have apps that work to create a custom track. My map with tracks, waypoints, bus stops and tide warnings is available here: [caltopo.com/m/BHDRO](https://caltopo.com/m/BHDRO).

### Research the rules

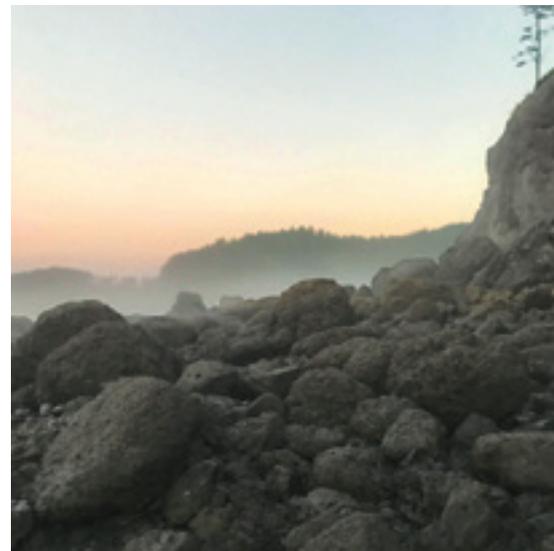
Once I had a rough map of my entire trip, I started researching access and permits. Several sections of the coast are tribal lands, and one turned out to be closed to non-tribal members. For the Quinault Reservation between Moclips and Queets, I made a plan to use roads and buses to reroute inland around the area. Past Queets, my path would enter Olympic National Park, which meant securing backcountry camping permits for each night.

### Break the hike into pieces

My route ended up being about 185 miles of hiking. I then started breaking it down. I set my daily distance based on the terrain and the options for accommodations and resupply. I used motels where I could and camped otherwise.

The first stretch of the hike was the Long Beach peninsula, which was 34 miles of beach and trail. I broke it into 2 days, stopping overnight at Ocean Park where there was lodging, shops and restaurants.

I proceeded up the coast on my map, figuring out each day. The most challenging section was in Olympic National Park. A number of stretches of beach had narrow▶



time windows when the tide was low enough to round a point or cross a river. For example, Diamond Point could only be crossed at a 2-foot-or-lower tide. I planned to camp the night before just south of the point, so I had the whole next day to find a window to make my way around.

I did one extra step and researched additional places where it would be possible to get on or off the beach. In Washington, there can be long stretches of coast where every access point is private property and posted “no trespassing.” In case I missed a tide and needed to road-walk a section, I needed to identify ahead of time where I could get off the beach and onto the road. I noted the location of every public beach access along my route.

The best choice was state and local parks on the beach. If I just saw a road leading to the beach, I looked on Google Street View to see if the road off the coast highway was marked with “private” or “no trespassing” signs or had a gate.

### **Pick the dates**

I knew I would be hiking in early September. I picked my hiking dates by looking at when I would have the best daytime low tides for the most challenging sections. Working backward from the best day to round the tide pinch points, I settled on a Sept. 2 departure.

I then went through day by day to be sure my dates worked. Because I planned to use buses to skirt the Quinault Reservation, the Hoh River and the Quillayute River, I needed to be sure the buses I needed would be running on the days I’d need them; some buses only run on weekdays.

### **Obtain reservations and permits**

With dates in mind, I started making reservations. The camping permits were booked on recreation.gov. Normally the permits are emailed out a few days before the reservation date, which could have caught me out on the trail without cell service or a printer. Because I was thru-hiking, I reached out to the Olympic National Park Wilderness Information Center and was able to have all of the permits sent to me ahead of time.

I then looked at each of the other stops and tried to find a modestly priced motel. By staying in motels, I could wash clothes and dry gear in between camping stretches. I didn’t end up camping until I got to Olympic National Park.

### **Arrange resupply**

For a trip of 5 days or less, I normally just bring all of my food and supplies from home. For this 12-day hike, that would not fit in my pack. Instead, I mostly ate along the way at minimarts and restaurants until I got to Olympic National Park. I resupplied in Forks for the first half of the park, and in La Push for the second stretch.

I also noted that if I needed to replace any gear, my bus rides would give me the option to get to supplies

### **Knowing the unique issues**

for the area you’re planning — such as the time of low tides for a beach hike — will help ensure you have a safe, fun trip.





Photos courtesy Lauren Lake

at Walmart in Aberdeen and Forks Outfitters farther up the coast.

A final step in resupply planning was identifying water sources. Just because a map shows a stream flowing along the path doesn't mean the water is drinkable or that it flows year-round. I looked for trip reports mentioning water and scanned recent satellite images for water levels. CalTopo and Gaia have daily Sentinel satellite map layers available for premium subscribers.

The best water sources were in towns, which are frequent on some sections of the coast. In between towns, beach access and campground restrooms may have running water. Failing that, I tried to identify a stream where recent trip reports had indicated water was available. I noted each possible water source on my maps.

## Plan your gear

In order to plan my gear, I looked at typical weather patterns for my dates. With a long trip, I didn't have the luxury of checking last minute and packing accordingly. I ended up taking a midweight thermal top as my mid-layer, since temperatures are typically moderate at this time of year. Had the weather turned cold, I would have bought a heavier fleece in Forks for my camping nights to the north. For rain gear, I took just the jacket and skipped the pants. Again, I knew I could add pants in Forks if needed.

Coastal thru-hikes tend to have frequent towns for resupply, often with fishing shops with good foul-weather gear. If I were planning more of a backcountry trip, or if towns I planned on passing wouldn't have rain gear, I would have packed warmer options. The weight penalty would be offset by the gain in safety and comfort.

I carried a bear canister the whole way. It is required for the Olympic National Park sections, but I prefer to carry one in general when I have a potential wilderness camping night. This was something I could have acquired at my resupply stop in Forks, but I liked having it early in case of an unexpected camping night.

I'm an experienced coastal hiker, so my gear list ([lighterpack.com/r/093lxv](https://www.lighterpack.com/r/093lxv)) was pretty dialed in. If I did not have a tested list, I'd do some online searches. If you're planning a hike, check out [lighterpack.com](https://www.lighterpack.com) to see if hikers have posted their packing lists for their trips on similar trails. Another good source is guide companies that offer trips in the area. They often post their recommended gear on their websites.

## Final preparation

A week out, I started reading recent trip reports on [wta.org](https://www.wta.org) and checking the wilderness information on the Olympic National Park site. I double-checked all of my bus schedules to be sure they hadn't changed.

Based on the tides and bus schedules, I figured out when I needed to start

hiking each day and worked out a few time checkpoints for each day to be sure I was on pace. (Nothing worse than missing the last bus of the day.)

I downloaded all of my final maps and information to my phone and printed hard copies of the maps in case my phone died. I installed a tides app on my phone and also carried a printed list of the tide times for the trickiest spots.

## How did it all turn out?

Mostly things went according to plan. In two places, I had to road-walk farther than anticipated because the beach access I hoped to use was posted "no trespassing." My food and resupply worked out perfectly, though I did need to replace a couple of broken items in Aberdeen. If I did it again, I think I could shave off a day by making better use of buses between Aberdeen and Forks.

## When you're home

After your trip, one final step is to head to [wta.org](https://www.wta.org) and file a trip report. It lets you reflect on your hike — and give other hikers valuable information! ■

*Lauren is a spreadsheet addict and a compulsive planner who enjoys backpacking, hiking, paddling and cross-country skiing. To see some of Lauren's maps and research for this trip, go to [wta.org/diythruhike](https://www.wta.org/diythruhike).*





# Getting Closer to Nature

By **Doug Diekema**

For most of us, getting close to nature means hitting the trail and enjoying views of mountain peaks, forests, lakes and meadows. But that quest for the view can lead us to miss the equally majestic and beautiful things at our feet. We may notice the clusters of flowers and the forest of ponderosa pines, but we rarely stop to examine their amazing details and color — the fine hairs on elegant cat’s ear, the amazing symmetry of western trillium, the curved lines of hellebore, the artistry of butterfly wings or the geometric complexity of a spiderweb strung across the trail. Close-up and macro photography help us see these remarkable details. Technically, macro photography requires

that the subject being photographed is projected on the camera sensor at life-size or larger, providing a magnified image. The technical definition is less important, however, than the goal of capturing the small wonders of nature in a way that allows us to appreciate the intricate details of their composition.

A typical landscape lens, with its wider field of view, may not be ideal for shooting close-ups. For those who really want to get serious, there are dedicated lenses specifically designed for macro photography. The extra cost and weight can represent a barrier, however, and I’ve found I can do some wonderful close-up photography using the telephoto lens on my mirrorless camera or using my camera phone. In fact, the newer versions of the iPhone have a macro setting that works quite well (Settings > Camera > Macro Control). When turned on, when the camera moves close to an object, it will automatically switch to the ultra-wide-angle lens, allowing amazing, sharply focused close-ups. Regardless of which camera you choose to use, here are the things you need to know to improve your close-up photography.

Photos by Doug Diekema

**Get close.** To capture the details and patterns that make a close-up photo special, the camera must be very close to the subject. If you're not closer than a foot, you're probably not close enough. Getting up close and personal presents some challenges when photographing a moving object or nervous insect. Butterflies, for example, tend to be quite skittish and rarely sit in one place for long, so capturing a good image requires patience.

**Focus on what's essential.** Anytime you're capturing an image from inches away, the depth of focus will likely be very limited — sometimes only a few millimeters. At a 1:1 magnification, it may be impossible to sharply capture the full depth of a flower or the entire body of an insect. There are two strategies for dealing with this problem. The first is to choose which part of the subject needs to be in focus. With insects, this will almost always be their eyes and face. With flowers, it will be the part of the plant you most want to emphasize. This is not all bad, as the increasing blurriness that occurs with anything out of the plane of focus works to your advantage in reducing clutter and emphasizing what is most important about your image. The second strategy requires positioning the camera so that the important parts of the subject all lie in a plane that is parallel to the camera sensor.

**Watch your background.** Try to find a background that draws attention to the main subject, rather than distracting from it. Look for a background that is simple, uniform in texture and color, blurred ("bokeh"), and of a color that contrasts with the subject. Look carefully for distracting elements — like stray branches, blades of grass or parts of other flowers — and

eliminate them from the composition if possible. The farther the background elements are from the subject, the easier it will be to achieve that pleasing "bokeh" effect that sets apart a contest winner from just another pretty photo.

**Optimize lighting.** Direct overhead sunlight rarely works well in close-up photography. Diffused light, like that found under a canopy of trees, can reduce shadows, provide more uniform illumination and allow for richer colors. If your subject transmits light, like plants, flowers, spiderwebs and droplets, backlighting can make the image "pop." Be aware of your own shadow and the impact that it might have on the lighting and composition.

**Move your body.** Many small objects worthy of your attention will not be conveniently located at eye level. You will have to move your body and camera to optimize the lighting, keep the important elements in the same plane as your sensor and capture the composition you want. Try different angles and perspectives, and don't be afraid to get down and dirty where the plants and bugs live — they are often more interesting from ground level than from above. Of course, this means you'll need to dress appropriately! (And don't trample the plants!)

Macro and close-up photography is a fun way to expand your creative vision. It's also a different way of seeing and enjoying nature, leading to a greater appreciation of the complex and elaborate construction of nature's smaller wonders. The delicate structure of a flower, the intricate details of a spider's web and the color palette of a frog's skin are remarkable to gaze upon, and photography can help us do that more often.

## Spread Your Love of the Outdoors!

Are you passionate about time outside and do you want to welcome others to enjoy themselves and recreate responsibly? If so, we could use your help this summer! Along with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, WTA is training volunteers to welcome hikers and other recreationists at six sites in Central Washington.

Learn more at [wta.org/wdfw](http://wta.org/wdfw)



Photo by R. Steele

**Telling a Story**

# More Than a Place to Hike

A step onto a trail can tell you a lot about the community of the space you're in. Some trails feature landmarks that are remnants of their previous lives, others provide refuge for wildlife and plant life. A trail might share space with other points of interest with fascinating histories or give you a glimpse into who calls the region home. When you're out hiking on one of these trails, take a second to look around and see what the trail can tell you about the area — you may be surprised by what you learn.





# Olmstead Place Historical State Park

## Yakima area

Follow the footsteps of 19th-century homesteaders for a half mile along a scenic creek that connects historic buildings and surrounding nature to our present story.

*By Wes Partch*

Begin your hike on the south side of the historic Seaton Schoolhouse, where a signpost marks the beginning of the Coleman Creek Interpretive Trail. Pass between barns on your left and the willow-lined creek on your right; soon a metal bridge will appear over the creek. Although the trail does not continue on the other side, it's worth a stop here to take in the scenery.

The trail continues along the eastern side of the creek, now on a boardwalk with interpretive signs that tell the story of homesteading over a century ago. After the short boardwalk, the way stays close to the creek and can be muddy in places. As you pass through the narrowing corridor, blackbirds, magpies and mourning doves flit about and fill the air with their songs.

Two benches sit at scenic bends in the creek with peekaboo views. Nearby logs with their branch ends chewed to pencil points mark the presence of beaver. After a half mile, the path leaves the creek and heads across open fields toward the southern end of the homestead. On sunny spring days, the highlands surrounding Kittitas Valley gleam a brilliant white under a big blue sky.

Finally, you'll arrive at the southern end of the hike, marked by a charming homestead with a red barn, vegetable garden and original cabin from 1875. The grounds invite exploration and include an alternate parking lot, picnic area and vault toilet. One can also peer through the dusty windows of the old cabin and imagine living here almost 150 years ago. Return the same way you came.

**WTA pro tip:** There are two trailheads at Olmstead Place Historical State Park. If you like, you can park at the far end of Ferguson Road, where the southern trailhead is accessed. Both ends have a nice picnic area, although only the north end has an ADA-accessible restroom.

**Distance:** 1.2 miles roundtrip ♦ **Elevation gain:** 25 feet

**Highest elevation:** 1,570 feet ♦ **Map:** [waparks.org/parks/olmstead-place](http://waparks.org/parks/olmstead-place)

**Permit:** Discover Pass ♦ **Dogs:** Leashed

**Info:** [wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/olmstead-place-historic-state-park](http://wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/olmstead-place-historic-state-park)

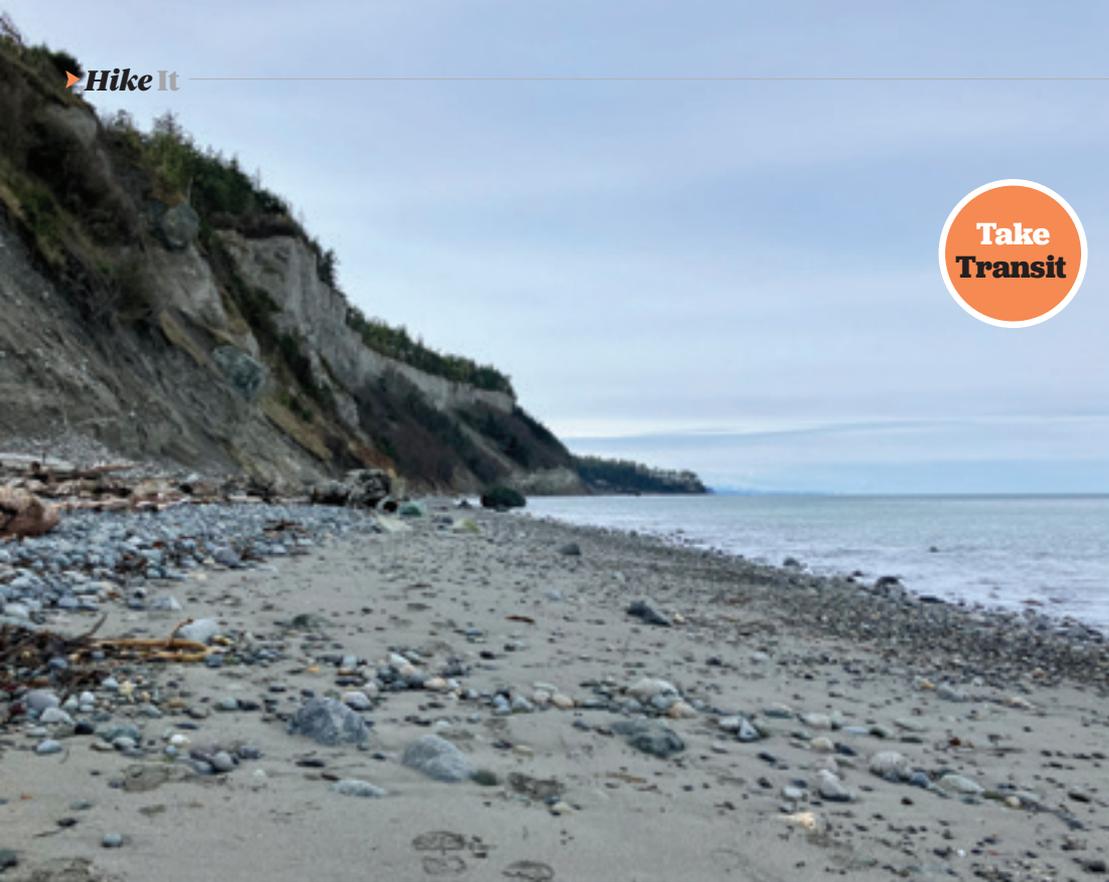
**Trailhead:** From Main Street in Ellensburg, head east on Mountain View Avenue for 3.8 miles, then turn right onto North Ferguson Road. In a half mile, turn right into the enormous gravel parking lot at the north end of the park, where you'll find an ADA-accessible restroom and a large picnic area. The trail begins next to the schoolhouse.

## NEARBY HIKES

**Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park:** A flat trail adjacent to the Yakima River in Ellensburg. Free public park with restrooms, picnic shelter and swimming area. (2.2 miles of trails, minimal elevation gain)

**Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area — Bluebird Trail:** This trail is roughly a half-hour drive east of Ellensburg. Hike along a dry creek that is home to bluebirds, among other fauna. (1.7 miles roundtrip, 315 feet of elevation gain)

Photo by Wes Partch



## North Beach County Park to McCurdy Point

### Olympic Peninsula — Northern Coast

This beach walk demonstrates the successful rehabilitation of a former dumpsite into a popular hiking destination, with views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and ample opportunities for wildlife viewing.

By *K. Huntress Inskeep*

From the trailhead at North Beach County Park, you'd never know this beach was once the site of a rubbish dump. Only the sharpest eyes will still find the occasional bit of water-polished glass among shoreline pebbles and rock, the origin of the site's local "Glass Beach" moniker. As you approach McCurdy Point, you'll start to see scattered evidence of history in the form of old tires and related detritus.

Many eagles make their home in the trees on the bluff above, so you are sure to see — and hear — at least a few. Seabirds also abound. A herd of seals enjoys gathering near the point; you'll likely see a few of their curious faces poking up offshore. The bluff walls offer geology geeks layers of time and geophysics to ponder.

The hike is popular, but many visitors turn back short of McCurdy Point — go the distance and you may enjoy greater solitude as well as small tide pools during lower tides. Hikers may occasionally need to climb over small logs during some tides.

Speaking of tides: It's essential to respect the tide here. Consult a tide table and plan accordingly to avoid getting trapped at high tide — the sandy bluffs abut private property and offer few to no escape routes. One possibility is to start your journey shortly after peak high tide during a cycle that will give you plenty of time for the approximately 6-mile (out-and-back) distance.

There are portable toilets, picnic tables and a small picnic shelter adjacent to the parking lot at the trailhead; more facilities and opportunities for hiking are at adjacent Fort Worden Park.

**WTA pro tip:** The parking lot at North Beach County Park is small; avoid parking in the adjacent neighborhood.

**Distance:** 6 miles roundtrip  
**Elevation gain:** Minimal  
**Highest elevation:** 100 feet  
**Permit:** None (but limited parking)  
**Dogs:** Leashed

**Tide table:** NOAA Tide Table [tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/stationhome.html?id=9444900](https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/stationhome.html?id=9444900)

**Info:** [wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/north-beach-county-park-to-mccurdy-point](https://wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/north-beach-county-park-to-mccurdy-point)

**Trailhead transit directions:** Catch Jefferson Transit Route 2 at Haines Place Park & Ride in Port Townsend. Route 2 stops at San Juan Ave/45th, Spruce and W St or at Fort Worden, all of which offer pleasant, short hikes through Fort Worden State Park trails to North Beach. From Seattle, M–F: Kingston Fast Ferry to Route 14/Kingston Express. From Edmonds, M–F: Edmonds-Kingston Ferry to Route 14/Kingston Express. From Kitsap County, North Viking Park and Ride, M–Sat: Jefferson Transit Route 7.

**Trailhead driving directions:** From the center of Port Townsend, follow F Street for 0.7 mile. Turn right onto San Juan Avenue and continue for 1 mile. Follow the road, which will veer left and become 49th Street, then immediately turn right onto Kuhn Street. The parking lot is at the end of the road in about 0.5 mile.

### NEARBY HIKES

**Cappy's Trails:** A network of trails in a suburban greenbelt connecting to Jefferson County Fairgrounds and easily reached from uptown or downtown Port Townsend. (4 miles of trails, minimal elevation gain)

**Larry Scott/Olympic Discovery Trail East:** Winding to or from Port Townsend's marina, this rail trail is the easternmost end of the growing Olympic Discovery Trail. It welcomes hikers, cyclists and horseback riders alike as it meanders among trees and quiet agrarian, semirural neighborhoods on the outskirts of town. The eastern section approaching town offers invigorating views of Port Townsend Bay. (7.3 miles one-way, 641 feet of elevation gain)



## Indian Creek Community Forest – Arboretum Loop Trail

Eastern Washington — Selkirk Range

Explore a wheelchair-friendly interpretive trail built by WTA volunteers in partnership with the Kalispel Tribe.

By Anna Roth

The Arboretum Loop Trail, which is open to the general public, is slightly over a half mile with very little elevation change. It was designed to be an easy hiking route to highlight the native tree and shrub varieties of this ecosystem.

Interpretive signage is located along the route, so a hike here is meditative and educational. The signs along the route highlight the Kalispel Tribe’s cultural connections to the plants of the area and also offer interesting biological tidbits.

At the point farthest from the parking lot, two benches provide a lovely place to stop and enjoy the sounds of nature at a viewpoint facing the Pend Oreille River near the mouth of Indian Creek.

The way is wide and flat, with very little outslope. It is made of packed dirt. While it was built to be accessible, conditions may change depending on the season. It is highly recommended you check trip reports before you go and write your own when you’re done hiking here, so the next person knows what to expect.

The trail is open to hiking in the summer, and Nordic skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. Biking is not permitted. Visitors should note that hunting may occur on the property during various Washington hunting seasons, so blaze orange or pink is recommended during those periods.

**Note:** The Arboretum Loop Trail is the first recreation trail completed within the Indian Creek Community Forest property. This area will eventually connect to the Geophysical Area trails nearby.

**Distance:** 0.58 mile ♦ **Elevation gain:** 35 feet  
**Highest elevation:** 2,200 feet ♦ **Permit:** None  
**Dogs:** Leashed

**Info:** [wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/indian-creek-community-forest-arboretum-loop-trail](http://wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/indian-creek-community-forest-arboretum-loop-trail)

**Trailhead:** From Newport, travel east on Highway 2. Immediately after crossing the Pend Oreille River, turn north on Le Clerc Road. Travel 7.3 miles to Indian Creek Road and turn right. Continue 0.4 mile to the top of the hill. The driveway to Indian Creek Community Forest is on the left. Proceed to the parking lot for the Arboretum Loop Trail to the left of the main drive, marked by a large kiosk.

### NEARBY HIKES

**Cheney Tertiary Wetlands:** Cheney Tertiary Wetlands is part of an enhancement to the Cheney Wastewater Treatment and Reclamation Facility. It features a looped trail system with wheelchair-friendly routes just outside of Cheney. (5 miles of trails, elevation gain varies)

**Waikiki Springs:** The trail from the parking lot to the river is wide with paved sections between dirt and gravel. It loses 200 feet of elevation over a mile on the way to the river, which you have to make up on the return trip. (4.8 miles of trails, 588 feet of elevation gain)

**Fish Lake:** Visit this rails-to-trails paved path connecting West Spokane to Queen Lucas Lake. Enjoy this multi-use, ADA-accessible trail with a mild uphill grade that currently ends at Scribner Road. (7.6 miles one-way, 382 feet of elevation gain)

Photo by Anna Roth

# Naches Trail Preserve

## Seattle–Tacoma area

May is the perfect time to enjoy native flowers in bloom and a landscape alive with birdsong in this Pierce County Parks preserve.

By *Leslie Romer*

The Naches Trail Preserve is a 40-acre natural area where native plants are protected and their praises sung by a wide range of the region’s birdlife. The area offers a good opportunity to visit wildlands without a long hike. Protecting wildlife and their habitat is the priority here — pets and dogs are not allowed.

Blue and green park signs at the western end of the parking lot beckon walkers to the 0.4-mile gravel loop trail. Attractive split rail fences border some parts of the path while chain link fences mark wetland boundaries and other protected areas.

All three lowland habitats in the preserve appear beside the southern section of the loop trail. The prairie mounds are tan in fall and winter, a deep carpet of blue camas blossoms in May and a multicolored wildflower display through the summer. Chest-high wetland plants, notably cattails, grow south of the fences. And a conifer-covered ridge rises beyond the wetland, forming the undeveloped southern boundary of the preserve.

Toward the western end of the current loop trail, tall, rangy Garry oaks rise above Oregon grape thickets. Each habitat supports a different bird population, from hummingbirds to hawks. A bench at the northwest corner of the preserve offers clear views of Mount Rainier framed between stately Garry oaks — an excellent place to pause for reflection.

**WTA pro tip:** Restrooms, picnic tables and a playground are available at the Stan and Joan Cross Park, just across from the parking lot. Pets and dogs are welcome in that park.

**Distance:** 0.4 mile roundtrip ♦ **Elevation gain:** Minimal  
**Highest elevation:** 340 feet ♦ **Map:** piercecountywa.gov/1399/Naches-Trail-Preserve ♦ **Permit:** None ♦ **Dogs:** No dogs or pets

**Info:** wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/naches-trail-preserve

**Trailhead:** From I-5, head toward Puyallup on WA-512. Drive 5.7 miles and exit onto Canyon Road E. Turn south toward Frederickson. Drive 3.7 miles and turn right onto Military Road E. Drive 0.7 mile, watching for blue Pierce County Park signs. Turn left onto 43rd Avenue Court E, just past the signs for Naches Trail Preserve and Stan and Joan Cross Park. Turn into the preserve’s paved parking lot on the right. There are several accessible parking spaces on the right side and sidewalks all around the lot’s perimeter.

### NEARBY HIKES

**Foothills Trail:** A paved walk and bicycle path that extends 21 miles in Pierce County, from East Puyallup to Buckley. The most scenic section offers views of the Carbon River, South Prairie Creek and Mount Rainier in 3.5 miles with little elevation gain, starting south from the trailhead in downtown Orting. (7 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain)

**Bresemann Forest Trails:** Enter the forest from the western edge of the Sprinkler Recreation Center parking lot, near Spire Rock. The main trails provide a short loop, with primitive connecting trails offering a variety of additional options. (1.3 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain)

*Leslie Romer is the author of “Lost Fire Lookout Hikes” and “Histories: Olympic Peninsula and Willapa Hills.”*

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## Manchester State Park

### Kitsap Peninsula

This state park is a waterfront gem with hiking trails, history and many camping options.

By Steve Payne

Manchester State Park is outside Port Orchard on the Kitsap Peninsula. The park offers a delightful frontcountry hiking experience, with trails, several grassy areas and a 1900s Army Corps of Engineers torpedo warehouse — all with plenty of water views. Formerly known as the Middle Point Military Reservation, the park was established when the base was decommissioned in 1958. The park takes its name from the nearby unincorporated city of Manchester, which — in turn — took its name from Manchester, England.

There's a short interpretive trail near the park entrance with signs to identify mature Douglas firs, maples and even hazelnut trees. A longer hiking trail with two access points from the large parking lot leads down to the shores of Rich Passage, where ferries shuttle cars and walk-on passengers between Bremerton and Seattle. Also here is Battery Mitchell, built to house large guns — which were never installed — to protect the Bremerton shipyards.

Reservable facilities include two picnic shelters and the torpedo warehouse itself, perfect for large gatherings. There are separate sites for Cascadia Marine Trail paddlers, hikers/bikers, RVs and tents and a huge group site with peek-a-boo views of Clam Bay. Military history buffs will also appreciate learning more about the torpedo warehouse and gun battery, and may be inspired to visit Fort Ward, the park's sister site across the passage on Bainbridge Island.

**WTA pro tip:** Campground loops make excellent walking routes.

**Distance:** 1.9 miles of trails  
**Elevation gain:** 100 feet  
**Highest elevation:** 140 feet  
**Map:** [parks.wa.gov/542/Manchester](https://parks.wa.gov/542/Manchester)  
**Permit:** Discover Pass  
**Dogs:** Leashed

**Info:** [wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/manchester-state-park](https://wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/manchester-state-park)

**Trailhead:** The park is just a short drive from Port Orchard. Head east on Beach Drive E for about 3 miles. Turn right onto E Hilldale Road. The park will be at the end of the road in about a mile.

### NEARBY HIKES

**Fort Ward Park:** Also a former army fort, this park sits right across the water from Manchester State Park. You'll get to see similar structures and artifacts here, and a trail connects the park to Blakely Harbor Park for those seeking more green space to explore. (2.25 miles roundtrip, minimal elevation gain)

**Banner Forest:** If you're looking to make your own hike, the trail network here can give you just that. Spend an afternoon winding through the forest and exploring the wetland. (4 miles roundtrip, 50 feet elevation gain)

Photo by Steve Payne

**The Fireside Circle**

*Blazing a new path for trails*

The Fireside Circle is a special community of WTA members who contribute \$500 or more annually to WTA. Learn about the benefits of being in this community at [wta.org/firesidecircle](https://wta.org/firesidecircle).



Photo by Arnab Banerjee



## WSU Vancouver Cougar Trails

### Vancouver

By Craig Romano

The Cougar Trail system traverses the 351-acre WSU Vancouver campus via a series of old roads, paved paths and single-track trails. Explore more than 6 miles of trails leading to a scenic hillside, salmon-spawning creek, cool ravines, big tree groves and old pastures. And while the Cougar Trails attract a fair number of walkers, hikers and runners (especially when classes are in session), it's possible to enjoy some tranquility. And chances are good too of seeing deer, coyotes and other critters on the sprawling campus.

The WSU trail map shows four suggested loops, color-coded green, orange, blue and red. They're good for getting acquainted with the trail system. But some of the more interesting trails are unnamed secondary paths branching off of them. The 1.3-mile Green Loop is paved, travels through the heart of campus and climbs Mount Vista's open slopes for some good views.

The Orange Loop travels 1.3 miles on mostly soft-surface trails through mature forests and a large field, to the WSU barn, the site of a pioneer cabin and an old orchard. The 2.5-mile Blue Loop is completely paved. It follows most of the Green Loop and continues to the Wailing Bell, a 17-foot-high bell that mourns extinct species.

The 4.6-mile Red Loop pretty much loops the campus. It follows paved trails, wood-chipped trails, soft-surface trails and roads and passes many pretty spots and interesting features. Two of the more interesting secondary trails run along and near the banks of Mill Creek. They offer beautiful glimpses of and access to this important tributary of Salmon Creek.

**Distance:** More than 6 miles of trails

**Elevation gain:** Up to 250 feet

**Highest elevation:** 390 feet

**Map:** [vancouver.wsu.edu/about/cougar-trails](http://vancouver.wsu.edu/about/cougar-trails)

**Recommended Guidebook:**

Urban Trails  
Vancouver WA  
(Mountaineers Books)

**Permit:** Parking fees 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. year-round (fees vary, see website for details), no parking fees on weekends

**Dogs:** Leashed

**Trailhead:** Follow I-5 north to Exit 7A (exit 36 if coming from I-205) and then head east on NE 134th Street (which becomes NE Salmon Creek Ave) for 1.2 miles. Turn left onto WSU Entrance Road and continue for 0.8 mile to visitor parking and the trailhead.

*Craig Romano is a guidebook author, [craigromano.com](http://craigromano.com).*



Photo by Craig Romano

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Olympic National Park  
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Learn more and sign up at [wta.org/olt](http://wta.org/olt).

Photo by Erika Haugen-Goodman

# What Do I Do if I Find Old Stuff on Trail?

By **Linnea Johnson**

**“We saw this little piece of what I thought was sheet metal sticking out of the ground,”** said Brandon Tigner, North Puget Sound trails coordinator, about a curious object our volunteer crew saw while working on Woodinville’s Greenbrier Trail last December. “When we started to clear the debris around it, we realized it was a big metal object.”

Brandon notified the city of Woodinville, who determined that the object was part of a portable steam sawmill left by loggers when the area was cut over a century ago. After consulting with the state archaeologist, the city approved continuing our work in the area. Our crew simply curved the urban trail to avoid disturbing the artifact.

Our trail staff attend trainings with the archaeologist for the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks so that our crews know what to do if they find an artifact. But what should you do if you see something old on a hike? How do you know if it’s trash that you should pack out or if it’s an object you should leave alone?

Laura Phillips, archaeology collections manager at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, explained that an artifact is defined as any object “that people made or transported or modified.” That means there are artifacts all around us — including the candy wrappers you can pick up as a good steward.

So, you can pick up candy wrappers. But what about that rusty chunk of metal?

“If it looks like it’s over 30 years old, leave it there,” Laura said. Why 30? “It might be even older and it’s going to tell a story.” When an object is left in its place, archaeologists are better able to piece that story together. If an object is moved, it loses its context. (Note: It’s also illegal to remove artifacts from land you do not own — or from your own property without a permit.)

Laura encourages hikers to treat the whole landscape as something that’s always been cared for.

“Rest assured,” she said, “people have been in the mountains since time immemorial.”

So, you’re on the trail, and you see an old object. What’s next?

1. Does the object look 30-plus years old? Leave it be.
2. Take a photo of the artifact (pro tip: place another object next to it for size). If possible, record its GPS coordinates.
3. When you return to the trailhead, confirm who manages the land. Examples of land managers include county parks, tribal governments, Washington State Parks and the U.S. Forest



**The Greenbrier Trail** opened on March 31. Artifacts there and along many trails in Washington unlock stories that can help us understand the present.

## Why artifacts are important

Because stories are often written by those with power, artifacts can unveil truths that would otherwise go untold. “The people in charge in a town are often the ones who controlled the stories, rather than the people who lived there,” Laura said, so artifacts “bring a story that’s different.”

Service. The land manager is the legal steward of artifacts.

**4.** Locate the contact information online for the land manager’s archaeologist. Share where and when you saw the artifact. Include photos or a description, as well as coordinates or a map.

**5.** If you’re unsure who the land manager is, contact the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation or the Burke Museum.

“We don’t pick the flowers, and we don’t pick up the artifacts,” Laura said.

Being a good steward to cultural resources is essential to leaving no trace. As part of the trail community, you are key to ensuring that artifacts can continue to teach us for generations.



## A MOMENT OF MAGIC

**This was a perfect summer hike** on a Saturday in late May. We went to Dirty Harry's Balcony Trail in the Snoqualmie region. I remember it being a mild day, but our backs were still sweaty when we rested at the top. We munched on potato chips and sandwiches as cliff swallows snatched bugs out of the air high above the tree line. On our way back down, we could see turkey vultures floating above the tall trees as a cool breeze made it a comfortable descent.

At the very bottom of the trail is a bridge over the Snoqualmie River. After the hike, I went down to soak my feet. My wife, Noreen, immediately went to work on her favorite hobby, searching for heart-shaped rocks. The late afternoon sun was behind her and I watched as she

searched, stooped low on the shore with water up to her ankles. She stood up to proudly show off this smooth black rock when I snapped this shot.

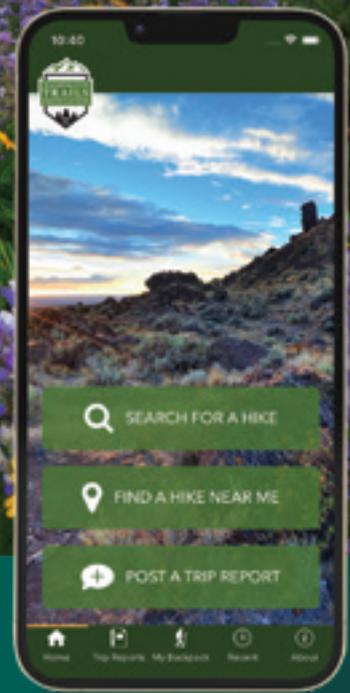
Noreen isn't crazy about how often I make her pose for photos on hikes, so catching a candid moment like this was fun. I love how the focus in the picture makes her fingers and the stone stand out right as she shows it off.

We love hiking as an opportunity to be active, spend time together without distractions and get to enjoy stunning views of nature. The mountains here never get old! I love packing a camera on the trail to try and capture just a single drop of the magic you can experience.

— Ben Beehner



# Log in. Get outside.



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