

Things to keep in mind when hiking

The ecosystems of central Washington may be beautiful, but they are also fragile. By taking simple steps to minimize your impact while out hiking and using common sense, you can help prevent the degradation of these ecosystems.

While hiking, be careful to stay on a maintained trail to minimize damage to ground vegetation. Dispose of waste properly. If you find litter, please pick it up and carry it out with you, pack out all your trash. To dispose of human waste properly, dig catholes at least 200 feet from any water source. Catholes should be dug 6 to 8 inches deep and all toilet paper should be packed out. Do not start campfires. Be considerate of local fauna, do not harass wildlife. Besides respecting the natural environment, be considerate of other hikers and travel quietly.

While hiking be prepared for the worst case scenario. Carry the following items when you are hiking: extra food and water, sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat (especially for desert hikes), extra clothing (including raingear and an insulating layer), a map of the hiking trail and a compass, a first aid kit, a flashlight, an emergency space blanket, and matches.

The hikes at a glance

Hike numbers refer to numbers on the vicinity map on the front of this guide.

1: Ginko Petrified Forest

Skill Level: Novice

Distance: 1.5 miles roundtrip

Estimated Hiking Time: 45 minutes

Elevation Gain: 256' elevation gain

Driving Time: 35 minutes from Ellensburg

Directions: Follow I-90 east toward Spokane. Take Exit 136 for Vantage. At the bottom of the exit ramp, turn left on to Vantage Highway. Follow Vantage Highway for 2.5 miles. The ranger station and trailhead will be on the right hand side of the road.

This is a short hike at the Ginko Petrified Forest. The walk takes you to see various petrified logs. Visit during May and June to see a wonderful wildflower display.

2: Umtanum Recreation Area

Skill Level: Novice

Distance: 3.5 miles roundtrip

Estimated Hiking Time: 2 hours

Elevation Gain: 325' elevation gain

Driving Time: 25 minutes from Ellensburg

Directions: from the I-90 Exit 109 interchange, drive south on Canyon Road/WA State Route 821 for 12 miles. The parking lot is located on the left side of the road between mileposts 17 and 16.

This short hike takes you along a riparian corridor lined with black cottonwoods and aspen. The groves of quaking aspen that line Umtanum Creek are an oasis of green in a seemingly endless sea of sagebrush.

3: Umtanum Creek Falls

Skill Level: Novice

Distance: 2 miles roundtrip

Estimated Hiking Time: 1 hour

Elevation Gain: -700'

Driving Time: 30 minutes from Ellensburg

Directions: From the I-90 Exit 109 interchange, drive north for 0.7 miles and turn left onto Umtanum Road. Follow Umtanum Road for 10 miles, past the end of the pavement at 5 miles. The parking area

will be located on the left side of the road at a sharp bend to the right.

This hike takes you along the upper reaches of Umtanum Creek. The trail travels through aspen and cottonwood thickets, and a Douglas fir-Ponderosa pine forest. At the end of the trail you can hike right to the crest of Umtanum Creek Falls.

4: Manastash Ridge, from Cove Road

Skill Level: Intermediate

Distance: 4 miles roundtrip

Estimated Hiking Time: 2.25 hours

Elevation Gain: 1873' elevation gain

Driving Time: 15 minutes from Ellensburg.

Directions: From downtown, follow Main Street south, turn right on to Umtanum Road. Follow Umtanum Road for 1.6 miles, turn right on to Manastash Road. Follow Manastash Road for 3.5 miles and turn left on to Cove Road. The gravel parking lot is located on the right hand side, just before the end of the road.

Climbing Manastash Ridge you get a commanding view of the Kittitas Valley, the Stuart Range, and Mount Rainer. Two trails take you to the summit. The Boy Scout Trail travels through a Ponderosa pine forest before meeting up with the Westberg Trail, just east of the summit.

5: Manastash Ridge, from Canyon Road

Skill Level: Strenuous

Distance: 2 miles roundtrip

Estimated hiking time: 2 hours

Elevation gain: 1173'

Driving Time: 15 minutes from Ellensburg

Directions: Follow Canyon Road/SR 821 south from Ellensburg. Drive 6.2 miles to a gravel turnout on the inside of a turn on the

east side of the road. The turnout is located at milepost 22.

This strenuous hike takes you from the bottom of the Yakima Canyon to the top of Manastash Ridge very quickly. The view is quite to Hike 4, with views of the Kittitas Valley, the Stuart Range, and Whiskey Dick Mountain.

6: Yakima Skyline Trail

Skill Level: Strenuous

Distance: 9 miles

Estimated Hiking time: 5 hours

Elevation Gain: 1408'

Drive Time: 50 minutes from Ellensburg.

Directions: Follow I-82 south to Exit 26. At the end of the ramp, bear right on Canyon Road. Follow Canyon Road for 0.7 miles and turn left onto Harrison Road. After 2 miles turn right onto North Wenas Road. At 2.8 miles North Wenas Road will curve to the left, continue straight onto Gibson Road. At 0.25 miles turn right onto Buffalo Road. Follow Buffalo Road for 2 miles, at the end of the road turn left and pass through an elk fence and cattle guard. The parking area is located another 0.5 miles beyond the fence.

The Yakima Skyline Trail follows the rim of Yakima Canyon. Starting the Selah, the trail gives you a commanding view of Mt. Hood, Mt. Rainier, Mt. Adams, and the Yakima River as it meanders its way along the rim of the Yakima Canyon.

7: Enchantments Traverse

Skill Level: Strenuous

Distance: 17 miles

Estimated hiking time: 12.5 hours

Elevation Gain: 4400'

Driving Time: 90 minutes from Ellensburg.

Permits needed: Northwest Forest Pass, Alpine Lakes Wilderness Permit

Green Trails Map: 209S, The Enchantments

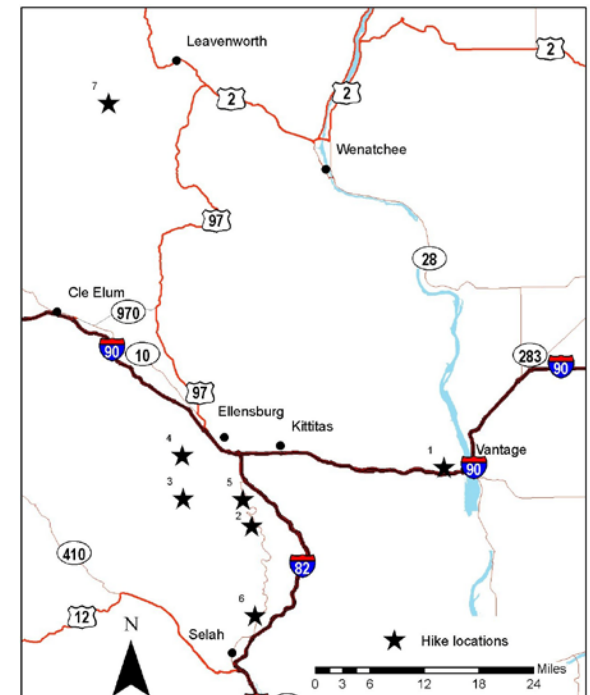
Directions: Follow US 97 North toward Wenatchee, 50 miles over Blewett Pass to the intersection with US 2. Follow US 2 toward Leavenworth for 6 miles to Leavenworth. At the western edge of town, turn left onto Icicle Road. Follow Icicle Road for 7.5 miles, turn left at Bridge Creek Campground. Follow Forest Road 7601 over Icicle Creek and 3.5 miles to the Colchuck Lake Trailhead at the end of the forest road. Those seeking to do the entire traverse, drop a second vehicle at the Snow Lake trailhead, located 4 miles from the intersection of Icicle Road and US 2. This will save a hitch hike or a long walk back to the Colchuck Lake Trailhead.

Even if you do not do the entire 17 mile hike, the Enchantments are well worth the visit. These high alpine lakes are located on the north side of the Stuart Range. You will be surrounded by awe-inspiring mountains, mountain goats, and glaciers. Do this hike after the middle of June, when most of the snow pack is gone from the higher basins.

Permits are required for overnight camping between June 15 and October 15. Contact the Wenatchee National Forest Ranger Station in Leavenworth at 509-548-2550 for more information. For information on the Enchantments permit system, visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee/passes/encantments/>. Day hikers can pick up free day use permits at either the Snow Lake or Lake Stuart trailheads.

Day Hikes Near Ellensburg, Washington

An AmeriCorps Community Action Project organized by Daniel Allen
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For maps of each of the hikes and more detailed descriptions, please visit the online hiking guide on the Kittitas Environmental Education Network's website at <http://www.kittitasee.net/>.