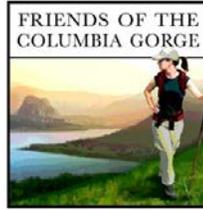




**TRAVEL
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**“Ready, Set, GOrge!” Provides Tips for Hikers
Headed to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area**

— At ReadySetGorge.com, visitors can plan ahead and get prepared for their visit to the Gorge with trail recommendations, gear lists, shuttle information and more —

Hood River, Ore., and Washougal, Wash. (May 21, 2019) — Summer hiking season is upon us, and state, federal and non-profit groups are encouraging people to plan ahead at ReadySetGorge.com before they venture to the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.



The online resource, a collaboration between [Friends of the Columbia Gorge](#), the Oregon Tourism Commission, [Travel Oregon](#), the [U.S. Forest Service](#) and [Oregon Department of Transportation](#), is a resource for anyone planning to hike or bike the Gorge. The online guide includes an up-to-date printable driving map that shows popular trails, campsites and public facilities. Trails impacted by the Eagle Creek fire are clearly marked, as are alternative trails in the eastern Gorge and Washington. People will also find tips for when to go, what to pack, and how to get to and around the Columbia River Gorge National

Scenic Area, including how to catch a shuttle to popular destinations such as Multnomah Falls and the Dog Mountain Trail System.

“A great Columbia River Gorge experience begins with preparation. Before leaving home, consider heading to less-crowded trails and, especially on weekends, consider leaving early or planning a car-free visit to the Gorge with the help of a public shuttle,” says Kevin Gorman, executive director of Friends of the Columbia Gorge.

A natural border between Oregon and Washington, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area encompasses nearly 300,000 acres of ecological, recreational, cultural and historical attractions. More than 2 million people visit the Gorge each year, which puts a lot of pressure on the roads and trail systems.

ReadySetGorge.com is a great resource for people looking to explore less popular but equally beautiful trails in the region.



There is limited parking at many trailheads throughout the Gorge. Parking at popular sites such as Multnomah Falls and the Dog Mountain Trail System fills up quickly. The Columbia Gorge Express is an affordable and convenient option for traveling between Portland and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. It travels between Gateway Transit Centers in Portland and Hood River, with stops at Rooster Rock State Park, Multnomah Falls, Cascade Locks and Hood River.

On the Washington side of the Gorge, hikers are encouraged to use the Skamania County West End Transit (WET) Bus from the Skamania County Fairgrounds to the Dog Mountain Trailhead on weekends during the busy season. A permit is required for all Dog Mountain Trail System hikers April 20 through June 16 (Saturday and Sunday only). For those taking the shuttle, the \$2 cost (\$1 each way) includes a free daily hiking permit.

“The Gorge is definitely open for business. The vast majority of the trails in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area remain open. However, there are some trail closures between Multnomah Falls and Cascade Locks due to the 2017 Eagle Creek Fire,” says Rachel Pawlitz, public affairs officer for the U.S. Forest Service. “Hiking on trails in former burn areas can be extremely dangerous, due to risks associated with falling trees and erosion. It’s important to stay on official trails, let someone know where you’re hiking and bring along a paper map of the trail you intend to hike.”

The Columbia River Gorge-Mt. Hood Trailhead Ambassadors, a group of trained volunteers, will be available throughout the summer on weekends at the 10 most-popular trailheads, serving as a resource for hikers and visitors of all ages and abilities. Trailhead Ambassadors will provide answers to frequently asked questions to help people of all abilities understand trail conditions before they set out. In 2018, 94 Trailhead Ambassadors donated nearly 2,000 hours, while engaging with over 23,700 visitors.

“Summer is a popular and beautiful time to visit the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and Mt. Hood. Plan ahead at ReadySetGorge.com for the best experience – and for tips on how to leave it better so that future generations can enjoy it, too,” Gorman says.

About Friends of the Columbia Gorge

Friends of the Columbia Gorge is a nonprofit organization with over 8,000 members dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Friends maintain an office in Portland, OR as well as in two Gorge towns — Hood River, Ore., and Washougal, Wash. Visit gorgefriends.org to learn more.

About the Oregon Tourism Commission

The Oregon Tourism Commission, dba Travel Oregon, works to enhance visitors' experiences by providing information, resources and trip planning tools that inspire travel and consistently convey the exceptional quality of Oregon. The commission aims to improve Oregonians' quality of life by strengthening the economic impacts of the state's \$12.3 billion tourism industry that employs more than 115,000 Oregonians. Visit TravelOregon.com to learn more.

Photo: Weldon Wagon Road Trail, Washington by Micheal Drewry