

On Your Face: A Kiss of Mist

Story and photos by Tracy Beard

Fall hike delivers fresh air, color and four waterfalls

Autumn is my favorite season to be outdoors. The temperate weather in the Pacific Northwest is perfect for hiking. The bugs are gone, and the cool mornings and sunny afternoons inspire me to venture outside. Nature's abundance of color paints a glorious backdrop for my photos, and I'm honestly not quite ready to give up all the sun and warmth from summer to bundle up and get out the snowshoes, snowboards and skis for winter. Early in the season, my husband Steve and I decided to head east from Woodland to the Lewis River Trail.

Lewis River Trail

It takes a while to reach the Lower Falls Campground, but as you ramble on the roadway following the river, check out some of the lovely properties along the way. Part of the FS-90 trail is deteriorating with substantial drops and potholes, so be sure to travel in a four-wheel- or all-wheel-drive vehicle.

We began our hike at Lower Falls Campground. The up and back route begins here and turns around at an overlook above Upper Lewis River Falls. Don't forget to purchase a day pass, or put your Northwest Forest Pass on the rearview mirror of your car before you begin.



I have hiked the Lewis River trail many times. A few years ago, storms washed out part of the trail near Middle Lewis River Falls. The original trail was 5.2 miles round trip with gentle rolling hills and stunning views of three waterfalls. Today the re-routed trail, extended by a detour adding a little more than ¾ of a mile, makes the route just over 6 miles up and back. This addition also adds a bit of elevation gain and loss to the hike in one section but rewards hikers with a fourth waterfall for the effort.

Lower Lewis River Falls

The trail leads down to the river from the campground, and in just a quarter mile we were standing in front of Lower Lewis River Falls. The falls drop 43 feet and span 200 feet across. The Native Americans used to wade in the water beneath the falls and catch salmon. We arrived at 8am. The campground and trail were incredibly quiet, but we did see a committed photographer. He was standing in waders downstream from the falls waiting



for the perfect shot when the sun would illuminate the sky while rising over the waterfall.

Middle Lewis River Falls

We meandered another mile and a half east up the trail toward Middle Lewis River Falls. This section of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest is recognized as old-growth forest. Wispy green moss drapes the giant fir and cedar trees, seedling and juvenile trees spring forth from mother logs, and broken limbs and ancient stumps fill in the forest floor along with an abundance of pine needles and ferns.

Shade canopies most of the gently rolling riverside trail, but

Ad space

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several side trails lead down to the water where you can bask in the sunshine while lying on the rocks or remove your boots and revitalize your feet in the icy water.

Steve and I soon found the detour leading up the hill to the Middle Falls parking lot. The route is well signed and easy to follow. We heard the waterfall before we spied it through the trees on the left side of the trail. This one was not as large or exciting as the three waterfalls on the main river, but it was lovely and distracted us from the uphill climb.

Once we arrived at the parking lot we headed back down another trail to the main route. Middle Lewis River Falls bridges the entire width of the river. In some places the water plunges down over the rocks, creating stunning sprays of white foam, and in other areas cascades down gently over sloped rock, never making a splash.

Upper Lewis River Falls

We continued east along the river until we finally arrived at Upper Lewis River Falls, my favorite of the four falls. Fewer people venture this far, creating a more tranquil atmosphere. The waterfall is 58 feet high and 175 feet across. We climbed down off the trail and onto the beach. Downed logs made a perfect bench for resting and sharing a snack. We sat quietly



enjoying the summer peaches we had packed and as we gazed at the falls the wind sent a kiss of mist to grace my face. We lingered a while in our private paradise and then gathered our things and made our way back toward the start.

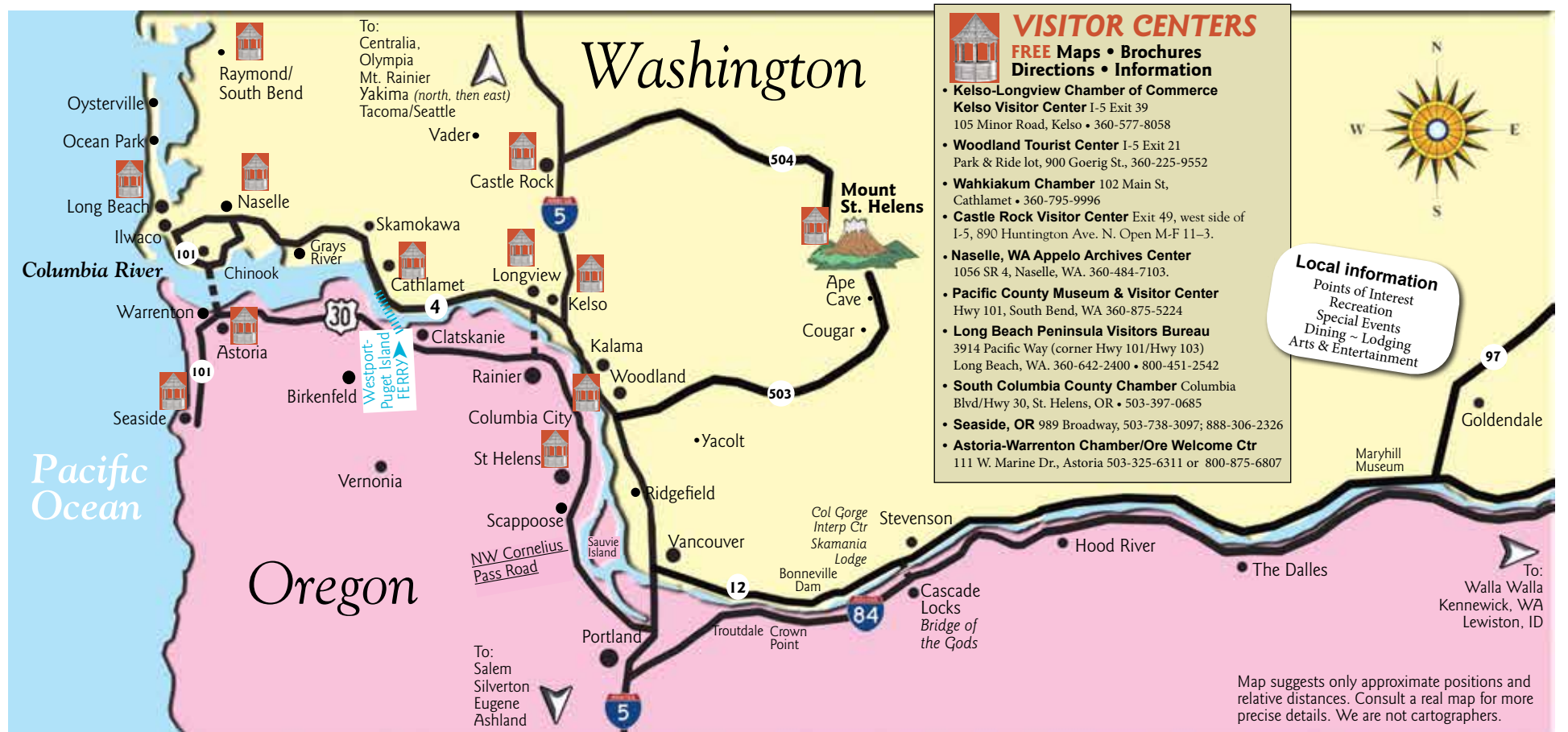
It's funny when you traverse an up and back hike, you notice different things in each direction. On the way up, I was concentrating on the river and listening for the sounds of the next waterfall. On the way back Steve and I were discussing our upcoming backpacking trip for the following weekend when I noticed three campsites along the river. These easily accessible sites make great

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IF YOU GO

Direction to Lewis River Trail

Take Exit 21/Woodland off Interstate 5 heading east on WA-503. Drive 31 miles, (2 miles past Cougar) the road turns into FS90. Continue 30 miles on FS 90, turn right immediately past the Pine Creek Information Center and drive until you reach the Lower Lewis River Falls Recreation Area. Take the first right off the entrance road for the trailhead and follow the signs to the campground.



Waterfalls

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spots for families looking to backpack with smaller children, or for anyone looking for a fun overnight trip.

The Lewis River Trail is generally open from April to November depending on snow. It's not too late to get out and hike one more trail before you, too, drag your snowshoes, snowboard and skis out of the garage to greet the winter weather.

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By Tracy Beard

PROVISIONS

ALONG THE TRAIL OR AT THE GAME

DELICIOUS SLIDERS

It's football season, so whether you are sitting in front of an old console TV, lounging in your new home theater, or standing while tailgating in the parking lot at the game, try out my spicy pulled pork sliders with zingy coleslaw assembled on Hawaiian buns.

Spicy Pulled Pork

1 (2-3 lb) pork sirloin tip roast – frozen
1 teaspoon McCormick's steak seasoning
1/2 cup leftover pork juice
2 teaspoons adobo sauce
2 chipotle peppers – seeded and chopped fine
1-1/4 cups Sweet Baby Ray's BBQ Sauce, or your favorite brand
Cooking spray

Spray your crockpot with cooking spray. Sprinkle all sides of frozen pork roast with steak seasoning and place seasoned roast in crockpot and cook for 6 hours or until thoroughly cooked. Remove roast and discard all but 1/2 cup pork juice. Add chopped chipotles, adobo sauce and 1-1/4 cups of your favorite BBQ sauce to the juice in the crockpot and mix thoroughly. Use two forks to shred the pork. Add pork to sauce and mix. Keep on warm setting.



Tracy's Zingy Coleslaw

2 14-ounce bags of classic coleslaw mix
1 cup grated carrots
1 cup mayonnaise
4 tablespoons seasoned rice vinegar
4 teaspoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1-1/2 teaspoons celery salt

Whisk everything from mayonnaise to celery salt in a large bowl. Add coleslaw mix and carrots. Mix sauce and vegetables thoroughly and let sit covered in the refrigerator for at least one hour, up to one day.

Slice Hawaiian buns in half, add pork and slaw to make sliders.