

Santiam STATE FOREST



Driving forest roads

Most of the recreation sites on the forest are reached over maintained gravel roads, but drivers should be aware that gravel roads require more caution and slower speeds. Carry a forest map, water, check your spare tire and be alert for log trucks and other vehicles. Stay to the right and expect a vehicle around every corner.

If you're looking for more specific information or a detailed forest map please contact us or visit our office 1 mile east of Mehama on Highway 22.

Forest Contact Information:

Santiam State Forest
22965 North Fork Road SE
Lyons, OR 97358
Phone: 503-859-2151



Welcome to Santiam STATE FOREST



Come and discover...

... a forest of towering Douglas-fir and hemlock trees. Catch the mist on a hot day from a high waterfall as it plunges to a punchbowl of broken basalt. Feel the wind sweep over you as you stand on a rocky peak with the snow-capped Cascades towering in the distance. Relax at your camp near a clear lake ringed with rhododendron.

The Santiam State Forest may be one of the best-kept secrets in the foothills of the northern Oregon Cascades. It's easy to miss the tucked-away forest for busy travelers heading up Highway 22 more popular destinations. The fact that it is largely unknown can be a plus- particularly for visitors seeking a more primitive, but highly scenic experience.

The Oregon Department of Forestry invites you to stop and visit the Santiam State Forest, located about 30 miles east of Salem. Spread over 47,000 acres of prime forest lands ranging in elevation from 1,000 to 5,000 feet, the forest is carefully managed to provide a range of benefits from wood products to wildlife habitat to recreation opportunities. Visit our office on Highway 22 near Lyons for information and maps and come ready to explore.

Be prepared to venture off the beaten path and travel gravel roads to find the best this forest has to offer. A little exploration will reveal secluded picnic spots, high mountain vistas, scenic waterfalls and lakes, and trails for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.



Weather on the forest is generally warm and dry in the summer. The bright autumn colors and glowing sunshine of early fall give way to steady rain at the lower elevations by late fall. At higher elevations, snow blankets the forest and often stays until June.

Private timber companies harvested most of the forest in the Santiam Canyon between 1880 and 1930. By the 1930's and 1940's, with the land either logged over or burned by wildfire, many of the timber companies that owned the land saw little value in the forest. Some of these landowners let their land return to the counties for delinquent taxes while others sold it to the county for a minimal amount.

The Forest Acquisition Act, passed in 1939, encouraged counties to deed the foreclosed lands to the Oregon Department of Forestry in exchange for a share of future timber harvest revenues, giving rise to the state forest system we have today. Since then, the Oregon Department of Forestry has managed the land.

By the time the state took ownership, much of the forest already was naturally restocked with a native mix of seedlings. The only part of the Santiam State Forest that was planted by the Department of Forestry was the area burned by the 1951 Sardine Creek Fire, which burned approximately 21,400 acres northeast of Mehama.

Santiam Forest Today

The forest is divided into several large blocks of land and numerous smaller parcels. The largest block of forest is in the Rock Creek Basin, located to the south of Highway 22 near Mill City and Gates. This area includes the Rock Creek campsites and the Santiam Horse Camp, where a growing network of non-motorized trails is available.

Another sizable piece of the Santiam State Forest lies just north of Highway 22 in the Niagara Road area. It includes the highest points on the forest and features trails to Rocky Top and Natural Rock Arch.

The other large block of Santiam State Forest is located in the Butte Creek Basin and is reached by driving south of Highway 213 through Scott's Mills and the Crooked Finger Road. Explore the High Lakes Recreation Area and Butte Creek Falls in this area.



Butte Creek Falls

Take a short trip down the Butte Creek Falls Trail to discover two beautiful waterfalls. The Upper Butte Creek Falls splashes over a 20 foot rock ledge into a deep, cold pool. Follow the trail to its end at a rocky precipice where you can view the 80 foot high Lower Butte Creek Falls. A small primitive campground down the road from the trailhead offers visitors a place to relax after hiking the trail.

Season of use: Year Round
Elevation: 1,900 feet
Number of sites: 3



Butte Creek Falls

High Lakes Recreation Area

The High Lakes Recreation Area is a lightly visited area that includes Rhody Lake and Butte Lakes. This series of small lakes is nestled among thick patches of rhododendron at an elevation of 3,500 feet. Beginning near Rhody Lake, visitors can hike between the lakes on a 1.5 mile trail that traverses a steep rugged ridge and passes through grassy meadows and marshes finally ending at the Butte Lakes. A small primitive campground and picnic area is located near Rhody Lake.

Season of use: May–November (depending on snow level)
Elevation: 3,500 feet
Number of sites: 3



Rhody Lake

Rocky Top Trail

This short but rugged trail climbs to the 5,000 foot summit of Rocky Top, which was once the location of a fire lookout. The spectacular view on a clear day includes Mt. Jefferson, Three Sisters and Three-Fingered Jack. But don't forget to look down for delicate flowers such as the fiery red paintbrush and thick bunches of bear grass clinging to rocky crevices.

Season of use: June–October (depending on snow level)
Elevation: 5,000 feet



Mt. Jefferson as viewed from Rocky Top



Pack it in and Pack it out.
 Since many areas within the Santiam State Forest are managed for primitive recreation experiences, visitors are asked to practice Leave No Trace ethics. When trash receptacles are not present please Pack it in and Pack it out.

Natural Rock Arch Trail

The Natural Rock Arch is an impressive geologic formation that stands 50 feet tall and 40 feet wide. After hiking the steep 1/2 mile trail, you stand under the huge arch and can almost feel the weight of the rock hanging above. Explore around the base of the arch to discover numerous small caves in the fractured rock.

Season of use: May–November (depending on snow level)
Elevation: 3,800 feet



Santiam Horse Camp

The Santiam Horse Camp and Day-use Area rests among the shade of Douglas-fir trees and is the starting point for a system of non-motorized trails for horses, bicycles and hikers. Horse campers will find ample room for trailer parking with corrals and stock water for their animals. Trail users travel through miles of diverse forest with clear streams and unique geologic formations.

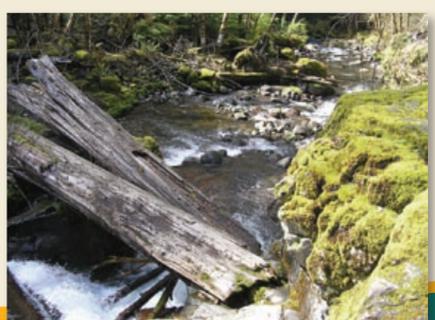
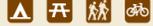
Season of use: May 1—October 31
Elevation: 1,700 feet
Number of sites: 9



Rock Creek Campsites

Four campsites are spread out along Rock Creek offering a great spot to camp, picnic or cool off in the stream during a hot summer day. A non-motorized trail network is being developed in this area providing access for hikers, horses and mountain bikers.

Season of use: Year Round
Elevation: 1,300 feet
Number of sites: 4



Shellburg Falls Recreation Area

Shellburg Falls Recreation Area offers a small, developed campground nestled in a moss-draped forest of Douglas-fir and hemlock. The short and scenic Shellburg Falls Trail passes behind the waterfall, which plunges 100 feet from the edge of a basalt cliff into a foamy pool. Nearby, you will find three miles of trails open to mountain bikes, horses and hikers.

Season of use: Walk-in access year round
 Vehicle Access
 May 20 – Nov. 1
Elevation: 1,500 feet
Number of sites: 7

