



2025

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**Deschutes
River Trail
(Wasco)**
Oregon



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Caution: The route is dotted with tire-slicing puncture vine, which is cleared by rangers. Bicyclists should carry tube sealant, along with a patch kit or extra tubes. If you take a side trail, be alert: Grasses may hide rattlers and bull snakes, as well as nestling fawns and ticks. If you leave the wide-open path, consider gaiters or pants tucked into socks.

Whitewater rafters, anglers, kayakers, horseback riders, hikers, and mountain bikers are all drawn to the beauty, wildlife, and history of the Lower Deschutes River, a designated National Wild and Scenic River. The Deschutes River Trail extends 18.6 miles from the shaded camping and family river activities of the Deschutes River State Recreation Area into a rare, remote, and scenic river canyon.

About the Route

Expect intense heat in the canyon; snacks, liters of insulated water, and hats are recommended. A spring jaunt in moderate weather highlights lupines and other wildflowers—a perfect renewal from the rainy northwest winters. Equestrians may request a trail reservation from March to June.

Begin at the state recreation area trailhead, located uphill via a short, narrow pathway. Watch for western meadowlarks, ospreys, doves, golden eagles, herons, and the distinctive black-on-white magpies.

At 3.5 miles, there is a patch of shade trees, as well as a trail to the river (with picnic tables and a toilet). Horse troughs and hitching posts begin at 4.5 miles, accompanied by the first of several renovated boxcars providing shelter and history. Along the way, the trail passes a small trestle and a rock wall built by Chinese railroad workers. A toilet and boxcar at mile 8 offer a good spot for a river swim and respite from the sun. Cottonwood trees planted for shade and grains planted by rangers attract pheasants, quail, chukars, foraging deer, and elk.

Ten miles into the route, the canyon widens and flattens under towering rock formations beside a remnant of a river bridge. The horse path ends at the old Harris Ranch and railroad water tower at mile 11, where many hikers and bicyclists also turn back. Meandering south, the trail continues following the river.

The bike trail ends at mile 18.6, as does an accommodating hike. A rough trail continues for about 7 rugged miles to Macks Canyon Campground, going up and down the canyon walls once traversed by trestles.

Trail History

The trains that used to roll by across the river were built



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States: Oregon

Counties: Sherman

Length: 18.6miles

Trail end points: Deschutes River State Recreation Area (Wasco) to 7 miles north of Macks Canyon Campground (Grass Valley)

Trail surfaces: Dirt,Gravel

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Fishing,Horseback Riding,Mountain Biking,Walking

Parking & Trail Access

The Deschutes River Trail is an out-and-back trail that runs south from Deschutes River State Recreation Area Campground (89600 Biggs-Rufus Hwy, Wasco), which offers parking and restrooms.

Visit the [TrailLink map](#) for detailed directions.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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