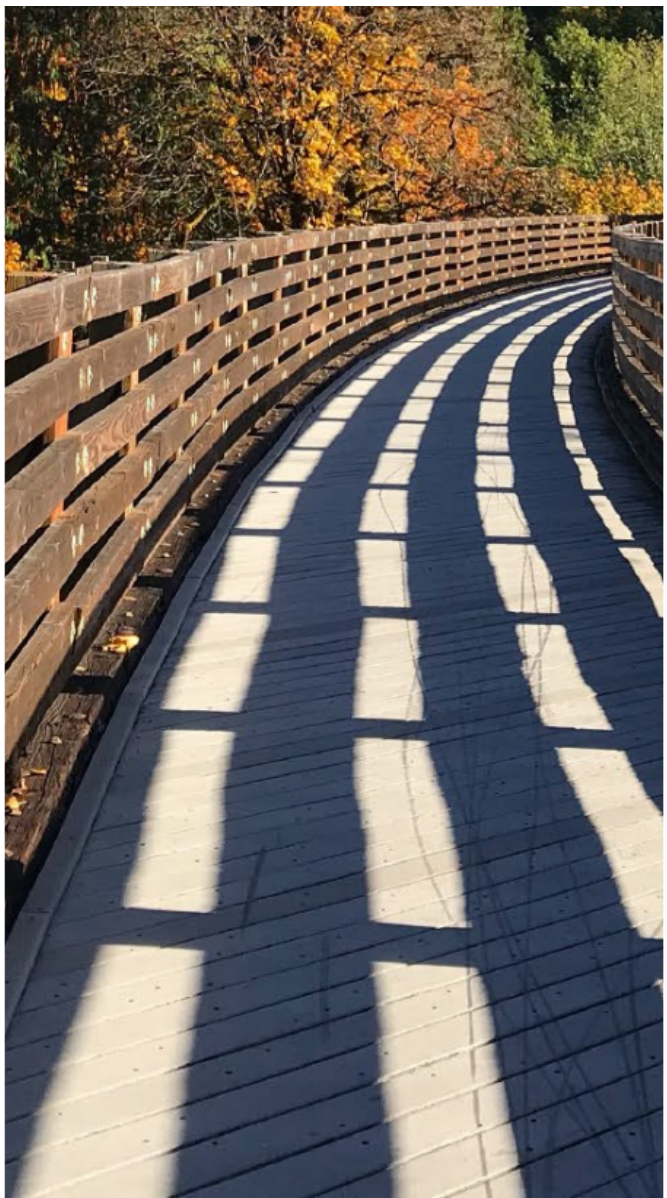
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2025

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Klickitat Trail

Washington

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Note: Brief gaps and technical areas require dismounts for bikers. The only way in or out of the canyon is at the trailheads, and solo travel is discouraged. To enjoy this extraordinary backcountry safely, go to the Klickitat Trail Conservancy's website to access precautions, guidelines, and essential tips for hikers and mountain bikers.

Discover a rare trail adventure in the hills of southern Washington as you traverse a remote canyon and a National Scenic Area, as well as 11 miles of nationally designated Wild and Scenic River, along the Klickitat Trail.

The 1903 Columbia River & Northern Railroad line paralleled the Klickitat River for much of its 42 miles from Goldendale to Lyle, transporting food goods, livestock, and lumber to steamships on the Columbia. In 1908, the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway lined the Washington shore and absorbed the short line. Lyle became a vital shipping point for sheep and wheat, while passengers rode the line to Portland. The BNSF Railway operated the line from 1970 to the early 1990s when the Klickitat lumber mill closed.

Now, 31 miles of scenic trail climb from the Columbia River to the Goldendale Plateau. A missing trestle divides the trail into two parts at the northern tip; therefore, you must experience each part separately. Here, the trail also experiences a transition zone, creating two distinct landscapes with separate climates.

Crushed gravel lines the western 13.2 miles of trail from Lyle to Klickitat. (Note: This is the only portion of the trail open to equestrians.) After traveling 1.7 miles, you'll reach the boundary of the Columbia River National Scenic Area and cross the Fisher Hill Trestle to the west bank, away from the highway. Oaks and ponderosa pines abound along the Klickitat riverside, where eagles congregate in winter and wildflowers bloom in spring. This trail section ends at a 3-mile detour through the town of Klickitat, around a missing trestle. From here, you can hike to a beach.

The contrasting beauty of the remote Swale Canyon begins east of Klickitat and continues southeast for 16.4 miles, passing below basalt cliffs (on a somewhat rocky, irregular surface) to the open prairie flatlands of the Golden Plateau. Due to its dryness and potential fire dangers, this section of trail is only open from October through June.

Klickitat Trail

Washington

States: Washington
Counties: Klickitat
Length: 31miles
Trail end points: Lewis and Clark Hwy. (Lyle) to Centerville Hwy. (Centerville)
Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Ballast,Crushed Stone,Dirt,Gravel
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Fishing,Horseback Riding,Mountain Biking,Walking,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

To reach the Lyle trailhead from the Portland area, take Interstate 84 to Exit 64, and cross the Hood River Bridge to Washington. Turn right (east) onto State Route 14, and travel 13 miles. Cross the Klickitat River Bridge at the entrance to Lyle, and turn left (north) onto SR 142. Turn left at the trailhead entrance in 100 yards.

To reach the Harms Road trailhead from Lyle, head northeast for 15 miles on the paved Lyle-Centerville Highway. Turn left (north) onto Harms Road. Go 0.5 mile, and park just north of the bridge.

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Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel