

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

Lewis River Falls

Located in the heart of the Gifford-Pinchot National Forest and along a secluded section of the Lewis River is the Lewis River Recreation Area. Here, surrounded by old growth Douglas fir, hemlock, and western cedar, the crystal clear waters of the Lewis River cascade over ancient basalt.

Directions

From Woodland travel east on SR-503 east, following the signs to Mount St Helens and Cougar. As you pass through the small town of Cougar SR-503 turns into Road 90. After you have traveled $38\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Woodland, follow the signs to Carson as Road 90 veers to the right just past the Pine Creek Ranger Station. Continue on Road 90 for another $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the Lewis River Recreation Area located on the right 1 mile past the bridge crossing the Lewis River.

The Trail

This short four mile section of the Lewis River passes by five waterfalls, four of them are on the Lewis River itself. Although all of the waterfalls are relatively easy to access from the road the enjoyable $3\frac{1}{2}$ mile trail that takes you through old growth Douglas fir, western red cedar, vine maple, and Oregon grape as it follows along the river, is by far the preferred way to visit and experience the falls.

To view the 60 foot high and 200 foot wide Lower Lewis River falls, turn right into Lewis River Recreation Area and follow the road to the day-use parking area. Follow the well marked gravel path leading a few hundred feet to a railed platform overlooking the Lower falls. Here the river makes a slow turn to the west just before tumbling over ancient basalt lava as it tumbles

From the viewing platform, Copper Creek, Middle and Upper Lewis River Falls, and Taitnapum Falls are located upstream along the $3\frac{1}{2}$ mile scenic trail.

To visit Copper Creek Falls and Middle Falls, which lie just 2 miles upstream, follow the gravel path along the river and past the campground. Soon the gravel gives way to the forest humus. Another $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles brings you to a small footbridge crossing Copper Creek just downstream from the 200 foot high Copper Creek falls as it slides down the cliff face and into the Lewis River. A short $\frac{1}{4}$ mile further brings you to the base of the 40 foot high and 100 foot wide gentle slide of Middle Falls.

From Middle Falls the trail continues upstream, passing beneath an overhanging cliff carved by the river, for another $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles to Upper Falls. You get your first glimpse of the 80 foot high Upper Falls after just $\frac{3}{4}$ miles. At this point the trail crosses a small foot bridge over Alec Creek and then makes a short climb above the river where a trail spur to the right leads to the rim of the falls. Here, flowing over ancient basalt, the Lewis river cascades down through a narrow chute before tumbling into a deep plunge pool.

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For an extra treat, follow the main trail upstream another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile where you come to the small, 20 foot high, but very scenic Taitnapum Falls nestled among 200 foot high Douglas fir and cedar. If you prefer to drive, just follow Road 90 up river $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the marked pullout for Middle Falls. A short, steep trail loop leads down past the lip of Copper Falls, to the Lewis River and the base of Middle Falls.

There is no easy road access to Upper Falls. However, if you would like to shorten the hike drive 2 miles upriver past the Middle Falls parking area to the Quartz Creek bridge and park at the pullout. Follow the trail leading downstream where after $\frac{1}{2}$ mile you'll pass Taitnapum Falls and just $\frac{1}{4}$ mile further brings you to Upper Falls.

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