

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

Triple Falls

One of the gems of the Columbia River Gorge Trail System, the Triple Falls Trail offers spectacular vistas of the Columbia River, passes behind a waterfall, and peers into a hidden moss covered gorge.

Directions

From Portland drive 35 miles east on I-84 to exit 35 (Ainsworth State Park). Follow the Columbia River Scenic Highway 1 ½ miles to the Horsetail Falls trail parking area on the right. From Hood River take exit 35 (Ainsworth State Park) and follow the Columbia River Scenic Highway 1 ½ miles to Horsetail Falls.

The Trail

The trail begins just east of Horsetail Falls at the Ponytail Falls trailhead. After climbing ¼ mile through a few switchbacks the trail leads behind 80 foot Ponytail Falls. The cave behind the falls was created by the falls old splash pool which washed away the softer sediment buried underneath one of the many lava flows of the area.

Another ½ mile through cedar and Douglas Fir brings you to a fork; stay to the right where you come upon a basalt outcropping offering a spectacular view up and down the Columbia River Gorge. Continuing on for another ½ mile the trail switch backs down Oneonta Gorge to the bridge looking onto 60 foot Oneonta Falls. From here a short climb of a few hundred feet brings you to the junction with the Oneonta Trail. Turn left and follow the trail to scenic Triple Falls.

The best view of Triple Falls is from the viewpoint ¾ miles up the trail. From here the three chutes of the 130 foot falls are framed by the maple trees that overhang the creek. Another ¼ mile brings you to the bridge crossing the creek just above the falls. This is a good place to stop, rest, and have lunch.

On your return trip you can either backtrack down Ponytail Falls Trail or take the Oneonta Gorge Trail back to the Highway where, after ½ mile, it leads you back to the Horsetail Falls parking area. It's roughly the same distance either route you chose.

In the summer, you may want to put on some shorts and sandals and hike into Oneonta Gorge. The cold clear water of the creek covers the floor wall to wall and never gets more than waist deep. Looking up, fir and cedar trees form a canopy over the rounded moss and fern covered walls. After approximately ½ mile you come to a little known, and rarely visited 100 foot falls.

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

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