



View of Mount Hood.

PHOTOS BY MATT REEDER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

Hood River adventure

Road trip wraps hiking, biking, whitewater rafting into four days

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Mount Hood and the White Salmon River are two of the Pacific Northwest's most iconic natural landmarks.

One is Oregon's tallest mountain, while the other features the Northwest's most thrilling whitewater.

Bring them together on a four-day road trip that includes camping, hiking, waterfalls and biking, and you have a perfect adventure for the active family.

This road trip is centered around the eastern side of Mount Hood — the mountain's quieter side — and the Hood River area.

DAY 1

MORNING/AFTERNOON: Hiking Elk Meadows, Mount Hood

Leave Salem in the morning and head northeast toward Mount Hood and Government Camp. Stop in town for lunch if you desire — a good bet is Mount Hood Brewing Company — before heading east on Highway 35 for 10.7 miles, passing the turnoff for Mount Hood Meadows, and turning left into Elk Meadows Trailhead.

Elk Meadows is a sublime alpine paradise on the eastern side of Mount Hood with postcard-worthy views of Oregon's tallest mountain. The hike is 6 miles round-trip with about 1,100 feet of climb, making it challenging but doable for most people.

You'll cross Clark and Newton creeks amid a forested setting before the trail switchbacks up Newton Canyon to Elk Meadows. Wonderful picnic areas can be found here, as well as plenty of backcountry campsites. A trail circles the meadow.

AFTERNOON/EVENING: Nottingham Campground

The hike should take three to four hours, making it late afternoon by the time you're finished. Once you return to your car, it's time to find a campsite.

The best option is Nottingham Campground, a mere 7 miles up Highway 35. There are 23 first-come, first-served sites here, and use is light to medium. Many campgrounds are along the East Fork Hood River, amid a tranquil forested setting.

Set your tent up, and enjoying the evening.

DAY 2

MORNING/AFTERNOON: Tamanawas Falls

Wake up and take your time with breakfast, enjoying the sound of the river nearby.

Once you're ready to get moving, jump into your car and head north on Highway 35 a grand total of ... 4 miles. The trailhead for Tamanawas Falls is on the left side of Highway 35.

A beautiful hike in any season along Cold Springs Creek, though old-growth forest and over wooden footbridges, leads to 100-foot cascade. This waterfall

4 day road trip

DAY 1: Hiking to Elk Meadows on Mount Hood and camping at Nottingham Campground along the East Fork Hood River.

DAY 2: Hiking Tamanawas Falls, swimming in the Columbia River

DAY 3: Whitewater rafting on the White Salmon River

DAY 4: Bike riding from Hood River to Mosier

WHAT YOU NEED: Camping gear and food for at least one night, and maybe two or three, depending on your preference, hiking boots, snacks, sandwiches.

PLAN IN ADVANCE: Contact one of the outfitters on the White Salmon River (see list at bottom of the story) to reserve a whitewater rafting trip.

hike is 4 miles round-trip, which is nice because it gets you out and away from the highway noise, and the falls itself is stunning. From the trailhead, follow East Fork Trail for half a mile, then be on the lookout for a junction with Cold Springs Trail, where you turn left and hike another 1.4 miles to the falls.

AFTERNOON / EVENING: Hood River (town) and Columbia River swimming

After enjoying everything that Tamanawas Falls offers, return to your car and prepare to make a decision.

The easiest option is to follow Highway 35 into Hood River and reserve two nights at one of the city's many hotels. Great restaurants, shopping and all things civilized beckon in the recreation capital of the Columbia River Gorge.

However, if you want to camp for two nights, a great option is Memaloose State Park, 17 miles east near The Dalles. Memaloose, home to over 100 sites, sits amid large oak trees far enough from Interstate 84 that traffic noise isn't a big issue.

Either way, spend the evening swimming in the Columbia River. Good spots to swim include Hood River's Waterfront Park or Koberg Beach State Park.

DAY 3

ALL DAY: White Salmon River rafting

Head to the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge, and prepare for adventure.

The White Salmon River offers the most beautiful and thrilling single-day river trip in the Pacific Northwest.

The rapids are big and fast, and if you choose the full-day option, you can boat through the former site of Condit Dam, which was removed in 2012.

The cost isn't cheap. With a guided outfitter, a half day trip is around \$65 per person while a full day-trip averages around \$110 per person. Both are certainly worthwhile, however.

River flows allowing, you'll have the option of running Class V Husum Falls, a 12-foot waterfall that provides one of the biggest rafting thrills in the West.

Budget most of the day for rafting the



Tamanawas Falls on the east side of Mount Hood.

White Salmon. After you're finished on the river, the small towns of White Salmon and Husum make for some fun exploring.

DAY 4

ALL DAY: Bike riding to Mosier

For the final day in the Hood River area, jump onto a bicycle and ride one of the most scenic car-free routes in Oregon to a small town with cherries, fun restaurants, a beautiful swimming hole and a trail packed with wildflowers in spring.

BIKE: If you didn't bring your own bikes, you can rent them in Hood River from Discover Bicycles, Mountain View Cycles or any number of great shops.

THE ROUTE: Start at the Mark O. Hatfield West Trailhead, located on the east side of town, and follow this historic, car-free highway 4.7 miles one-way past spectacular views, historic bridges and to the Twin Tunnels Trailhead. Follow Rock Creek Road another 0.7 miles into Mosier, where there are a ton of ways to spend your time.

FRUIT: Mosier is famous for cherries, and you'll find lots of fruit stands when

cherries are in season. You-pick cherries can be had at Evans Fruit Company (which you can reach on bike, but bring a good backpack).

HIKING/SWIMMING HOLES: From the middle of town, lock up your bike and follow the Mosier Plateau Trail to beautiful blooms of wildflowers in spring, along with a waterfall and swimming hole in summer.

RESTAURANTS: There are a handful of restaurants in town, both coffee shops and cafes. One good bet is The Thirsty Woman Pub, which opens at 2 p.m. and features music, pub fare and drinks. Rack & Cloth is another well-regarded destination, with craft ciders, local wines, draft beers and seasonal off-farm-to-table foods.

Once you've had your fill of Mosier, ride your bikes back to Hood River and head back home to Salem.

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