

Trail

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Travel to Hood River today, and you'll find a town that specializes in craft breweries and touristy restaurants excellent for grabbing a quality bite to eat before heading out to bike, hike or ski.

But around 150 years ago, this river and stopping point for pioneers heading west was known for consumption of far less delectable cuisine: dog meat.

"In pioneer days, some travelers, being in a starving condition, ate dog meat near Hood River, and the name Dog River was the result," says "Oregon Geographic Names," the much-celebrated tome of the state's name origins.

Yes, the now-touristy Hood River valley was originally named for having Fido on the menu.

The somber moniker didn't last, of course, thanks to Mrs. Mary Coe, a well-known pioneer resident who succeeded in changing local usage to Hood River, on account of the river's source.

On a map dated 1852, Dog River was out and Hood River was in.

Yet the disgraced Dog River hasn't gone away completely. Rather, it's been banished to a place where conscientious Portland tourists are less likely to be offended — unless they want to go for a nice hike.

Head south on Highway 35 from Hood River for about 20 miles and you'll come to a trailhead that begins a pathway tracing its way along a stream that retains the doggone name.

The trailhead is large and on the side of the highway. It's a popular trail for mountain biking, so if you're hiking, keep your head up and be aware of bikes that might be flying down the trail.

From the trailhead, you reach a wooden bridge and cross not Dog River, but its companion Puppy Creek. As far as I know, there's no sinister history surrounding Puppy Creek, so rest easy.

The trail then climbs along a ridge above Dog River itself, which stays out of view. The dry forest here is pretty interesting. Because the Hood River Valley sits right on the edge of the rain shadow between the wet west side and the dry east side of the Cascades, you'll come across both old-growth Douglas fir, classic tree of the west side, and the burned-orange ponderosa pine, tree of the dry side.

To see the two giants standing side by side is pretty fun, if for no other reason than you don't see it in too many places. Also, they're just cool trees.

After 1.7 miles, the trail reaches a wooden bridge crossing the disgraced Dog River, and I got to put eyes on it for the first time. Alas, I didn't see the ghost of any ingested canines rising in the mist to demand justice for a wrongful death. Overall, it's a pretty nondescript stream with clear and cool water.

Beyond that, the trail rises gradually,



The Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail between Hood River and Mosier offers some outstanding views of the Columbia River Gorge. ROBYN ORR/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL



The Dog River Trail, south of Hood River, features old-growth forest, clear streams and a great view of Mount Hood.

PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL



climbing a little over 1,000 feet to two knockout views of Mount Hood that are worth the price of admission.

The hike can continue farther, but after the Hood views and splashing myself in Dog River, I had accomplished what I came for and turned around to head back to my car.

On a practical level, Dog River Trail is great if you mountain bike or if you want to hike in the off-season, as the trail starts at a pretty low elevation and provides access most of the year.

Still, I think it's fun to hike just be-

cause it brings to life an oddball story in Oregon's history.

Dog River Trail

In a nutshell: A pathway south of Hood River with views of Mount Hood and old-growth forest with a fun history.

Length: 5.3 miles one-way; about 5.5 to 6 miles out-and-back to views of Mount Hood.

Difficulty: Moderate. There are some steep climbs to the view of Mount Hood.

Directions: From Hood River, travel

approximately 18.5 miles south on Oregon Hwy 35, approximately 0.1 mile southwest of milepost 78, to the parking area on the south side of the road.

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and hawks," Hans said.

Decaying salmon also provide food for insects and other aquatic species.

And when a bear or another critter drags a dead salmon on the bank, some remains after the feast to feed the trees and plants.

"And when trees fall into the river, that's where the young salmon live, so the trees need the salmon, and the salmon need the trees (to provide cover and to make pools), and it's kind of a symbiotic relationship with the salmon and the trees," Hans said, then laughed, "although the salmon don't know they're part of that."

Need proof?

"We find what's called marine-derived nutrients ... elements that only exist in the ocean; we find those in the cambium (growth) layer of the trees next to salmon-bearing streams, so we know that these trees are taking up nutrients from the salmon."

Calls of concern

Seeing a pile of dead salmon on the river bank this time of year has sparked calls of suspected poaching.

"The females will have their bellies split open and the eggs removed (when spawning them at the hatcheries)," Hans said. "So sometimes they'll see this big pile of like 20 dead females with their bellies cut open and they'll think, 'Oh, someone has gone in and stolen the eggs.'"

The tell for STEP-planted salmon is a missing tail, she said.

Those are cut off prior to being dropped off so that counters who walk the rivers and tributaries looking for spawning and post-spawning non-hatchery wild Chinook won't count them.

"That's another indication. If the belly's cut open and the tail's cut off, these fish came from the hatchery," Hans said.

Some also will have a snout removed when an embedded coded-wire identification tag is detected.



Marie Heuberger, an Oregon State University student and Salmon Trout Enhancement Program (STEP) volunteer, gets ready to pick up a Chinook salmon carcass to fork into the North Santiam River. TIM AKIMOFF/ODFW

Nature takes over

Once the salmon carcasses have been dropped in the river, rain raised water levels, critters and birds take over-spreading the wealth.

"Depending on how cold the water is, these fish will start to decompose, and that will create gas in the tissues, and that gas will form and bloat the fish," Hans said. "Then they'll float up and go downstream."

Watch your pooch

"The blood of raw salmon can contain

salmon poisoning; it's caused by an organism in the blood," Hans said. "And if a dog eats raw salmon, they can become very sick. And it's often fatal."

"It's a fluke (parasitic flatworm) that has a bacteria living on it. The fluke is harmless. It's the bacteria that make the dog sick."

Don't wait for symptoms such as vomiting or diarrhea to take action, salmon poisoning can lead to death by dehydration.

"What's really important is if you see your dog around dead salmon, take them immediately to the veterinarian," Hans said. "And they'll give them an

antibiotic as a prophylactic treatment, and that's going to cost you maybe about 100 bucks.

"But if your dog gets sick, that's going to cost you maybe thousands because the dog's going to need to be hospitalized and put on fluids."

"And you hope you can save the dog."

Thought for the week: Anyone who's gone through their fishing gear at the end of the summer recreation season understands why it's called "tackle."

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