

## Lookout

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### Hiking to the top

There are several ways to reach the Devil's Peak Lookout. I opted to take the Cool Creek Trail, which is popular among those venturing up. Some choose to add extra distance by taking the Hunchback Ridge Trail, which tracks twelve miles round-trip.

Cool Creek Trail is shorter at about 4.1 miles — or 8.2 miles round-trip — but it's not easy, especially with an overnight pack. From the trailhead, the path provides no opportunity to warm up, as it immediately starts ascending at a 45 degree angle.

The trail continues and this angle fluctuates but it remains aggressively uphill. The track ultimately gains about 3,100 feet and I found myself thankful for bringing hiking poles.

There are few sweeping views to distract from the uphill climb. Occasionally glimpses of Mount Hood can be caught through the trees, hinting at what waits ahead. However, most of the easy-to-follow trail is deep in the forest, completely surrounded by towering evergreens, ferns and yellowing shrubs.

Bears and cougars frequent this part of the woods, according to multiple signs at the trailhead. Encounters with cougars are rare and fatalities from these encounters even rarer but it is important to be familiar with cougar safety before heading out on the trail.

### Arriving at the fire lookout

A little less than half a

mile before the lookout, a steep user trail shoots off to the left. I dropped my pack at this junction and scrambled up the small hill to a rocky ridge. From the ridge, green, forested hills march out towards the horizon and Mount Hood towers above them.

Upon returning to the main trail, I continued a little ways until reaching a junction, where Cool Creek merges with Hunchback. To the right, the trail tracks for a tenth of a mile before reaching another junction with a sign for Devil's Peak to the left. From there, peering up the trail will reveal the first glimpse of the lookout through the trees.

From the top of the lookout steps, a view of Mount Hood immediately greets the weary hiker. Following the raised platform around offers sprawling views of green ridges and the forest that surrounds the structure.

After taking in the views, I unlatched the door and stepped into the cabin. The inside stands as a testament to the dedication of volunteers and other hikers, who have kept the lookout stocked and clean long after it was abandoned by the Forest Service.

A wood stove stands in one corner, with firewood stacked behind it. An axe rests nearby for people to cut more.

Two cots are positioned on either side of the space and an ice chest offers provisions that other hikers left behind. Tucked next to one of the cots is a guitar.

Binoculars rest on a table, along with cleaning supplies and a ukulele. Games are tucked away on a shelf, including cards, a makeshift cribbage board with matches as pegs and a puzzle.

On another table is a stack of notebooks, signed by visitors to the lookout, going back a decade. The notebooks tell stories of a proposal that happened on the peak, of game nights with strangers that met at the hut, of special occasions celebrated there and more. There are scores from games that happened years ago and drawings of scenes around the lookout. Many talk of the stunning views, the weather, the challenging trail and vow to come back again.

Signs explore visitors to leave the lookout as nicely as they found it and to clean up food to keep the rodents who inhabit the lookout at bay.

When the weather is good, the shutters around the lookout can be opened. Propping the



A quick scramble off the trail leads to a ridge that offers views of Mount Hood and surrounding forest.



From the fire lookout's platform, ridges and forest can be seen. PHOTOS BY EDDY BINFORD-ROSS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

door will also allow visitors to enjoy a framed view of Mount Hood from inside.

### Overnight stays are prohibited

Although the books tell stories of overnight stays and the lookout appears to be set up to accommodate that, staying overnight in the lookout is prohibited by the Forest Service, due to safety issues.

"It's closed to overnight use, because we don't really maintain it for human occupancy. You don't have safety inspections of it, nor is there any regular maintenance," Ibsen said.

Instead, hikers are left with a couple options, camp out on the peak or in the woods nearby or make their trip to the lookout a day hike.

Setting up a tent on the peak itself offers better views and closer proximity to the lookout for evening and morning use. This spot is unique and where I would recommend staying most of the time. However, the exposed nature of the area makes for challenging camping when the weather is bad. There is little to block wind gusts or pouring rain.

On nights when there is potential for wind or downpours, I suggest camping in the woods nearby for more protection from the elements and a calmer rest. So, the choice of where to spend the night is highly dependent on the conditions of that day and personal preference.

### A jarring hike down

Even on days when the weather is not clear, Devil's Peak offers a unique experience. When I woke up the next morning, the peak itself was shrouded in clouds and a drizzle persisted.

I spent the morning up in the relative coziness of the lookout looking out into the misty trees, before heading back down the trail. The downhill is steep and jarring to the joints, however, the descent is much faster than the ascent.

### Snowshoe up in the winter

The lookout remains accessible in the winter and spring, although deep snow blankets parts of the trail. The promise of an enclosed space and a fire to warm up makes it a popular winter destination, especially on days when the sky is clear.

To access the peak during the winter and spring, use the same Cool Creek Trail and trailhead. In these months, the use of snowshoes or microspikes, depending on the snow, is necessary.

### The history of Devil's Peak

Devil's Peak Lookout was built sometime in the 1930s or early 40s. It operated as a fully functioning fire lookout for the Forest Service, until the agency began phasing out the use of them, in favor of other technology for spotting fires.

As part of this action, Devil's Peak was officially decommissioned more than 25 years ago.

For a period of time in the late 1900s, the Forest Service had a policy of burning or tearing down lookouts that were not in use anymore, because of public safety concerns. This policy eventually ended, as the agency began to focus on preservation, but not before many lookouts were destroyed, according to Ibsen.

Ibsen added that this shift ultimately saved Devil's Peak, as its official decommissioning came after the policy ended.

There are few fire lookouts left across Oregon today that are still accessible to people, making Devil's Peak a unique location. A handful are still fully functional and used for spotting fires in summer months. Others are available to rent online. However, many more have succumbed to the elements or been torn

down by the Forest Service.

Devil's Peak stands as a reminder of the recent history of fire management, a testament to volunteers and a refuge from the elements.

### Enjoy the area before heading home

The trailhead is in close proximity to well-known spots in the Mount Hood National Forest.

Government Camp is twelve miles away, offering food and lodging, any time of year. I stopped for a hot meal at the Huckleberry Inn after finishing the hike, before heading home.

Mount Hood Meadows, offering recreation opportunities in the winter, is 23 miles away and the iconic Timberline Lodge is nearby as well.

### Devil's Peak Via Cool Creek Trail

**In a nutshell:** A trail west of Government Camp that tracks up to an abandoned lookout with views of Mount Hood and the surrounding forest.

**Length:** 4.10 miles both ways with an elevation gain of 3,150.

**Difficulty:** Challenging. The trail is quite steep in many sections.

**Directions:** About two hours from Salem. From Sandy, travel approximately 18 miles east on US-26. Turn right on Still Creek Road/Rd 10 and trail approximately 3.4 miles to the trailhead. The trail will be on the right side of the road, park on the shoulder.

**Coordinates:** 45.29745, -121.88432  
*Eddy Binford-Ross is the Outdoors Intern at the Statesman Journal. Contact her at ebinfordross@statesmanjournal.com or follow on Twitter @eddybinfordross.*

## Obituaries



Sharon P. Mares-Hudinchia

SALEM - Sharon passed away peacefully in her home on the afternoon of October 15, 2021 at the age of 68. She was born on March 4, 1953 in Baltimore, MD, to John and Clara Kadingo. She graduated from Western Oregon State College with a Masters Degree in Speech and Language Therapy, and taught for most of her career as a Special Education teacher at Silverton's Butte Creek Elementary School and at the Willamette ESD. She retired early for health reasons, but enjoyed many years of raising roses and gardening at her rural home just west of Silverton. She continued to share friendship with her teacher friends as well as shared many special times with her dear friend Fritz Jeniches from Keizer, OR. She will be remembered mostly for her witty remarks, kind smile and pleasant personality. Services will be held at Unger Funeral Chapel in Silverton, Oregon on November 10 at 10:00 am.

## Obituaries

### Carolyn Berg

SILVERTON - 7/3/1935-10/22/2021 Carolyn Berg loved by many.

Carolyn Berg was born, on the sidewalk, in Yuma, Arizona, on July 3, 1935 to John F. and Fay Cox Ham. She passed from this life on October 22, 2021 in Silverton.

Those who knew her will tell you that Carolyn was one of the most selfless people around. She was a loving and dedicated wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend.

Carolyn was the office manager at the Silverton Appeal-Tribune, starting in the early 1970's and retired after 35 years. In 2003 Carolyn was recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award for the town of Silverton. She later helped found Our Town, in Mount Angel. In retirement, she volunteered her time at the Silverton Hospital and Silverton Elks Lodge #2210. She enjoyed spending time with family, and most recently found a new love of trailer camping.

Carolyn was preceded in death by her husband, Keith Berg.

She is survived by her 3 children, John (wife Judy), Alan (wife Kendra) and Pam. Her 9 grandchildren; 5 great-grandchildren; as well as her best friend, Chuck DeGuire and his family, and many other friends and extended family.

May she rest in eternal peace.

There will be a short service at Silverton First Christian Church on November 6th, 2021 at 11:30am. A Celebration of Life immediately following at the Silverton Elks Lodge.

## Miller

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### Low tides, low light

Given the wind and weather of late, I almost hesitate to mention it, but...

On the plus side, there are several very low minus tides the first weekend in November.

On the downside, in addition to the potential for rain and storm surges, the tides are well after dark several nights after the new (no) moon that falls on Nov. 4.

If we get a break in the weather (yea, right), and you've got lanterns and/or headlamps, lows are: minus-2.21 feet at 8:50 p.m. (sunset's at 5:55) on Nov. 6, minus-2.03 feet at 8:38 p.m. on Nov. 27 at Garibaldi on the north end of Tillamook Bay.

Other sites/times: minus-1.27 feet at

8:58 p.m. Nov. 6, minus-1.20 feet at 8:49 p.m. Nov. 7 at Taft on Siletz Bay south of Lincoln City; minus-1.9 feet at 7:35 p.m. Nov. 6, minus-2.12 feet at 8:12 p.m. on Nov. 7 at South Beach on Yaquina Bay (Newport); and finally, minus-1.7 feet at 8:44 p.m. on Nov. 6, minus-1.58 feet at 8:34 p.m. on Nov. 7 on Alsea Bay at Waldport.

Whoopee!

Or not.

Storm watching is also fun.

And, as always, be sure to check that clamming is open before heading out by calling the Oregon Department of Agriculture's toll-free shellfish biotoxin hotline at (800) 448-2474 or go to <https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/Shellfish/>

**Thought for the week:** To mangle a well-known judicial quote, a fishing story is not a sworn affidavit.

Contact Henry via email at [Henry-MillerSJ@gmail.com](mailto:Henry-MillerSJ@gmail.com)