

05

COYOTE WALL-THE LABYRINTH

KEY AT-A-GLANCE
INFORMATION

LENGTH: 4.6 miles just to the top of the wall, 5.2 miles to include the Labyrinth

CONFIGURATION: Out-and-back with optional side loop

DIFFICULTY: Moderate

SCENERY: Cliff-top vistas, wide-open country, spring wildflowers

EXPOSURE: Along a cliff at times, and out in the open almost the whole way

TRAFFIC: Heavy on spring weekends, light otherwise

TRAIL SURFACE: Dirt; can be slick when wet

HIKING TIME: 3 hours

DRIVING DISTANCE: 69 miles (1 hour 15 minutes) from Pioneer Square

SEASON: Year-round

BEST TIME: March–May

ACCESS: No fee

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: First half mile on an old paved road

MAPS: USGS White Salmon

FACILITIES: None at the trailhead

INFO: Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, (541) 308-1700

IN BRIEF

Let's say it's springtime, at least according to the calendar, but Portland is socked-in and wet. Go east, young hiker!—to the high and dry lands of the Columbia River Gorge, where flowers bloom, birds croon, and Coyote Wall looms.

Note: In 2010, as this book went to press, the trails around Coyote Wall and the Labyrinth were subject to a large-scale planning process that may have resulted in significant changes. Call ahead or check online to get the latest information.

DESCRIPTION

Standing at the trailhead, looking up at Coyote Wall, one might feel a bit intimidated. Fear not, for the way is gradual and the work much rewarding. Just walk around the gate and follow the old road along Locke Lake, and eventually around the base of the wall itself. Turn left at the first cairn leading uphill, and immediately you're faced with numerous trailheads. Mountain bikers zip through here in every direction, but our path is always the one to the left and uphill.

Soon, the trail you're on (actually an old jeep road) is the only one around; you'll

GPS Trailhead
Coordinates

UTM Zone (WGS84) 10T

Easting 624310

Northing 5059990

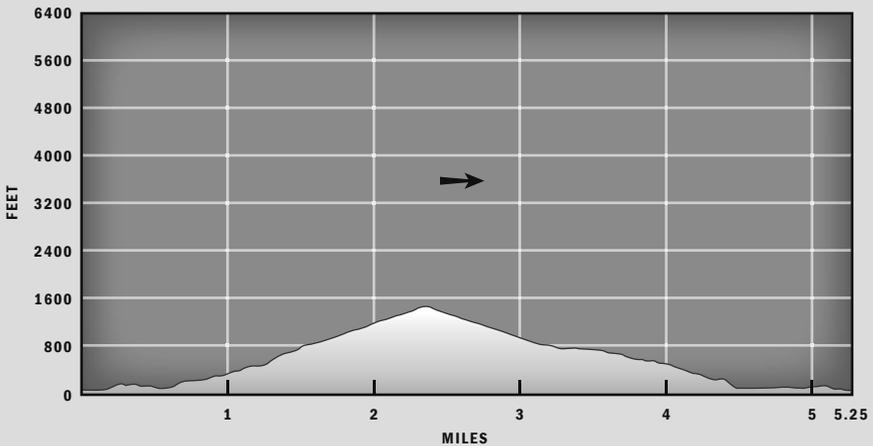
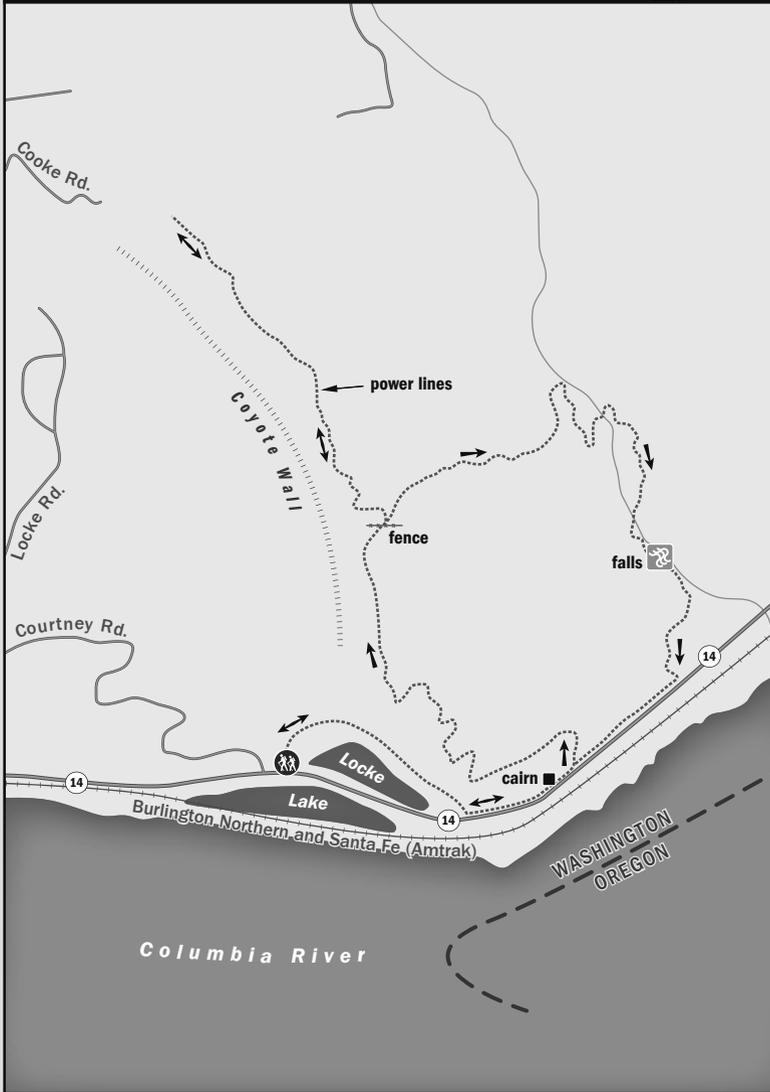
Latitude N 45.68231°

Longitude W 121.40371°

Directions →

Take I-84 from Portland, driving 57 miles east of I-205 to Exit 64, the third exit for Hood River, Oregon. Turn left at the end of the ramp, following signs for White Salmon, Washington. Pay a 75-cent toll to cross the Columbia River, then turn right on WA 14. Go 4.6 miles, turn left onto Courtney Road, and look for parking 100 yards ahead on the left.

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The Columbia River, as seen through a notch in Coyote Wall

follow it up the edge of the wall—though rarely too close to the edge to be of concern. Just less than a mile up, you reach a fence, where you have to make a choice. You can keep going up the wall or cut over to the Labyrinth—or, of course, go up the wall and then come back here and add the loop. This final loop is what the elevation profile for this hike shows.

If you're going up, stay to the left and follow a switchbacking trail that's more scenic (and less destructive) than the super-steep jeep road. After 1.2 miles of steep and steady climbing, generally through a sea of flowers with views behind you to the Columbia and Mount Hood, you'll reach a junction with several old roads at the head of the wall, close to an area with plenty of big logs to rest on. In the olden days (well, in earlier editions of this book), I encouraged hikers to explore various roads and trails in this area before connecting to the Catherine Creek trip (hike 3, page 20). But concerns about erosion and private-land rights caused the Forest Service to reevaluate the whole thing, and so, to avoid conflict, and to avoid the hassle of describing an unsigned network of social trails and private land, I'll just say, "Enjoy the view and then head back down the trail you came up." However, if they have added official trails by the time you get there, explore on your own; it's a great area.

Back at the fence, follow a trail leading east into the Labyrinth. I will, again, not try to describe an unsigned (in 2009, anyway) network of trails, and instead I'll just say, "Go wandering around in the Labyrinth; it's really cool." True to its



Headed toward the Labyrinth

name, this area can get confusing, with trails weaving between basalt pillars and through pocket meadows. The bottom line, though, is that if you keep heading downhill and to the right, you will emerge on the abandoned highway very near where you first left it to head up Coyote Wall.

The Labyrinth is filled with hidden wonders: waterfalls, a small cave, small buttes to climb, and hidden meadows filled with flowers. So take your time, have faith, and enjoy yourself. And if, since this book was published, the Forest Service has built and signed trails in the area, you'll have an easier time finding your way around. But I also think you (we) will perhaps have lost some opportunity for adventure.

NEARBY ACTIVITIES

Bingen is worth a stop on the way home, especially for its slightly bizarre combination coffee–antiques shop, called Antiques and Oddities.