



Trail Guide: A Walk Through Time

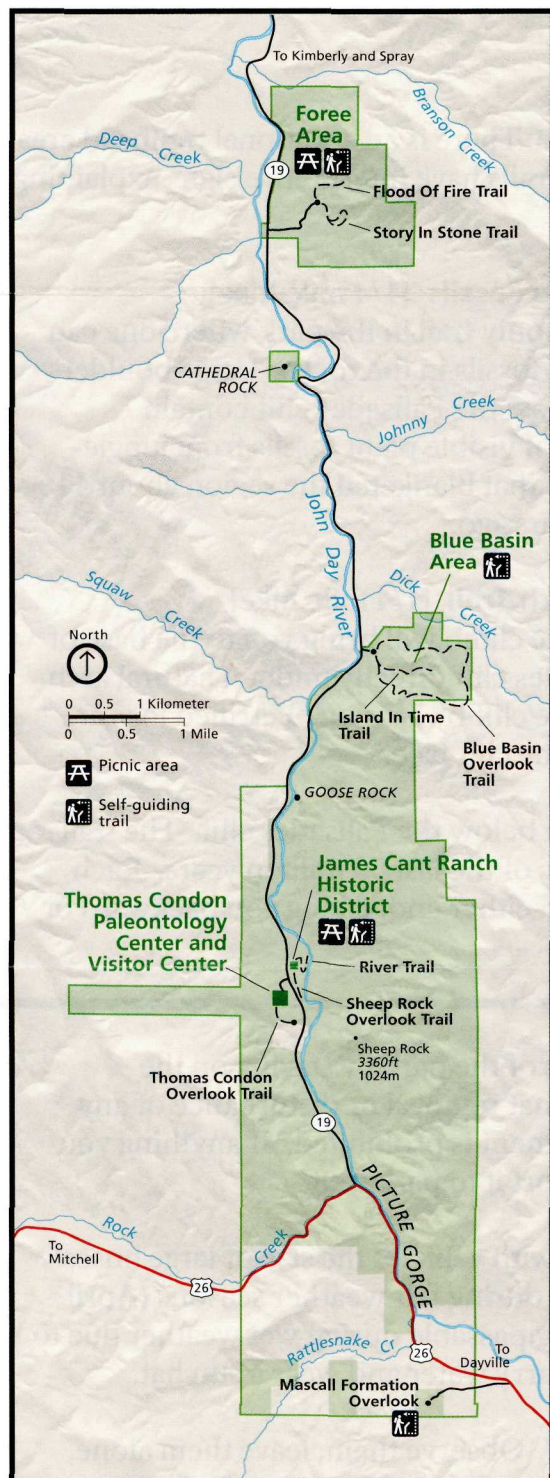
As you hike through the rugged badlands of the John Day Fossil Beds, beneath your boots the past is present. Where now you see an arid sagebrush steppe was once a lush, tropical jungle. The landscape where coyotes and elk now roam were once inhabited by rhinos, elephants and sabertooth predators.

The 40-million year story of these prehistoric animals and their environment is revealed in the remains they left behind. Discover this story of life and death, destruction and rebirth, as you explore the trails of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.



Sheep Rock Unit

Near Dayville, Oregon, at the intersection of Hwy's 26 & 19



Flood of Fire Trail [Foree Area; 1/4 mile]

This gently ascending trail ends at a grand viewpoint of the river valley from atop a steep cliff.

CAUTION: Be careful near the cliff edge.

Story In Stone Trail [Foree Area; 1/4 mile]

This trail, accessible to those in wheelchairs, features touch exhibits with replica fossils. The trail offers short and long-range views of colorful landscapes.

Blue Basin Overlook Trail [Blue Basin Area; 3 miles]

Climbing approximately 600 feet to the upper rim of Blue Basin, this trail provides breathtaking views down into the basin and grand vistas of the John Day River Valley. This is the park's longest trail. (*moderate to strenuous; muddy when wet*)

Island In Time Trail [Blue Basin Area; 1 mile round trip]

This gentle trail ascends along the canyon floor of blue-green badlands, which scientists have prospected for fossils since the late 1800's. Exhibits and fossil replicas tell the story of these remarkable exposures along this popular trail.

River Trail [James Cant Ranch; 1/2 mile]

Accessible to those in wheelchairs, this trail leads down to the John Day River. Trail exhibits feature the modern natural and cultural surroundings.

Sheep Rock Overlook Trail [James Cant Ranch; 1/2 mile]

Starting at the front gate, this trail ends at an overlook with a great view of the river valley with Sheep Rock beyond.

Thomas Condon Overlook Trail [Visitor Center; 1/2 mile]

This trail ends at an overlook with a view of the river valley and Sheep Rock. It begins at the south end of the parking lot.

Mascall Formation Overlook [South of Picture Gorge]

Grand views and natural history exhibits of the John Day Valley and Picture Gorge await one here.

PAINTED HILLS UNIT

West of Mitchell, Oregon, off of Hwy 26

Carroll Rim Trail [1 ½ miles round trip]

The trail ascends a few hundred feet in elevation to an overlook of the entire region, with a bird's-eye view of the Painted Hills and a bench at the end to relax and enjoy the view.

Painted Hills Overlook Trail [1/2 mile]

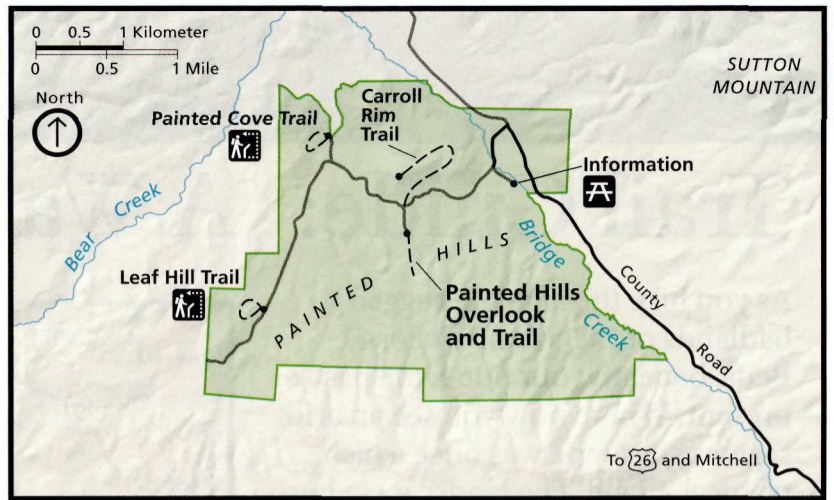
This trail offers incredible panoramas of the colorful Painted Hills. Benches are placed along the trail for a relaxing stop to enjoy this fascinating landscape.

Painted Cove Trail [1/4 mile hike]

With a multitude of colors, this trail is like a giant artist's palette. Here, one can actually walk among the red and gold claystone hills along a boardwalk accessible to those in wheelchairs. Bring your camera! Interpretive signs illuminate the geologic story.

Leaf Hill Trail [1/4 mile hike]

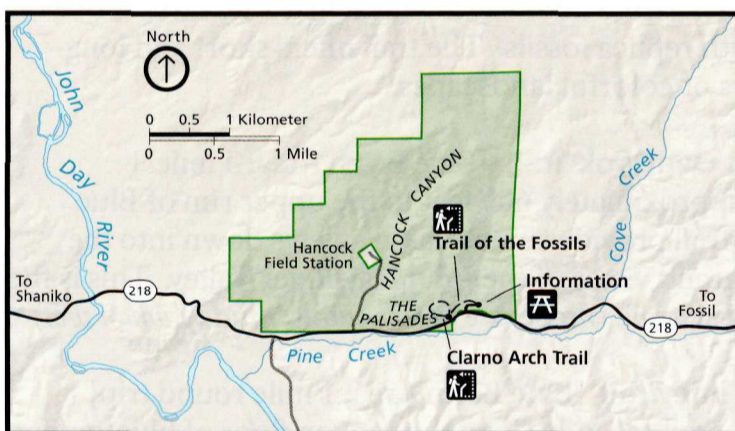
Accessible to those in wheelchairs, this drab looking hill was the scene of important scientific studies in the 1920's and 1990's. Thousands of leaf fossils found here helped give us our first glimpse of an ancient ecosystem 33 million years in age. A few fossils are on exhibit.



CLARNO UNIT

18 miles west of Fossil, Oregon, on Hwy 218

The three trails listed below begin from the trailhead parking area. There is an additional trailhead area 1/4 mile west of the picnic area along Hwy 218. Stops along the trails have interpretive signs explaining the landscape and unseen aspects of the resource.



Trail of the Fossils [1/4 mile hike]

This is the only trail in the park where one can readily see fossils in the rocks. Large boulders strewn below the Palisades cliff contain hundreds of visible plant fossils from jungle-like forests that blanketed the region about 44 million years ago.

Clarno Arch Trail [1/4 mile hike]

A moderate climb will bring you to the base of the Palisades cliff directly under a natural arch cut into the cliff by erosion. Petrified logs are visible in the cliff face.

Geologic Time Trail [1/4 mile one way]

This trail connects the picnic area and trailhead area, leading you below the Palisades cliff. The trail represents a timeline. Signs along the way note prehistoric events of the last 50 million years. Each foot of trail represents 37,000 years. The trail may be started from either end, taking you backward or forward in time.



While hiking, help protect the natural features of the park by staying on the established, marked trails. Please remember that removal or disturbance of any natural or cultural resources within the monument is prohibited. If anything you see during your visit concerns you, please report it to park staff.

All monument parking areas can be accessed with vehicles the size of large buses. Picnic areas have tables, restrooms, and water during fair weather seasons (April – October). Trails are open all year but may be impassable during wet weather due to mud. Sturdy footwear is recommended. In the summer, please carry water and wear a sun hat.

Snakes, including rattlesnakes, are sometimes seen along the trail. Observe them, leave them alone, and give them room. This is their home.