

John Day Fossil Beds

National Monument
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

TRAILS

GENERAL INFORMATION

These fossil beds must be experienced intimately to be appreciated. The trails in the three units take you close to major, but fragile, features that cannot be viewed by car.

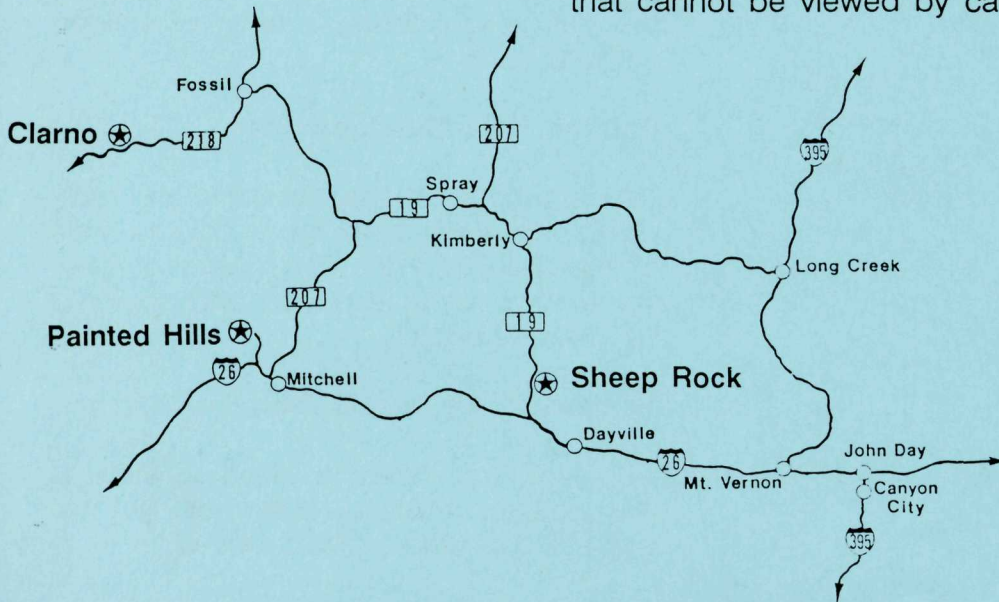
Trails are open all year but may be impassable during wet weather.

Help protect the natural resources by staying on all trails. Removal or disturbance of any natural feature in the monument is prohibited.

In summer, high temperatures increase your need for liquids. Carry water, and wear a hat and sturdy footwear.

Rattlesnakes, though uncommon, are sometimes seen along the trails. Give them plenty of room.

Additional information can be obtained at the visitor center in the Sheep Rock Unit or from any park ranger.



Sheep Rock Unit

Distances are round trip

FOREE AREA

Flood of Fire Trail

1/4 mile

This gently ascending trail crosses a ridge to a viewpoint overlooking the John Day River Valley and the surrounding basalt cliffs.

Story In Stone Trail

1/4 mile

This easy trail, featuring touchable exhibits, skirts a basin of blue-green claystone of the John Day Formation. The formation contains fossils of mammals which lived here 25 to 30 million years ago. This trail is traversible by wheelchair with moderate difficulty.

BLUE BASIN AREA

Off-trail use in Blue Basin is prohibited. Small, important but unobservable fossils can easily be destroyed by careless, cross-country hiking.

Island In Time Trail (self-guided)

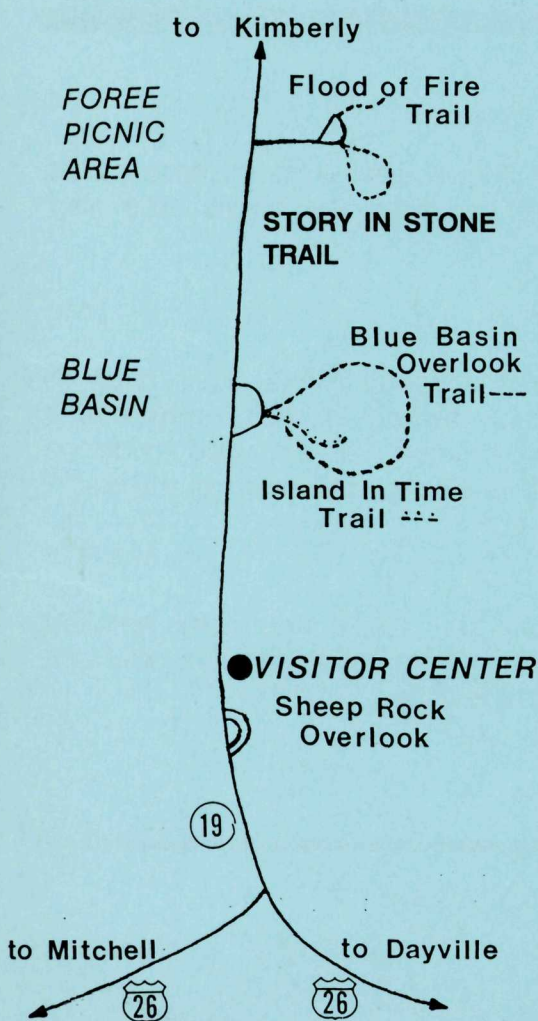
1 mile

This gently ascending trail leads to an amphitheater carved out of the blue-green John Day Formation. The volcanic ash, now turned to claystone, yields a rich variety of vertebrate fossils. Interpretive signs and fossil replicas are included along the trail.

Blue Basin Overlook Trail

3 miles

A strenuous, but rewarding, loop trail brings you to a spectacular vista overlooking the John Day River Valley. It is dusty in places and may be impassable in wet weather. Elevation gain is 600 feet.



Painted Hills Unit

Distances are
round-trip
1 1/2 miles

Carroll Rim Trail

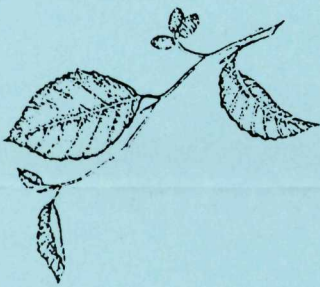
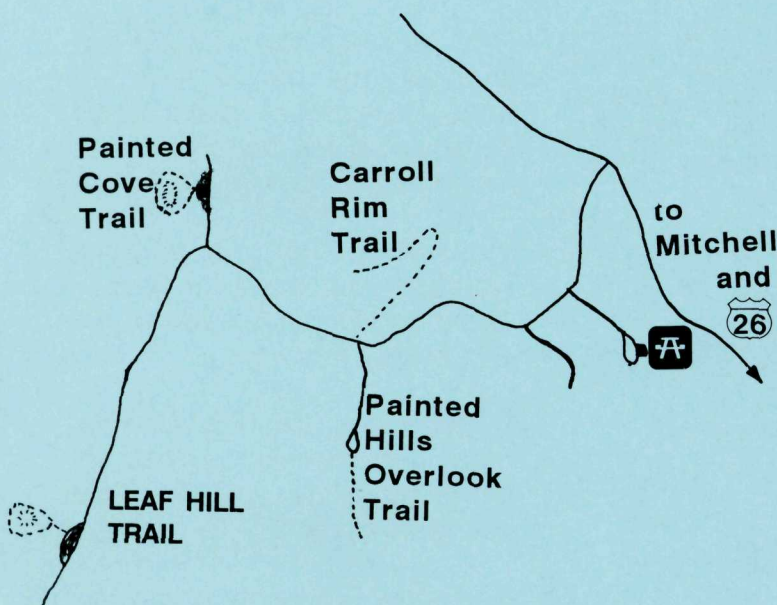
The Carroll Rim trailhead is near the road junction to the Painted Hills Overlook. This moderately strenuous trail leads to the top of Carroll Rim and offers a spectacular view of the Painted Hills and nearby Sutton Mountain. The weather-resistant rock forming the cliffs along the trail is ignimbrite, a layer of welded volcanic ash.

Painted Hills Overlook Trail 1/2 mile

Park your car at the overlook and walk along this easy path for a colorful view of the Painted Hills. The layers of claystone have been exposed and sculpted by water erosion.

Painted Cove Trail (self-guided) 1/4 mile

This loop trail offers a close-up view of the colorful Painted Hills soil. A trail guide is available at the trailhead.



Leaf Hill Trail

1/4 mile

This easy trail circles a hill in which remains from a 30 million-year-old hardwood forest are preserved. Fossil leaf exhibits are along the trail.

Clarno

Trails start at the parking lot 1/4 mile west of the Clarno picnic area on Highway 218. A spur trail from the picnic area also leads to trailheads.

Trail of the Fossils (self-guided)

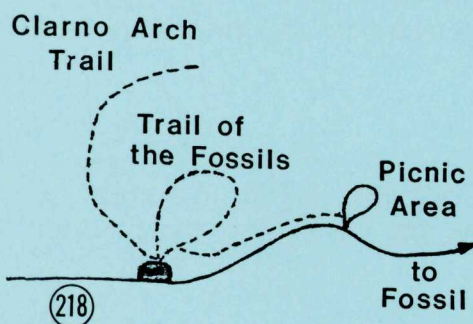
1/4 mile

Watch your footing on this trail of loose rocks. Here over 45 million years ago mudflows, now turned to rock, inundated a subtropical forest. Subsequent erosion has exposed evidence of this past environment which is clearly visible along the trail.

Clarno Arch Trail

1/4 mile

This steep, slippery and rocky trail takes you near petrified logs and limbcasts. At the end of the trail is the Clarno Arch, an unusual, but small, erosional feature.



This guide made possible through visitor donations.