

John Day Fossil Beds

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

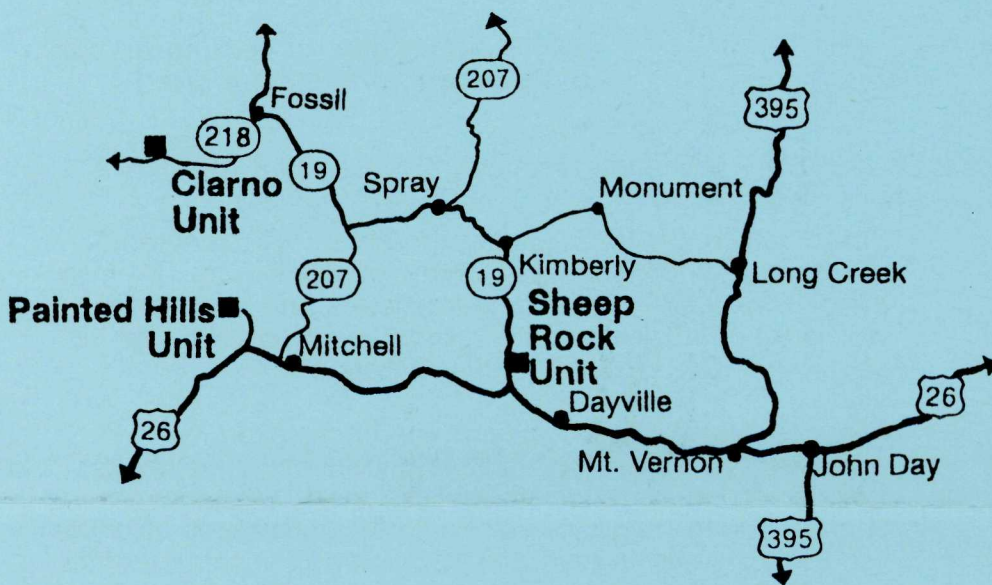


John Day Fossil Beds
National Monument

Park Trails “Walks Through Time”

All three units of the monument have trails, overlooks, and picnic areas. Most of the trails have wayside exhibits. 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 trails. Observe them, leave them alone, and give them plenty of room. This is their home.

North is at the top of all maps

CLARNO UNIT [18 miles west of Fossil, OR, on Route 218]

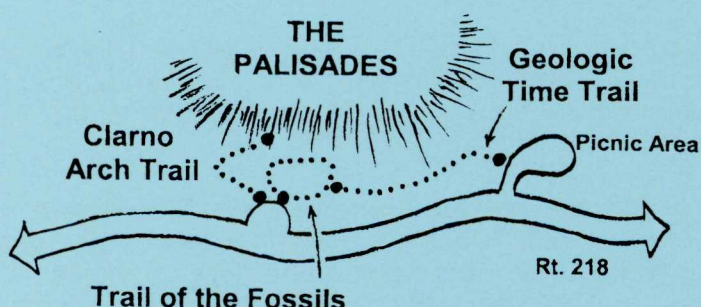
The Palisades trailhead is located 1/4 mile west of the picnic area along Highway 218. The three trails listed below begin from the trailhead parking area. Stops along the trails have interpretive signs explaining the landscape and unseen aspects of the resource.

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 one 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 one below the Palisades cliff. The trail symbolizes a timeline. Signs along the way note pre-historic events of the last 50 million years. Each foot of trail represents 37,000 years. The trail may be started from either end, going backward or forward in time.



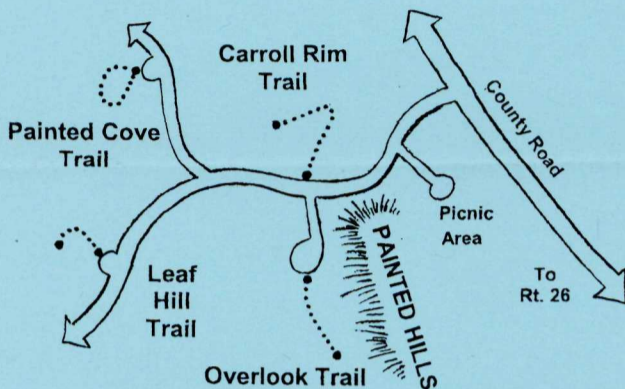
Please remember that collecting fossils in the monument is prohibited. There is an open collecting site within the town of Fossil, located at the High School.

PAINTED HILLS UNIT [ten miles west of Mitchell, OR, off of Route 26]

Carroll Rim Trail [begins from the Painted Hills Overlook, 1 ½ mile hike] – The trail ascends a few hundred feet in elevation to rimrock that overlooks the entire region, with a bird's-eye view of the Painted Hills. A bench to relax and enjoy the view is at the end of the trail.

Painted Hills Overlook Trail [begins at the Painted Hills Overlook, 1/2 mile hike] – This trail provides glimpses of the colorful Painted Hills from several angles. Benches are along the trail.

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. Bring your camera! Interpretive signs at each stop 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.

Please remember, collecting fossils in the monument is prohibited.

SHEEP ROCK UNIT [near Dayville, OR, at the intersection of Routes 26 & 19]

Flood of Fire Trail [begins at the Foree Area located 7 miles north of the Thomas Condon Visitor Center, 1/4 mile hike] – This gently ascending trail leads one to a grand viewpoint of the river valley from atop a steep cliff. *All should use CAUTION near the cliff edge.*

Story In Stone Trail [begins at the Foree Area, 1/4 mile hike] – This trail, accessible to those in wheelchairs, features touch exhibits with replica fossils. The trail offers short and long-range views of colorful landscapes. For the blind and visually impaired, an audiotape description of the trail exhibits is available for loan at the visitor center.

Blue Basin Overlook Trail [begins at the Blue Basin Area located 3 miles north of the Thomas Condon Visitor Center, 3 mile hike] – Climbing several hundred feet to the upper rim of Blue Basin, this trail provides one with scenic views down into the basin and grand views of the John Day River Valley. This is the monument's longest trail.

Island In Time Trail [begins at the Blue Basin Area, 1 mile hike] – This gentle trail ascends along the bottom of a basin 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.

River Trail [begins at the James Cant Ranch parking lot, ½ mile hike] – Accessible to those in wheelchairs, this trail leads one down to the John Day River. Trail exhibits feature the current natural and cultural surroundings.

Sheep Rock Overlook Trail [begins at the James Cant Ranch house, ½ mile hike] – Starting at the front gate, this trail ends at an overlook with a great view of the valley.

Thomas Condon Overlook Trail [begins at the Thomas Condon Visitor Center, ½ mile hike] – This trail ends at an overlook with a great view of the valley. It begins at the south end of the parking lot.

Mascall Formation Overlook [one mile south of Picture Gorge off of Route 26, 300' hike] - Grand views of the John Day Valley and Picture Gorge await one here. Exhibits along a short trail feature both prehistory and human history.

Produced with visitor donations, August 2004

