

Outdoor Activity- Dash Point State Park

Submitted by Patty Suskin, originally from The Olympian



Dash Point State Park, which straddles Highway 509 in Federal Way, is a 398-acre camping park with 11 miles of forest trails for hikers and bikers and 3,301 feet of Puget Sound shoreline. The trails provide ample opportunity for forest exploration close to home. There are enough trails to keep you occupied for a couple of hours or a whole day.

Starting at the beach parking lot offers you choices. You can head for the beach or up into the forest. The forest trail picks up across the road from the parking lot entrance, taking you under the highway to the section of the park with the most trails.

The Outbound Trail connects to the Boundary Trail and ends at the Dash Point Highlands Park (listed as “City Park” on the trail map obtained at the park office). This neighborhood park with playground equipment is a good destination if hiking with children. Yes, you can drive there but it’s more fun to get there by hiking through the forest.

The trails are rated by the park as “easiest,” “more difficult” and “most difficult.” with some signs amended to read “difficult,” a category not shown on the map. The rating system most likely relates to hikers and bikers with no forest experience, though care should be given to pay heed to the difficulty designation until you have tried out the trails to see how they match your experience and footwear.

Directions: From Tacoma, take Highway 509 north. The highway also is Marine View Drive, then becomes Eastside Drive Northeast. It turns into Southwest Dash Point Road when it crosses into King County. Shortly after crossing the county line, turn left into the park (toward the water) and drive down to the beach parking lot.

Difficulty rating: 2 (1 is easiest, 5 is most difficult)

Miles round-trip: 11

Elevation: 375 feet

Best time of year: Year-round

Map: Available at park office

Pass: None needed

Also: A map and a compass are a must for this trip. The 11 miles of trails involve a lot of intersections. Trail signs are placed high up on the trees, presumably out of the reach of vandalism. So crane your neck at each intersection to find the signs, though not all intersections have signs. In wet weather, the trail can be sloppy in spots, so use caution and hiking poles. The trails are shared by hikers and bikers, so be alert and be courteous.

Information: www.parks.wa.gov; “Washington State Parks,” Mountaineers Books

Hike of the Week is presented by The Mountaineers Tacoma Branch Hiking/Backpacking Committee. For other hikes, visit www.thenewstribune.com/hiking.