Wildlife

Wherever there is water, there is wildlife to watch. Waterfowl, river otter, and great blue heron are species commonly seen by the passive passerby, while crayfish, garter snakes, and beaver are most often viewed by those hiking in the field. In an area where streams and springs are rare, the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River fills a very important role.

A diversity of wildlife species are found in the river, the riparian area along the edge of the river, and in the juniper, shrub-steppe, and grasslands along the river corridor. The dramatic cliffs throughout the canyon offer nesting habitat for a variety of birds, including golden eagles, prairie falcons, and ravens. At least 13 species of waterfowl have been observed within the river areas. Mourning doves, chukar, and California quail often can be seen and heard in the upland areas.

Both resident and wintering populations of mule deer reside within the river corridor. This area supports deer wintering from the Ochoco and Paulina Range units. The western edge of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River corridor also supports a small population of resident and wintering pronghorn antelope.

Other wildlife species that depend on the river corridor include coyote, porcupine, skunk, mallard, Canada goose, common merganser, Townsend's solitaire, northern flicker, and bats. Common fish include redband trout, rainbow trout, and mountain whitefish.

Recreation

The Chimney Rock segment of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is becoming increasingly popular for all kinds of recreation. Thousands of people visit each year to enjoy the incredible fishing, camping, and scenic views. The area provides for many types of recreation activities including: camping, fishing, hiking, and driving, or bicycling on the Crooked River Backcountry Byway.

Trails

The 2.6 mile round trip hike to Chimney Rock involves a moderate climb up a side drainage, some switchbacks, and ends with expansive views of the Crooked River Canyon and Cascades in the distance. The trailhead is located on the east side of State Highway 27, opposite Chimney Rock Campground.

Fishing

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is a classic tail-water fishery located about an hour's drive from Bend, Oregon. This river is open all year for fly-fishing. The best time to start fishing is in early spring, continuing on through late fall. The river offers great dry fly and nymph fishing for hard-fighting rainbows and is a perfect fishery for the beginning fly-fishing enthusiast. One of the attractions of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is the constant water temperature that maintains an optimum river quality for year around fishing. Before you go fishing be sure to check the current sport fishing regulations with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Camping

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River offers many developed camping opportunities. There are nine developed campgrounds on the east side of the river, ranging in size from 6 to 30 campsites. The maximum length of stay is 14 days. All campgrounds have numbered campsites, toilets, picnic tables, and garbage cans. Grey water sumps are provided for waste water disposal (dish water). There are no RV dump stations on the river corridor, although they are available in Prineville at the Chamber of Commerce and Crook County RV Park.

Cultural Resources

Prehistory

Imagine traveling through this area as Native American people have done. For thousands of years, Native American groups from the Columbia Plateau and Great Basin hunted game and gathered plant materials throughout this region.
The Lower Crooked River corridor is within the ceded lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Under the Treaty of 1855, the Tribes are guaranteed certain traditional rights such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and grazing on ceded lands.

Pioneer Settlers

Peter Skene Ogden, who trapped beaver for the Hudson Bay Company in the mid-1820s, was the first explorer to leave written accounts of his journey to this region. Other explorers to the area near the Crooked River and its tributaries soon followed along with soldiers on military expeditions, all looking for better routes west. From the 1860s on, settlements increased in central Oregon. Unavailable farmland in the Willamette Valley encouraged settlers to stay on the unclaimed lands in central Oregon. Stockmen supplying beef and mutton to miners because of the discovery of gold in the John Day area in 1862, and the development of transportation routes connecting the desert country with the more populated western Oregon, caused continued growth. Today cattle and sheep ranching and agricultural production are still major industries in this region.

Directions to the Site

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River is a 12-mile drive south from Prineville, Oregon, and a 46-mile drive from Bend, Oregon.

From downtown Prineville, go south on Main Street. Main Street turns into State Highway 27 (Crooked River Highway) and passes through ranchland in the Crooked River Valley. Approximately 10 miles from town, the river canyon narrows and the Federally-managed Wild and Scenic River stretch begins. Bowman Dam at Prineville Reservoir is the upper end of the Wild and Scenic River. The trip from Prineville to Bowman Dam is 22 miles.

From Bend, the most direct route is to go east on Reservoir Road and intersect with State Highway 27 south of Bowman Dam and Prineville Reservoir. To reach the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River, go north on State Highway 27, cross over Bowman Dam and descend down into the narrow Crooked River Canyon gorge. The drive from Bend to Bowman Dam is approximately 46 miles.

District Contact Information

Prineville District

Bureau of Land Management
3050 Northeast 3rd Street
Prineville, OR 97754

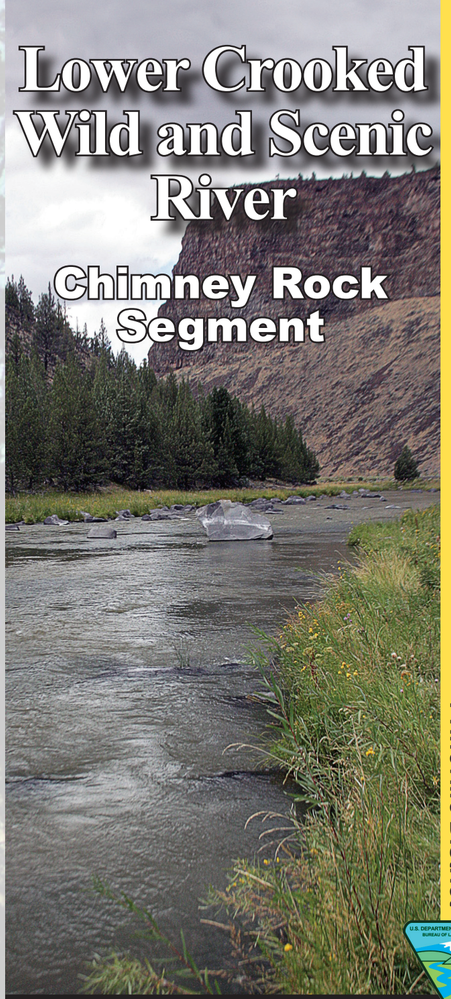
(541) 416-6700

www.or.blm.gov/prineville

BLM/OR/WA/GI-05/033+1122.32

Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River

Chimney Rock Segment



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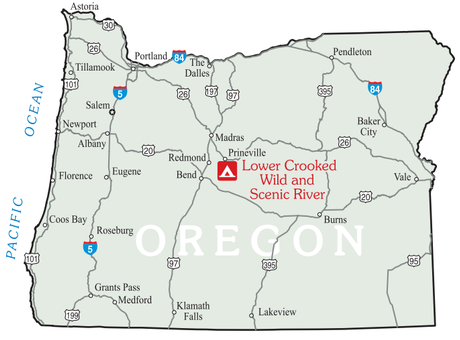
Prineville District

Welcome to Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River (Chimney Rock Segment)

Welcome to the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River, which was designated a Federal Wild and Scenic River in 1988. Located along the Crooked River National Back Country Byway, the 8-mile Chimney Rock segment boasts diverse scenery and wildlife and provides access to year-round recreational activities.

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River has 2,300 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management and approximately 220 acres managed by the Bureau of Reclamation. The river meanders through a rugged canyon that includes towering basalt cliffs up to 600 feet high.



Know Before You Go

The Chimney Rock segment of the Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River has nine developed sites for camping, two day-use areas, and one trailhead. The majority of campgrounds have single family campsites that accommodate up to eight people and one vehicle, with room for one additional vehicle.

Two campgrounds (Lone Pine and Big Bend) have group or multi-family campsites. The group sites are single campsite units that accommodate up to 16 people with two primary vehicles and up to two extra vehicles.

- Campsites and day-use sites are currently available on a first come – first-served basis, and are open year-round.
- These are fee sites, so be sure to check with the local Bureau of Land Management Office for current fee information.
- Potable water is only available at Chimney Rock Campground. The water tap is located adjacent to campsite number 8.
- The Chimney Rock Trailhead is located 16.4 miles south of Prineville on State Highway 27. The trailhead for this 2.6 mile round-trip hike is located on the east side of the highway opposite Chimney Rock Campground.
- All campgrounds are accessible to standard passenger vehicles. Trailers are not advised at Poison Butte Campground. Campgrounds are not recommended for larger recreational vehicles.

Practice Leave-No-Trace Ethics

Don't wash cookware or use soap in the river. Use designated grey water sumps. Wash at least 50 feet from the river and campsite. Please use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Strain dishwater and throw away garbage. Put all garbage in the garbage cans provided at campgrounds and day-use sites. Do not bury garbage – including fish guts and grease.

Use fire responsibly -- For cooking, a stove is much safer and more efficient than a campfire. Fires may be built or charcoal burned in the designated fire pits. Additional fire rings (built with rocks or any other material) are not allowed. Bring your own wood and kindling. Do not cut branches from live or dead vegetation. Wildlife depends on this wood for shelter and food.

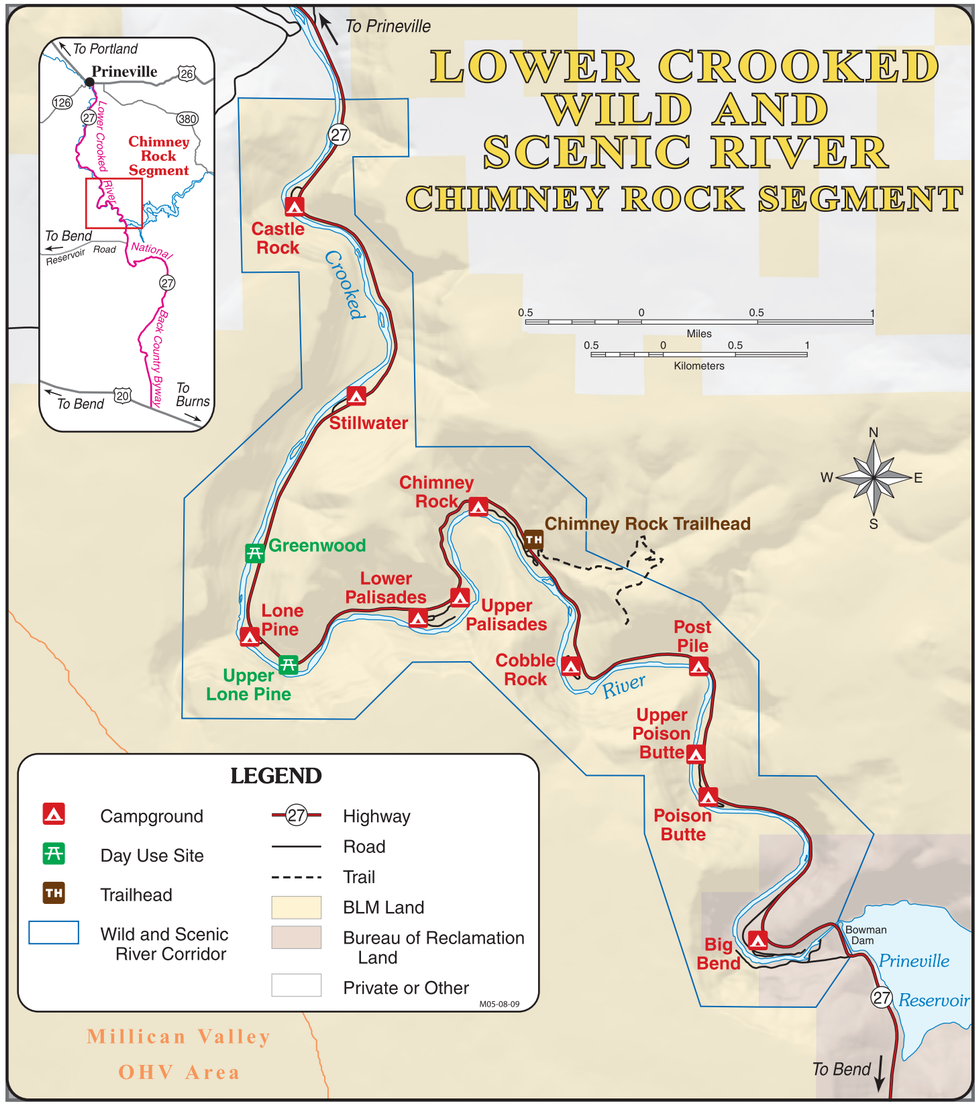
Respect private property -- camp only on Federal lands where camping is allowed. Lands downstream from mile marker 12 are predominantly privately owned. Permission is required to access private lands.

Keep your noise to a minimum -- Operating generators, amplified music, and other excessive or loud noise is prohibited between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

Do not discharge firearms at any time within the campground or day-use areas.

	Number of Campsites	Day Use Parking	Fee Charged	Group Campsites	Toilets	Water
Castle Rock	8	●	●		●	
Stillwater	10	●	●		● D/A	
Greenwood		●			●	
Lone Pine	8		●	●	●	
Upper Lone Pine		●			●	
Palisades	15	●	●		● D/A	
Chimney Rock	20	●	●		● D/A	●
Cobble Rock	15		●		● D/A	
Post Pile	10		●		●	
Poison Butte	6		●		● D/A	
Big Bend	30	●	●	●	● D/A	

D/A = Disabled Access

Geology

The Lower Crooked Wild and Scenic River has cut a gorge into a massive basalt flow, exposing cliffs and sheer basalt walls up to 600 feet high. The canyon walls exhibit irregular patterns and different layers of rust to dark brown basalt. The basalt formations include postpiles, talus slopes, and narrow tributary canyons.