

## DAY HIKES IN THE STEHEKIN VALLEY

**NOTE:** Due to flood damage, the Upper Stehekin Valley Road has been closed at Carwash Falls. Due to lack of turnaround space and poor road conditions, the Shuttle Buses can only take you to High Bridge, 1.5 miles short of this closure. Private vehicles may travel the entire distance to Carwash Falls at their discretion.

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### Easy Hikes

**The Lakeshore Trail** follows the north shore of Lake Chelan 17 miles to Prince Creek. The day hiker can go as far as he feels up to and turn around. Few will choose to go any further than the seven miles to Moore Point (14 miles round trip) before turning around and heading back to Stehekin. The trail has only slight ups and downs for the first four miles to Flick Creek. This is a good destination spot for a day hike as the lake is easily accessible and there is a campground and shelter.

This is the ideal trail for a morning or evening stroll if you are staying at the North Cascades Lodge because the trailhead is close by. It is also a nice day hike with small children as it is easy walking and when they get tired, you can turn around and return without waiting for transportation. Since you don't gain much elevation on this trail, the views are limited to the lake, Stehekin Valley, and the surrounding mountains. The best view on this trail is 5.9 miles down-lake at Hunts Bluff where you are 400 feet above the lake with a good view of the surrounding area.

To find the trailhead follow the road past the Golden West Lodge a few hundred feet. It is a good idea to walk in front of small children as there are a few rattlesnake sightings along this trail every season.

**Stehekin River Trail** takes you four miles to Weaver Point on the south shore of Lake Chelan where you will find a large public campground and a sandy beach for those who like cold water swimming. The way is mostly forested and you are only in view of the river along three different stretches. This is a nice cool hike for a hot day, and comes complete with a few fishing holes along the way.

The trailhead is 4.5 miles up valley from the boat landing and across Harlequin Bridge. Follow Company Creek Road 125 yards and take a left (this is the second left, and actually takes you straight ahead as the main road turns right) into the NPS maintenance area. Continue straight ahead to the Stehekin Airport. Head down-valley (left) along the landing strip. The trailhead is at the end of the runway.

**Agnes Gorge Trail** takes you 2.5 miles to a 210 foot deep gorge with only 300 feet elevation gain. As far as scenery is concerned, this is my favorite of the easy trails. The trail opens up in a couple of places for a nice view of 8,115 foot Agnes Mountain. After two miles, you will reach a small stream that crosses the trail - be prepared to get your feet wet in early summer! From this stream it is only a half mile to the edge of the gorge where there was, at one time, a suspension bridge across to the other side. If you backtrack approximately fifty feet, you will find a path that continues upstream. Follow this and it will take you down to the water's edge near a 15 foot waterfall and a view of the gorge. This is also a great place for a lunch stop.

This trail is an excellent choice for a half-day hike for folks staying at Stehekin Valley Ranch. Hop on the bus or ride your bike the 2 miles to High Bridge, and you are ready to hit the trail!

To find the trailhead, cross High Bridge heading up-valley. At the top of the hill you will see Agnes Creek Trail taking off to your left. This IS NOT the trail you want. Continue past the road that leads to High Bridge Campground about 125 feet and you will see where the Agnes Gorge Trail leaves the road on your left.

**The Old Wagon Road** that was built to service the prospecting community of Bridge Creek has long been rerouted but it now makes a very gentle and quite pleasant hike. Catch the shuttle to High Bridge and continue up the road for another 1.5 miles. The Old Wagon Road trail will take off on your right. The trail splits shortly after you get on it. The left path will take you 3.5 miles to Bridge Creek Camp. If you stay right on the trail you will connect to the Coon Lake trail system, from which you can access Coon Lake, McGregor Mountain, or High Bridge.

**Flat Creek Trail.** It is now a stretch to make a dayhike up Flat Creek, but if you are moving and get an early start, it can be an option. You should expect to encounter brush on this trail, due to its limited use! The trailhead is approximately 6.1 miles from Carwash Falls. Take the Old Wagon Road to Bridge Creek Camp, where it meets back up with the Stehekin Valley Road. Flat Creek trail takes off from the road a few hundred yards above Park Creek Bridge. As the name implies this trail is quite flat and only 3.3 miles in length. This trail is enjoyed by many during the fall foliage season. If you don't mind fighting a little brush this is also a good area to catch Cutthroat Trout.

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## Moderate Hikes

**Coon Lake-McGregor-Bullion Loop Trail** is full of options with three different trailheads to choose from. One is .5 miles above Tumwater Bridge, one at High Bridge and one at Bullion Campground. At the Bullion Campground trailhead, there is also a small loop trail and another leg of the trail that leads to Stehekin Outfitters. (Note: due to flood damage, part of this loop is no longer usable. Take the road down-valley from Bullion .25 miles, and rejoin the trail on the left.) This *is better understood by looking at a map*. The easiest route is to start above the Tumwater Bridge, as the road has gained much of the elevation for you. From this trailhead you may elect to meet the Stehekin Road at High Bridge, Bullion Campground or Stehekin Outfitters. Starting at Tumwater Trailhead, it is an easy one mile through mostly cedar and fir timber to Coon Lake and McGregor Trail Junction.

An option for those wanting a longer-hike is to turn left onto McGregor Mountain Trail for a ways and then come back and continue on the loop. One mile up the McGregor Mountain trail takes you to a nice view of the valley and to a falls which provides a scramble trail to water. The higher you go up McGregor Trail, the better the view!

This option is a good half-day hike for those staying at Stehekin Valley Ranch or a good day hike if part of the McGregor Mountain trail is used, since you can hike all the way back to the ranch and not worry about return transportation. Coon Lake is nearly a mile long and rather marshy on the trail end. You will often see wildlife, such as ducks, deer and an occasional beaver on or near the lake. About four-tenths of a mile after leaving the lake a stock trail takes off to your left which goes to the East end of the lake. You do not want to take this turn. Another two-tenths of a mile takes you to a junction that you will need to make a decision at. Keeping right will bring you to High Bridge, a left will continue you on the loop towards Bullion Campground and Stehekin Outfitters.

On this route you will soon cross a large rockslide and have a good view of the valley and Agnes Creek. Approximately one mile past the junction, you will see a small sign which says loop. A right here will take you to Bullion Campground and the Stehekin Road, keeping left will take you on the north leg of the Bullion loop trail for .5 mile and another junction marked loop. You will need to watch for this sign closely because the horses that use this trail do not turn here and this turn is hard to notice. What you are looking for is a small 4"x4" post about one quarter mile past the large rock slide. A right here will continue you on the loop, taking you to Bullion Campground. A left will bring you to Stehekin Outfitters (Stehekin Valley Ranch) and if you are staying there, you can bear left around the barn and field to the camp. If not, bear right on the driveway and it will lead you to the Stehekin Valley Road.

This is the same trail that is used for horseback rides, so don't be surprised to see five or six horses. The best thing to do when meeting horses is to step off the trail on the lower side. Try to avoid abrupt

movements. A horse will not spook when he sees you if you don't surprise him. It is best if you let them know you are there, if you are not out in the open, by chatting with the wrangler or guests.

**Rainbow Loop Trail** is a five-mile loop with the lower trailhead taking off from the road 2.6 miles from Stehekin Landing and the upper trailhead at 5.0 miles up-valley from the landing or .4 miles above Harlequin Bridge. I recommend starting at the upper trailhead as the elevation gain is a little less. Also, the first half of the loop is forested, so it is cooler uphill hiking.

Two miles will bring you to the junction of Rainbow Loop and Rainbow Creek Trails; here you take a right. (An optional hike is to take a left here up Rainbow Creek Trail a little more than a mile which will take you to an exposed bluff with an excellent 180 degree view of Lake Chelan and the Stehekin Valley.) Continuing right at the junction you will keep you on the Loop Trail, which drops down a short distance to where the trail crosses Rainbow Creek. This is a nice spot for a rest or lunch beside the creek. After climbing up from the creek, the next .4 miles you will be on a flat bench that takes you past Boulder Creek Trail on your left.

Stay right and you will start descending into the valley. On the way down there are several nice views of the valley and lake. If you do not plan on hiking the whole loop, the lower leg is your best choice for scenery.

**Bridge Creek Trail.** Part of the Pacific Crest Trail System, this trail can also make a nice all day hike. Six miles takes you to a bridge and a nice spot to rest or try your hand at catching some wild Cutthroat Trout. If you continue on from here you will switchback up about one-half mile to a trail junction. Take a left here and go up the North Fork of Bridge Creek to Walker Park about three miles or continue on to Grizzly Creek for a total of six miles. This trail takes you up a mountain valley with only moderate elevation gain. Although not as picturesque as some of the more strenuous hikes, this is nonetheless a nice place to spend the day.

To get to the trailhead, take the Old Wagon Road to Bridge Creek Camp. Keep going for another 100 yards, and the trail will take off on your right. On a hot day continue another 100 yards past the trailhead on the road and be prepared to jump into a marvelous (but cold) swimming hole when you arrive at the Bridge Creek bridge.

There are many other trails that could be considered moderate, depending on how far and how fast you go.

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## Hard Hikes

**McGregor Mountain** is a fine choice if you desire to gain some elevation for a grand view. This 8129' mountain had a fire lookout at one time and you can be sure that wherever you find an old lookout site you will find a magnificent 360 degree view. It is 6.8 miles from High Bridge to Heaton Camp which is the only campsite on the mountain. From here the trail takes you about another quarter mile to where the trail ends and a rock scramble begins. While this is not a technical climb it does have a high degree of exposure so use good judgment on whether or not you want to continue from this point. If you do decide to continue do not head straight toward the peak which has the repeater antenna on it. Start out on the right side of the scree slope and angle to your left toward the solid rock and you should start seeing painted blazes to mark the route. Visit the NPS rangers at the Golden West Lodge for a picture and explanation of the route.

The route will take you through a notch a couple hundred yards to the left of the summit and from there you will gain the peak from the backside. For other options see the section under easy hikes on Coon Lake and McGregor Mountain.

**Purple Creek Trail.** This trail starts at the Stehekin Landing just past the Golden West Lodge. Like many of the trails in the area you go as far as you would like to and return since this is not a loop trail. Good views of the lake and the lower valley begin at about 3 miles. For those more ambitious start early and hike 8 miles to 6800' Purple Pass. If you still have some energy left go approximately one-half mile, further to Boulder Butte, there is a former fire lookout site with a supreme view.

**Goode Ridge Trail.** This trail takes you five miles with an elevation gain of 4400' to the brow of Goode Ridge, an old Forest Service fire lookout location. Due to the closure of the upper valley road above Car Wash Falls, it is now more difficult to do Goode Ridge as a dayhike from Stehekin. (It is still a great option if you are camping at Bridge Creek though!) With an early start, it is possible, but be prepared for a long day and a brushy trail. On a hot day bring lots of water and be prepared to jump into a marvelous (but cold) swimming hole when you arrive back at Bridge Creek.

To get to the trailhead take the shuttle to High Bridge. Hike 1.5 miles along the Stehekin Road to the Old Wagon Road trailhead. Follow the Wagon Road 3.5 miles to Bridge Creek, where it meets back up with the upper Stehekin Road. Follow the road past Bridge Creek bridge, and the Goode Ridge Trailhead will be on the right.