

Oregon / Steens Mountains

Big Indian Gorge Trail

DISTANCE: 13.2 miles

ELEVATION GAIN: 1500 feet

ROUTE TYPE: Out & Back

Beautiful trek! Well worth the effort to get there. The first bit of the trail out of the campground was the hardest (for me anyway). It's exposed and on a dry slope with a rocky trail. It looked like an old, disused Jeep road. But again, the views make it worth the effort despite the heat and rolling rocks on the trail.

Once we reached the two mile mark, the trail dipped into a shady patch to the first creek crossing. It was a hot day, so it was great to get our feet wet. The trail followed the creek for a bit to another crossing and the remains of an old cabin. The trail through this section was very clear and easy to follow. At the third creek crossing, the path began to grow denser with sage brush. I would recommend long pants and was really happy to have a pair on. We hiked to 6.2 miles and felt that the trail was easy to follow and not all that overgrown.

The views of the rock formations and dramatic mountain scenery are phenomenal in this area. We hiked this trail to the 7 mile point with backpacking and camping gear, and really enjoyed the stunning views as the scenery unfolded up the majestic canyon.

Having said that, there are a few logistical concerns to share about this trail. It is extremely overgrown with sagebrush past the 3 mile point. We were wearing shorts and got very scratched up from having to plough through the sagebrush. The BLM information on this trail states that "many beautiful, existing primitive campsites beckon the overnighiter," however, we could not find a single campsight area to pitch a tent.

They may have been lost to disuse, as this trail appears to have very little traffic. The 3 stream crossings required wading through a foot of water, even in early August. Other than that, a great trail, and we would do it again - perhaps with a machete!

