

# Black Crater



- Trip Name: Black Crater
- Trip Length: 7 miles out-and-back
- Trip Time: 3-4 hours
- Best time to visit: Summer to early fall
- Difficulty rating: 7
- Views: 10
- Wilderness experience: 6
- Recommended activities: Day hike
- Best for: Hikers, dogs
- Restroom: Not at trailhead but nearby at Dee Wright Observatory
- Permit: Free self-issue Mount Washington Wilderness permit

## Trip Technical Data

- Trailhead: Black Crater Trailhead
- Trailhead Elevation: 4,980 feet
- Elevation of Black Crater: 7,250 feet
- Elevation Gain: 2,540 feet

## Driving Directions from Bend:

Travel time: 1 hour

Head west on Highway 20 into Sisters, Oregon. Once you get through downtown Sisters, in 0.3 mile, turn left onto Route 242 (closed in winter). At the first intersection turn right to stay on Route 242. Follow Route 242, and in 11.4 miles you will come to a roadside viewpoint on the right which offers great views of Mount Washington and Belknap Crater. Continue on Route 242 for another 0.3 miles to the Black Crater trailhead on your left.

## Trail Description:

The trail up to the top of Black Crater is a constant climb and gains elevation quickly. The first half of the hike makes its way through a dense forest of spruce, fir and pine along a soft, needle lined, trail. The trees are draped with old man's beard and mushrooms line the forest floor. The second half of the trail shares time between forest and exposed volcanic scree until you reach the small summit ridge where you are out of the trees with just a few white bark pines to your left.

From the trailhead, after filling out your free wilderness permit, you will enter the cool and dark forest even if it's a sunny and warm day. The steepness of the crater and hiking on the northern slope create the shadow keeping this section of the trail cool and wet. Wandering through the forest you will get peek-a-boo views north to Mount Jefferson and Mount Washington.

At the hike's 1.9 mile mark the trail will level out for a bit and the trees will thin giving you great views to the east of the Town of Sisters and out to Powell Butte. After a quarter of a mile the ascent continues across open fields of volcanic scree rock. The final 1.3 miles gains a little over 900 vertical feet on your way to some of the best views in all of Central Oregon.

Once at the summit there is a small pinnacle, about 15 feet tall, allowing you to scramble up to the true top of the mountain. The 360 degree views can be obtained without this scramble if you're not up for it.

The way back down comes with two options. The obvious is to turn around and follow your steps back down the same trail to the trailhead. The second option is for those that are a little more adventurous and comfortable with basic off trail travel. From the summit you will see a trail leading away from the trail you ascended heading to the west. Although we didn't go this way we learned from an elderly gentleman who has been this way many times that this trail will lead you around the crater rim and eventually connect back into the main trail. If you do choose to go this way keep in mind that this is not a maintained trail and the path may disappear. Please use caution and have a topo map and compass and know how to use them before taking this route. Whichever route you choose to follow you will end up back at the same place you started.

If time and energy permit after you are through with this hike, the Dee Wright Observatory is just a few miles west on Highway 242 and worth the side trip for the amazing views it provides.