

Learning experiences

Exploring the valley's interpretive sites

BY SANDRA STRIEBY

The sites described here use words, images, art and more to enhance visitors' understanding of the Methow Valley's natural and cultural features. They are all worth visiting in their own rights; at the same time, the interpretations they offer can enrich your experience of the sites themselves and the local landscape as a whole.

At all of the sites listed below, please be prepared to observe COVID-safety protocols, which may include distancing and masking. See www.recreateresponsibly.org for more-specific guidance.

■ METHOW MONUMENT AND PATEROS MUSEUM, PATEROS

The Methow Monument is located in Lakeshore Park and uses signs, sculpture and tiles bearing images of Methow pictographs to convey the history and culture of the Methow People. There's a teepee and a salmon bake oven; the monument is landscaped with native plants that were significant to people of the Methow tribe. A paved trail leads to the Pateros Museum; signs along the way and exhibits within chronicle various phases of the city's history. For more information: www.pateros.com/index.php/history/pateros-museum.

■ METHOW VALLEY INTERPRETIVE CENTER, TWISP

Enjoy natural-history and native-culture exhibits, including Seasons of the People, Emergence of the Methow, Ribbon of Life, and Methow Artifacts. Native plant garden with signs in English and *nisəlxcin*, the language of the Methow people; pit house; look-out cabin replica. Last Sunday



Photos by DON NELSON

presentations. Accessible restroom; accessible parking and entry on the north. Located on the northwest corner of the TwispWorks Campus at 210 Fifth Ave., Twisp. Admission is by donation. The garden is always open; for center hours and other information: www.methowvalleyinterpretivecenter.com.

■ TWISP PONDS DISCOVERY CENTER

One-half mile west of Twisp. The focus is on fish at this site, where a series of linked ponds provides habitat for salmon, steelhead and other species. An osprey sculpture marks the entrance; signs, more sculptures, and colorful nest boxes are all part of the experience. Numbered markers are tucked among native plants along the trail; a guide, with map, can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/532dpnj>. Learn more at www.methowsalmon.org.

www.methowarts.org/get-involved/explore-habitat-project and www.methowarts.org/river-twisp-ponds-discovery-center.

■ COTTONWOOD TRAIL

Between Twisp and Winthrop on the Old Twisp Highway. The trail loops through an abandoned agricultural field and along the Methow River, showcasing land and river restoration activities. Signs and a trailhead kiosk focus on natural and cultural history and the restoration project. Watch for colorful species-specific nest boxes, as well as birds, fish and other wildlife. Beavers are active in the area, and recently-fallen trees attest to their handiwork. Open year-round; parking lot is not plowed in winter. Discover Pass required. Learn more at www.methowsalmon.org/get-involved/explore-habitat-project and www.methowarts.org/river-cottonwood-trail.



■ HOMESTREAM PARK, WINTHROP

Enjoy art, picnic facilities, a riverside trail, and interpretive signs celebrating the Methow's rivers, fish, and, especially, native people. The 2-acre park is protected as a home for the spirits of those first people with a unique spirit easement. ADA parking is on-site; other users park at the town trailhead on the far side of the Twin Lakes Road/White Avenue. Learn more, and find a link to a map, at www.homestreampark.com.

■ GLACIER INTERPRETIVE LOOP, SUN MOUNTAIN LODGE

Signs along the 1-mile loop trail explain features of plant and animal life and the Methow Valley's glacier-sculpted terrain. Park at the lodge – the trailhead is near the tennis courts – or make your way up from the Chickadee Trailhead off Thompson Ridge Road. The loop is composed of sections of the Kraule and View Ridge trails. Visit www.sunmountainlodge.com/sunmountain/hiking for information about the Glacier Loop and other Sun Mountain trails.

■ SHAFER HISTORICAL MUSEUM, WINTHROP

Dedicated to fostering understanding of local history, culture and sense of place. Indoor and outdoor exhibits feature the Methow Valley's settlement and homesteading period. Open May 7-Oct. 3, weather permitting; explore the outdoor farming and mining collections during daylight hours year-round. Masks required; other COVID precautions in place. Gravel paths; most buildings have access ramps. Portable toilet. Admission is by donation – \$5 suggested for adults. Located at 285 Castle Ave. Free parking on Castle Avenue, or ascend the footpath from Riverside Avenue. For more information: (509) 380-9911; www.shafermuseum.org.

■ SATEEKHWA TRAIL, WINTHROP

A wide, level trail follows the Chewuch River; interpretive signs chronicle local history, including tribal use of the site, power and irrigation projects, and eventual restoration to support salmon recovery. Reach the site from 110 Bluff St. in Winthrop, just past the north end of Riverside Avenue – cross the footbridge between the River Pines

Inn and the Chewuch Professional Building and turn right. For more information: www.methowsalmon.org/get-involved/explore-habitat-project and www.wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/sa-teekh-wa-trail.

■ WINTHROP BARN TRAIL

Start from the Winthrop Auditorium (Red Barn) parking lot to explore the Methow River's riparian zone and learn more about critters in the river. The site is part of the Methow River Collaborative, a project of the Department of Ecology, Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation, Bureau of Reclamation and Methow Arts Alliance. Visit www.methowarts.org/river-collaborative-bridges-art-water-community-and-learning for a brochure and to learn more.

■ BIG VALLEY TRAIL

Natural history is the theme of signs along a level trail that follows the Methow River through the woods for roughly a mile and a half. (For a longer walk, continue around a loop, without signs, then return to the parking area by the original route.) No pass required. For more information, contact Methow Trails at (509) 996-3287 or visit www.methowtrails.org/summer-family-fun.

■ EARLY WINTERS CAMPGROUND

Fifteen miles west of Winthrop. To learn about the Methow basin's fish, explore the campground and look for signs along the trail that follows Early Winters Creek. There's no fee for day use, but please don't park at a designated camp site. Visit www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/okawen/recarea/?recid=59203 for more information.

■ ACCESSIBLE INTERPRETIVE TRAILS

The U.S. Forest Service maintains two accessible trails in the Methow watershed.

Black Pine Lake Campground is located about 20 miles west of Twisp off the Buttermilk Creek Road. Fees apply for camping, but there's no charge to park in the day-use area. A paved trail follows the shore of Black Pine Lake; signs describe aspects of the site's natural history. At the far end there's a view into the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness, with a peak finder that gives the names of some of the prominent high points. Other features include benches, accessible vault toilets,

and accessible fishing access. Learn more at www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/okawen/recarea/?recid=59109.

Washington Pass Overlook, 30 miles west of Winthrop, offers stunning views of Liberty Bell Mountain, the Early Winters Spires, and more. Fall visitors will see golden larches. There's a paved, accessible trail; accessible restrooms, and signs covering the history of the North Cascades Highway and more. Two of William Stafford's Methow River Poems are posted at the site, as well. Learn

more at www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/okawen/recarea/?recid=5949 and www.wta.org/go-hiking/hikes/washington-pass-overlook.

For more information about the sites above and two others, take a look at the Forest Service's "Over the Top" Accessible Adventures video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1ITgs1MDCg. The video is a few years old, so be sure to check current conditions online or by calling the Forest Service at (509) 996-4000. The Lone Fir trail featured in the video is currently not accessible.

STAY SAFE. TREAD LIGHTLY. BE KIND.

Methow Trails

Stay Safe
Plan ahead and prepare. Control your dog. Be aware of other users and ride in control.

Tread Lightly
Pack out litter. Pick up after your dog and take the bag with you. Follow posted use guidelines and respect private property. Don't cut switchbacks.

Be Kind
Be courteous. Yield to others. These trails are shared by first-timers and Olympians alike, and everyone deserves a great experience.

METHOW trails

The graphic features icons for various trail users: a person on horseback, a hiker, a cyclist, a person in a wheelchair, a dog, and a person with a child. The background shows a stylized mountain range and a winding trail.