

History

The Nez Perce and Salish used Pattee Canyon on their way to the plains to hunt buffalo. They called it “*Es nin paks*” which means “crooked trail.” They used Pattee Canyon as a detour to avoid ambush by the Blackfeet warriors in Hellgate Canyon, which is located to the north of Pattee Canyon.

Pattee Canyon was named after David Pattee, who filed a homestead claim in 1871 for land near the mouth of the canyon. He came to the Bitterroot Valley in 1856 from New Hampshire to rebuild saw and grist-mills owned by Major John Owen, for whom Fort Owen State Monument at Stevensville is named.

In 1877, the U.S. Army started building Fort Missoula. Since some of the largest trees in the area grew in Pattee Canyon the Army set aside a 1,600-acre timber reserve to supply the Fort. The old timber reserve is now the present day West Zone of the Pattee Canyon Recreation Area. In the 1920s, the Army built a rifle range in the meadow near the present day picnic area. The range was closed in 1945, but you can still see the earthen backstop and concrete foundations.

The Forest Service acquired the timber reserve in 1926. Subsequent land acquisitions have added to the original acquisition. Today a combination of Forest Service, State, City of Missoula and University lands provide non-motorized public trail access from the city to the recreation area.

Recently the Forest Service acquired an additional 2,100 acres of former industrial timberlands from The Nature Conservancy. These lands are located at the lower end of Deer Creek Road and around University Mountain. This area is known as the East Zone of the recreation area.

Facilities

At the picnic area you will find tables, fire rings, toilets (some accessible), parking and group picnic facilities. There is no running water, electricity or overnight camping. An 18-hole Frisbee golf (fol) course is located just north of the picnic area and is open in the summer.

Three group picnic sites have large tables, grills, and parking lots that can accommodate up to 200 people. Group sites are available by reservation only. Please contact the Missoula Ranger District at (406) 329-3814 for more information. The picnic area gate is open daily from 9 A.M to 9 P.M. during the summer season. Volunteer hosts may be on duty in the picnic area during the summer.

Trails

The 5,914 acre recreation area includes approximately 27 miles of non-motorized system trails.

Pattee Canyon Main Trailhead - Located east of the picnic area on Pattee Canyon Road. This trailhead accesses multiple trails including the 3.4-mile Sam Braxton National Recreation Trail (NRT). This is also the parking area for the north and south-side cross-country ski trails - a 10-km system. The Forest Service and the Missoula Nordic Ski Club, a volunteer organization, maintain these trails.

Crazy Canyon Trailhead - Along with access to multiple trails that connect the picnic area, University area, and Hellgate Canyon, there is a non-motorized road that leads to the summit of Mount Sentinel.

Restrictions

- East Zone - No Camping, Campfires, Target Shooting
- West Zone - No Camping, Campfires (Except at Designated Sites), Discharge of Firearms, Air Rifles, Paintball Guns
- Bicycles are only allowed on designated trails
- Construction of user built trails, jumps and/or other structures is prohibited.
- No motorized use
- Folfing in designated folf course and during the designated season only.
- Day use only
- No pedestrians, bicyclists, or dogs on groomed ski trails
- No fireworks
- No firewood cutting
- Group picnics by permit only

Opportunities

- Picnicking
- Mountain Biking
- Cross-country skiing
- Hiking
- Folfing
- Running

Prevent weeds

- Learn to identify local weeds
- Pull 10 weeds every time you visit
- Check yourself and pets for weed seeds
- Prevent vegetation or soil damage
- Keep yourself and dogs on trails in heavily weed-infested areas

Reduce user conflicts

- Be courteous, friendly and respectful to other visitors
- Keep your bike on designated open routes
- Do not build structures or new trails
- Slow your bike when passing others
- Control your dog
- Pack out your dog's manure
- Pack out more garbage than you brought
- Use public restrooms
- Keep off private property and out of closed areas

Food Storage Order

Wildlife food/attractant storage order in effect, April 1- Dec. 1. When unattended suspend food/attractants 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet from an upright support, or in a hard sided vehicle or camper, or in an approved bear resistant container.

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For further information contact:

Missoula Ranger District

Fort Missoula Bldg. 24

Missoula, MT 59804 • (406) 329-3814

Pattee Canyon Recreation Area



Missoula Ranger District
Lolo National Forest