

Chehalem Ridge Nature Park

Self guided tour



Ridge insights

Geology

The Chehalem Mountains trend northwest from the Willamette River to the top of the Tualatin River. They are composed of uplifted and folded Columbia basalts, overlying marine sediments primarily found on the west slopes. Chehalem Ridge itself was formed millions of years ago. Extreme pressure from the colliding tectonic Pacific and North American plates on what is now the Pacific coastline pushed, buckled and tilted the basalt ridge.

Topography

The highest point in this 1,250-acre nature park is approximately 1,120 feet above sea level at Mampa+ Trail while the lowest point is approximately 200 feet above sea level on the west edge of the park. As you follow the Chehalem Ridge Trail, you'll notice a steep sloping west side with shallower soils and more exposed rock. The gentler east side contains deeper soils formed from thousands of years of wind-deposited silt soil.

Soils

The soils within Chehalem Ridge are predominantly in the Laurelwood and Saum series. These soils formed in wind-blown (eolian) deposits in upland areas. These are silty loams that develop under a forest canopy and are characterized by very deep, well-drained soils making them highly fertile.

Water resources

Chehalem Ridge is an important source of clean water, acting as the headwater to five perennial streams. To the west of the Chehalem Mountains is a narrow valley defined by the Tualatin River and its tributaries to the north. In heavy winter rains, many small ephemeral streams collect rain and runoff and filter it as the water moves off the ridge and down into the Tualatin River. This site also features several springs and seasonal seeps.

Chehalem habitats

Riparian

This habitat includes headwater streams, wetlands and ponds. It is the interface between land and stream where snags and downed wood are key elements. These zones are important natural biofilters, protecting aquatic environments from excessive sedimentation, polluted surface runoff, and erosion. Look for ash, cottonwood, western red cedar, willow, and alder tree species that characterize this space.

Upland shrub

This habitat is slightly higher in elevation with no water above ground and is composed of dry land grasses, shrubs and short standing trees usually less than 15 feet tall. Special crust-like soils found in these areas prevent soil erosion and help plants grow by fixing nitrogen. Known as cryptobiotic soil, the crust is a living collection of blue-green algae, lichens, mosses, liverworts, micro fungi, and bacteria that is very fragile when dry.

Upland forest

An overstory of deciduous and coniferous trees of varying sizes dominates this forest. Significant shade tolerant shrubs and native herbaceous species like sword fern and Oregon grape make up the understory. A variety of snags and downed wood provide key habitat zones that benefit forest-dwelling species like black-tailed deer and the Douglas fir squirrels by providing shelter.

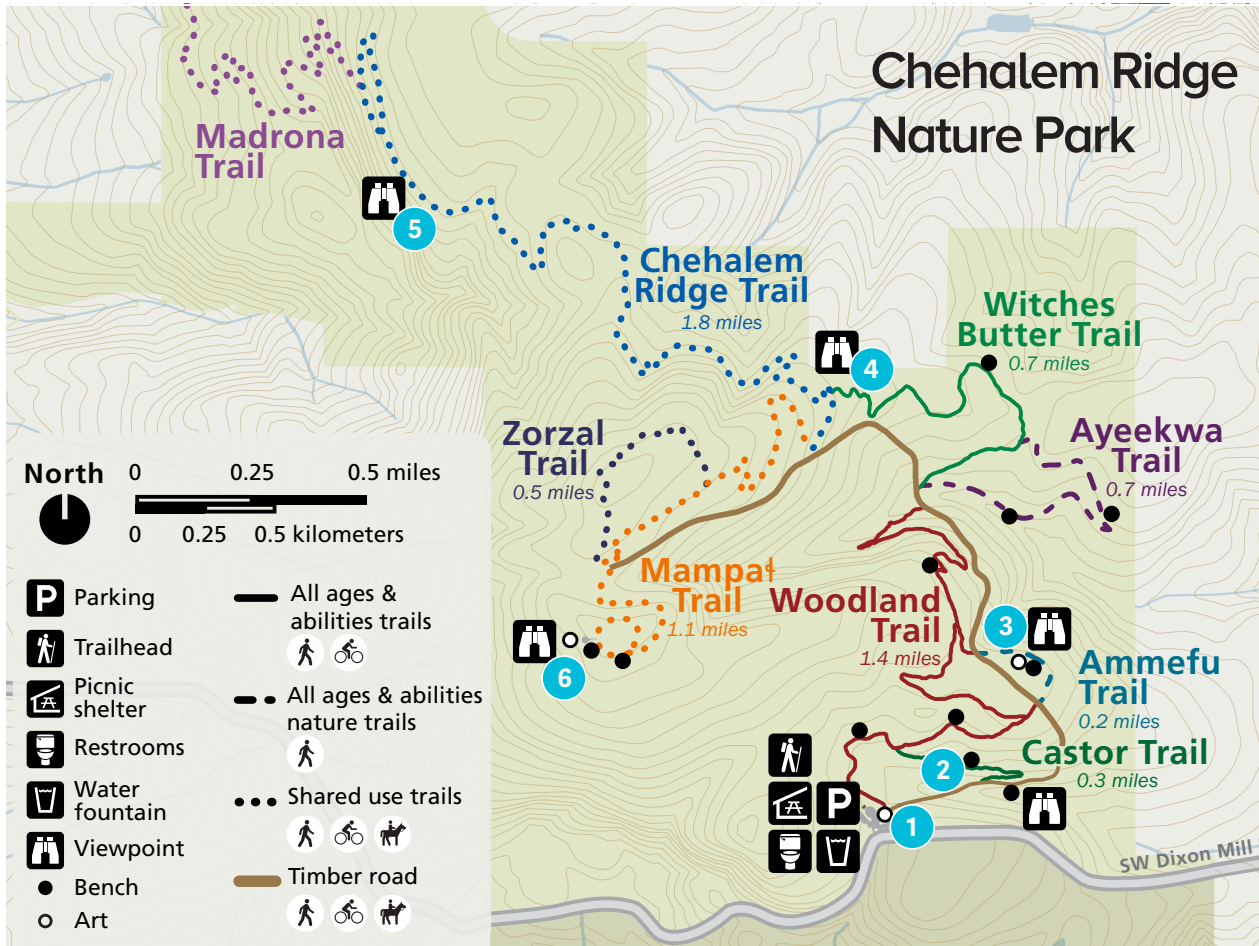
Oregon white oak woodland

This habitat contains a tree canopy, most of which is oak with an open grass understory that includes a mixture of old trees as well as new growth. These oaks, whose acorns feed people and wildlife alike, also play a critical role in the conservation of neotropical migratory birds that migrate through or nest in Oregon white oak woodlands.

Be safe

Please follow current public health and safety guidance during your visit.

Self guided tour



This is a zoomed in map of Chehalem Ridge Nature Park. Visit oregonmetro.gov/chehalemridge for a full map.

Tips for longer hikes

Pack with safety in mind. Bring sufficient water, food, a first aid kit and other necessities you might need on your hike.

Have a plan. Consider things like elevation gain, distance, and trail conditions. To best prepare yourself, visit oregonmetro.gov/chehalemridge to plan your trip and download a map. Way finding points throughout the park can help you find your way, but a map on hand can help ensure direction and put ecophobia at bay.

Know the sun's schedule. Long daylight hours make it easier to hike longer distances. For a rough idea of how far you can safely travel before dark, take the number of daylight hours and multiply it by two to three miles per hour. Don't forget to factor in time for breaks!

Be a turtle. Try to maintain a pace where you can easily converse with a hiking buddy without straining for breath. Take breaks, as needed. This can also be an opportunity to take in the sights and sounds of the area.

- 1 As a sky clearing opens past the Doug-fir-tree-lined park entrance, look for the first of three steel sculptures. The first of the "Three Elders" stands with the message of welcoming and protecting space.
- 2 Follow the gravel path along Timber Road and turn left on Castor Trail. As its namesake indicates in Spanish language, the beaver trail brings you near the edge of the stream where this crepuscular critter can occasionally be seen harvesting willow meals and constructing dams, altering their home waterways.
- 3 Take a right on Woodland Trail and cross over Timber Road to Ammefu Trail. The second of the Three Elders is designed with wapato leaves that hold recognition for the relationship held between Wapato Lake, wapato as a first food and the Indigenous peoples of this space – the Kalapuya – since time immemorial.
- 4 Just past the Witches Butter Trail is a shrubby clearing. Looking north, you can see volcanoes in the distance on a clear day.
- 5 The Chehalem Ridge Trail takes you to the Madrona Trail, which leads you to some of the most diverse habitats in the park. Look for Oregon white oaks and Pacific madrone trees as well as large patches of native shrubs that are a magnet for dozens of bird species, coyotes and the elusive alligator lizard.
- 6 Continuing on to the high point of the park via the Mampa+ Trail, the screen of young Douglas fir trees falls away to reveal a panoramic view of the Tualatin Valley and Coast Range. The third and final steel statue contains dentillium — a seashell used as traditional money — in its chest, a nod to the traditional stories of this place and its people. From the observation point, watch as the winter Wapato Lake basin in the Tualatin Valley fills up once again, repeating a pattern that has happened for thousands of years.