

**A** gorgeous retreat for birdwatchers, horseback riders, disc golfers and kayakers, Willamette Mission State Park has something for everyone. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the park marks the site of the original Willamette Mission, established in 1834 and washed away by flood in 1861.

The park's 1,300 acres include woodland, wetland, rolling meadows and working farmland. Just eight miles north of Salem and only minutes from I-5, it is a convenient retreat for family picnics and company events. Visitors also have a chance to explore almost 15 miles of trails on foot or horseback.

### Park trails

- ▶ 5 miles of bike trails
- ▶ 7 miles of horse trails
- ▶ 2½ mile self-guided educational trail
- ▶ 1 mile jogging loop

Note: Trails flood during heavy rainstorms in winter and spring. Call 503-393-1172 x40 for closure information.



Sketched from a U.S. Navy encampment on the banks of the Willamette River circa 1841, this drawing shows the original Willamette Mission on the opposite riverbank.

### A Park with a Past

Explore Oregon's history along the Mission Trail, where you'll find a vestige of the park's foundational role in the Euro-American settlement of Oregon. Across Mission Lake sits a ghost structure depicting the outline of a 19th century Methodist mission built to convert Oregon Country's Native Americans to Christianity. Established by Rev. Jason Lee in 1834, the mission marked the first organized religious enterprise in Oregon and one of the first Euro-American communities in the Willamette Valley.

Lee and four other men joined an expedition from St. Louis to Oregon in 1834. They selected a location on the banks of the Willamette River several miles south of a small community of French-Canadian fur trappers and their families. They built a one-room log Mission House to serve as a school, chapel, kitchen and living quarters. By 1836, they had enrolled about 20 children, some of who lived on site.

Lee sent for reinforcements, bringing women, children, teachers, farmers, blacksmiths and doctors to the area. The mission expanded to a settlement two miles long with a chapel, hospital, log cabin homes, blacksmith shop, granary and 30 acre farm. It became known across the U.S. as "Wilamet Station," and served for a time as the headquarters for satellite missions across the Pacific Northwest.

Frequent floods and mosquitoes along the banks of the Willamette River and the growing missionary enterprise pushed the missionaries to move their headquarters in 1841 to Chemeketa Plain, later to become Salem. Lee and his fellow missionaries went on to establish a school that became Willamette University and lay the groundwork for the Methodist Church in Oregon.

Families traveling the Applegate and Oregon trails continued to use the abandoned mission buildings until the great flood in 1861 washed the buildings away and rerouted the Willamette River to its present-day course. The old river channel is now Mission Lake.

Though the mission itself was transient, its legacy endures—both as the catalyst that put Salem on the map as the state's political capital, and a reminder of the upheaval in the lives of the Native Americans who first called this area home.



### Land play

Hikers have several options. The 2½ mile **Willamette Vision Educational Trail** begins at a wildflower garden and winds through acres of riparian plantings and wildlife habitat. The one-mile **Historic Mission Trail** takes hikers to a viewpoint looking out at a ghost structure of the original Willamette Mission.

Families can enjoy a ride on the easy 4-mile **bike path** that loops through the park and along the Willamette River to the Wheatland Ferry parking lot. The bike paths around the Filbert Grove day-use area are accessible to people with disabilities according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The park's **hiker/biker camp** attracts long-distance cyclists on the Willamette Valley Scenic Bikeway.

While you explore, watch for great blue herons, osprey, Canada geese, ducks, finches, nuthatches, robins, grosbeaks, and towhees. Animal lovers might see deer, raccoons and coyote.

In summer, watch for pale pink and purple roses by the park entrance and at the Mission viewing deck. The Salem Rose Society planted these descendants of a rose brought west by the wife of the original mission's blacksmith.



The Wheatland Disc Golf Course features 18 holes that weave through a hazelnut grove.



At 270 years old, the nation's largest black cottonwood stands more than 155 feet tall and more than 28 feet in circumference.



Enjoy paddling on tranquil Mission Lake. Launch your kayak or canoe from the Mission Lake Day-use Area boat ramp.



**Willamette Mission State Park**  
10991 Wheatland Road NE  
Gervais, OR 97026  
503-393-1172

Reservations: 800-452-5687

[oregonstateparks.org](http://oregonstateparks.org)



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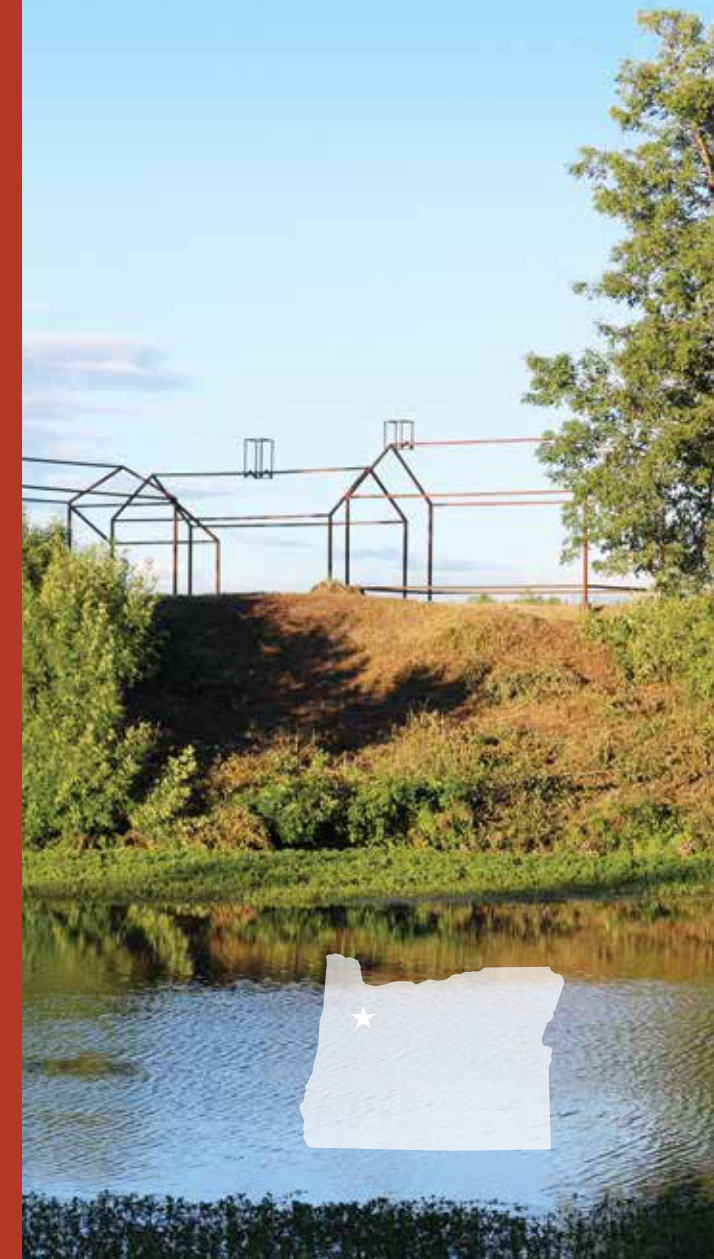
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63400-8065 (10/17)



**Willamette Mission State Park**

### Recreation Guide



## Water Play

Anglers will enjoy fishing for bluegill, crappie, carp and largemouth bass in Mission and Goose lakes. Fishing at Goose Lake requires some trailblazing, and the undeveloped trail can flood in the winter and spring. At Mission Lake, cast your line from the ADA-accessible fishing dock.

Access the Willamette River from the boat launch next to the Wheatland Ferry, at the north end of the park. Two trails from the Filbert Grove Day-use Area lead to a beach with a gravel bar popular for launching kayaks.

## Visiting with your Horse

Horses and their people love to explore more than six miles of horse trails that twist in and out of thick foliage and offer views of the Willamette River, Windsor Island Slough, meadows and farmlands.

Equestrians can enjoy four overnight horse camps with corrals. Each corral has room for two groups and four horses. Water is available.

## Group Camping and Picnicking

Camping at the primitive Beaver Island group campsite has room for 100 tent campers.

Three reservable picnic shelters accommodate up to 150 people each and include spacious lawns, volleyball courts and horseshoe pits.

## Parking

Day-use parking permits are required in the park. You will need to display either a daily permit, a 12- or 24-month permit, or your camping receipt, valid for the days you are registered. Daily and annual permits are sold at [store.oregonstateparks.org](http://store.oregonstateparks.org) and major park offices.

## Restoring a floodplain forest

Situated on one of the largest remaining floodplain forests in the Willamette Valley, the park provides crucial habitat, food and water quality for native fish and wildlife, including salmon, migratory songbirds, raptors and amphibians. Missionaries arrived to vast swaths of these low-lying forests along the middle reach of the Willamette River. But a century of population growth and farming has all but displaced them; only 10 percent of the original forests remain.

Where native Oregon ash and black cottonwood once thrived, invasive weeds now flourish. In order to restore this vital habitat, nonprofit Willamette Riverkeeper began a project in 2013 to remove invasive species and plant native trees and shrubs. The project is set to continue through 2022, and already native plants are starting to reappear and even thrive.

## Help keep the park beautiful: Leave No Trace

### ► Keep to the trail.

Taking shortcuts causes erosion and harms plants and wildlife.

### ► Take only pictures.

Do not take plants or feed, harass or capture wildlife.

### ► Leave only footprints.

Please—do not carve or write on trees, rocks or other structures.

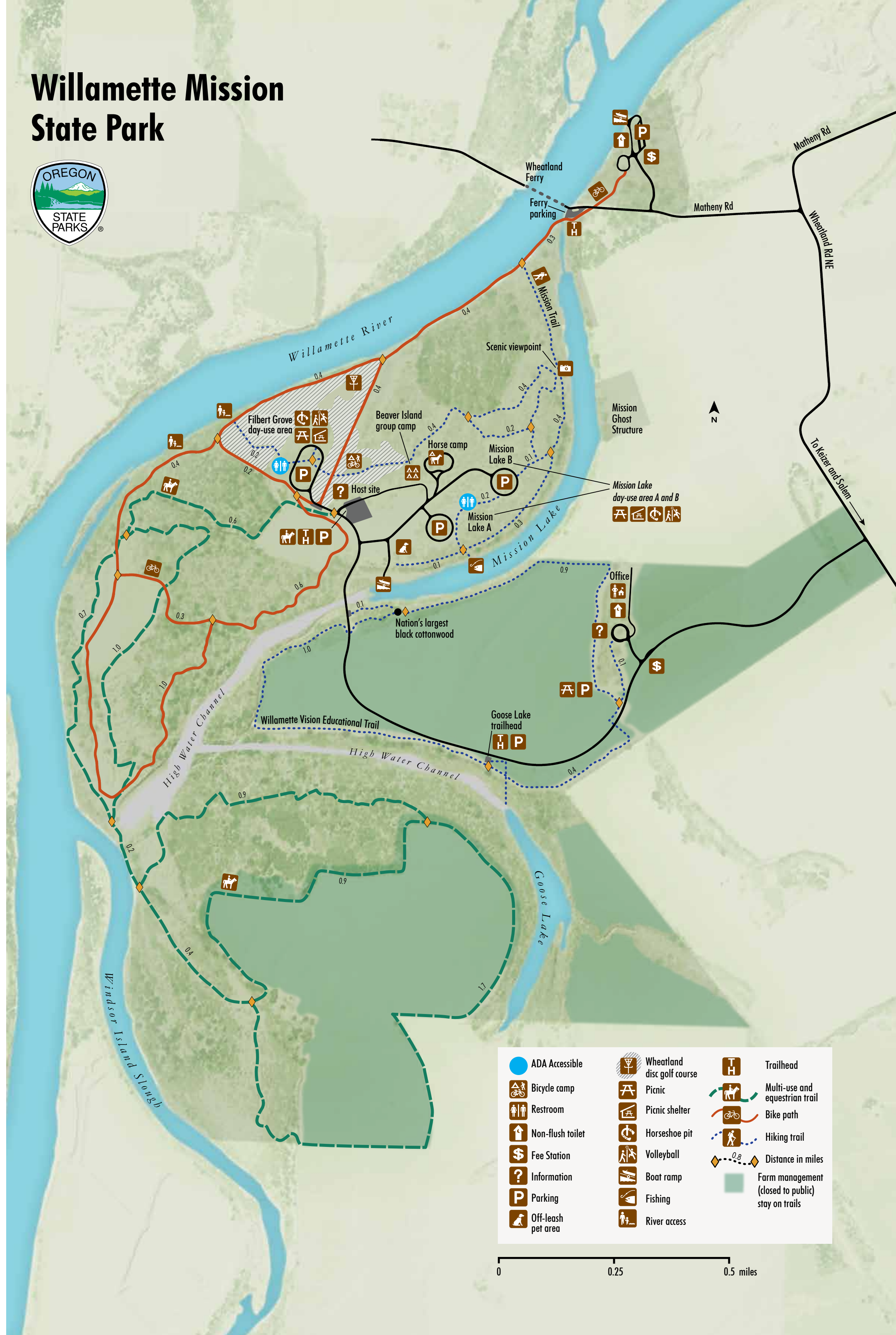
### ► We love pets.

But they must be on a leash no longer than 6' (except in the pet exercise area), and their wastes properly disposed.

### ► Smoking is prohibited

in state parks.

# Willamette Mission State Park



ADA Accessible	Wheatland disc golf course	Trailhead
Bicycle camp	Picnic shelter	Multi-use and equestrian trail
Restroom	Horseshoe pit	Bike path
Non-flush toilet	Volleyball	Hiking trail
Fee Station	Boat ramp	Distance in miles
Information	Fishing	Farm management (closed to public) stay on trails
Parking	River access	
Off-leash pet area		

0 0.25 0.5 miles