



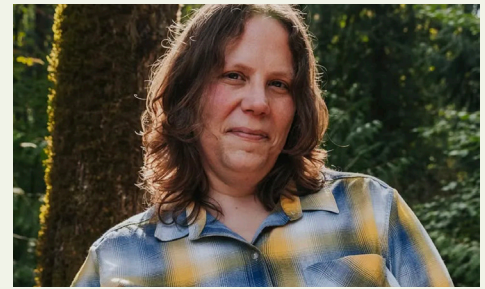
A DISABLED HIKER'S GUIDE TO 5 WASHINGTON STATE PARKS

SALTWATER

Lake Sammamish | Flaming Geyser | Federation Forest | Dash Point | Saltwater

This assessment and guide were written by Syren Nagakyrie of Disabled Hikers, with funding and collaboration from the Washington State Parks Foundation.





Syren Nagakyrie is the founder of Disabled Hikers, a nonprofit organization building disability community and justice in the outdoors. Syren grew up with multiple disabilities and encounters numerous barriers to outdoor recreation but has always found nature to be a place of belonging. As a long-time disabled activist and community builder, Syren is committed to building a movement of Disabled leadership in the outdoors. They are the author of *The Disabled Hiker's Guide to Northern California: outdoor adventures accessible by car, wheelchair, and foot* (2024) and *The Disabled Hiker's Guide to Western Washington and Oregon* (2022), both published by FalconGuides. They also work with parks, organizations, brands, and government agencies to improve access and belonging for disability community.

www.disabledhikers.com



The Washington State Parks Foundation's vision is to ensure a vibrant and inclusive state parks system for generations to enjoy. This guide to accessibility in five Washington State Parks was developed with the support and collaboration of the Washington State Parks Foundation.

www.waparks.org





Saltwater State Park

Overview

Saltwater State Park is located in Des Moines, between Federal Way and SeaTac, less than two miles from the interstate. It used to be a popular urban camping destination, but the campground is now closed. It is still a wonderful day-use park with beach access, picnic facilities, and miles of trails.

There are no directional signs when you enter the park, and I could not find a map or brochures at the entrance station, so be sure to check out the map online. Once you enter the park, go past the first parking lot at the entrance station and continue until the road ends at the parking area. To the left are the restrooms and picnic shelter and to the right is the beach.

Note that Saltwater State Park is directly under a flight path for SeaTac International Airport. Planes fly frequently overhead, and they are very loud.



Resources

Park phone number: (253) 661-4955 | [State Park website](#) | [State Park Official Map](#) | [Virtual Park Tour](#)



The beach at Saltwater State Park.

Suggested Activities

Take a stroll or roll along the beach then picnic along a creek.

There is a paved path that travels along the beach, above a seawall of boulders, with nice views across the sound. It is a great place for birding and taking in the sea air. Then have a picnic under the trees at the Creek Shelter, which is wheelchair accessible and reservable.



Flat, level access to the beach near the concession stand.



The paved trail along the shoreline.



A parking spot and trail head at the beach.

What's Accessible?

PARKING

Beach Parking Area: There is a large, paved parking lot with two sections that extends from the beach to the picnic area. The beach parking area has four designated accessible spots near the beach access, but none of them are van accessible. There is one parking spot directly next to the paved trail that has a blue parking hump and a striped aisle next to it, but no accessible parking sign.

Picnic Parking Area: There is one ADA accessible spot as you turn left into the picnic parking area. There are two ADA accessible spots in front of the Creek Shelter. There is an access aisle in between, but the parking spots may not be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair accessible van.

Bluff Parking Area: The parking lot adjacent to the entrance station and across from the Bluff Interpretive trail is paved but is on a steep slope and does not have any accessible parking spots. The most accessible parking option is one parallel spot in front of the entrance station and directly across from the interpretive trailhead, but be careful of cars entering the park.



The accessible parking and access route to the Creek Shelter.



The parallel parking spot in front of the entrance station.

RESTROOMS AND FACILITIES

Beach Area: There is one restroom building in the beach parking area. It is on the south side of the parking lot, about 200 feet east of the concession building. A small wooden sign at the concession building points towards the restrooms. There is no accessible parking at the restrooms – you would have to park and then take the sidewalk along the edge of the parking lot. There are two parking spots with an access aisle in front of the restroom, but they are not designated accessible parking.

The restrooms are gendered, each with one accessible stall that has 60 inches of clearance and three grab bars. The faucets are push-button activated and the pipes are wrapped with sufficient clearance underneath. There is a privacy wall in front of the entrance doors, but there is still sufficient room for access. The front doors have a handle and are light with a springy motion.

There is another restroom building about halfway down the shoreline trail, but it is closed and would not be wheelchair accessible.

PICNIC AREAS

Creek Shelter: The Creek Shelter is the designated accessible shelter in the park and is reservable. It is located on the left side of the parking area – turn left at the end of the road and continue straight past the roundabout. Accessible parking is on the left directly in front of the shelter. From the parking spots, there is a 1 – 1.5-inch lip as you transition to sidewalk. The sidewalk inclines at 5% for a few feet and then reaches the shelter. The shelter is on a concrete pad. There are six tables, one has an accessible overhang. The grills are 34 inches high, but the surface surrounding them has textured metal plates with high diamond shapes on them that may be difficult for wheel-users to navigate. The grills also have high side walls that restrict access from sitting height.



The beach restroom building.



The door and handle to the women's restroom.



The accessible creek shelter.



The picnic table next to the Creek Shelter.

There is also a first-come picnic table next to the shelter. Follow the sidewalk to the left, and there is a bench and one table on a concrete pad. Unfortunately, the table does not have an accessible overhang.

Beach Shelter: Located adjacent to the paved shoreline trail, this shelter is on a concrete pad in the grass. It is currently not wheelchair accessible, but will be renovated.

Bluff Shelter: The Bluff Shelter is located near the top of the Bluff Interpretive Trail. To access it, you have to cross a dirt and natural surface path between two fence posts. The concrete pad has a 2 – 4-inch threshold and there are no accessible tables or grills.



The Bluff Shelter.

Picnic tables are also scattered through the beach and picnic area. They are typically on concrete pads in the grass. There are several picnic tables to the left of the concession stand, beneath a couple of very large horse chestnut trees – watch out for their spiky seed pods.



The beach access point with steps.



The shoreline trail, picnic area, and playground.



A damaged section of the shoreline trail, with logs pushed up against the pavement.

TRAILS

Shoreline Trail

0.2 mile one way; flat; paved

From the edge of the parking lot, follow the paved path towards the beach. There is one slightly rough and raised section at the transition between the parking lot and paved trail. Beach access is directly in front of you, but it requires walking down two concrete steps. The beach is narrow, especially at high tide, and generally firm sand with small rocks. To continue walking along the shoreline, follow the paved trail to the right and cross a paved footbridge over the creek. The bridge has horizontal wood slat barriers through which you may be able to view the creek. There is a 1 – 2-inch shallow gap as you cross the end of the bridge. The paved trail then splits into a short loop – I recommend staying to the right. The left side of the loop has a very narrow, eroded and collapsed section with logs and rocks pushed up against the trail. There is only about 10 inches of level pavement with a 2-inch drop-off on the edge.

Staying to the right, you'll pass a couple of picnic tables, a playground structure, and a closed restroom building. The trail then continues along the edge of the rock seawall. There are several benches along the way, and you can watch and listen for birds, sea lions, planes, and more.

About halfway down the trail, just before the picnic shelter, there is a collapsed and eroded section of pavement. The level section is about 2 feet wide, but there are still cracks running through it. The outer edge is mostly compact gravel and level, so you may be able to bypass the cracks. Just before the pavement ends, there is a pullout on the right – I recommend turning around here if you are using a wheelchair or scooter. The pavement continues just a few more feet then transitions to gravel and ends.

Bluff Interpretive Trail

0.3 mile; maximum 18% grade; loose gravel and natural surface

The trailhead is directly across from the entrance station, between two fence posts with 36 inches of clearance. The trail takes a 10% incline then passes an old building, and a trail information sign at the beginning of the loop. Continue straight ahead, on a 8 – 10% incline for 50 feet. There are printed plant identification signs stapled to small logs close to the ground along the edge of the trail. The trail continues on loose gravel at a 5-8% incline for a few more feet, then levels out briefly and takes another 10% incline as you approach the Bluff Shelter on the right. The trail then curves slightly left and levels out along the top of the bluff. There are views of the water through the trees, and a couple of picnic tables and benches along the right side. The edge of the bluff is protected by a wooden fence. At the halfway point of the loop, at the tip of the bluff, there is a wide grassy area with a couple of picnic tables and a view through the trees of the beach below.



A damaged section with cracks.



The start of the interpretive trail.



The interpretive trail inclines and then declines along the bluff.

The trail then heads back down the bluff, with a loose gravel surface. Take a maximum 18% decline for about 30 feet, then the trail continues on a gently rolling decline. As you pass an old chimney and a couple of picnic tables on the left, there are a couple of small roots rising 2 – 3 inches across the trail; they can be navigated around with care. There are also a couple of 5% cross slopes. Go right at the end of the loop to return to the trailhead.



View of the beach through the trees.

Other Features

Outdoor shower: There is an outdoor shower and scuba rinse station at the start of the shoreline trail. It is immediately adjacent to the paved trail at the edge of the parking lot. The surface is loose gravel with pavers. There are two push-button-activated shower heads; one shower head is a couple of feet high, the other is 6 feet high.

Trash Cans: There are several standard trash cans along the beach.

Water: I could not find any accessible water fountains.

Maps and Signage: There is an information board with a map located on the top of a grassy hill adjacent to the beach parking area. Another information board with map is located on the sidewalk near the Creek Shelter.

Cell reception: Cell reception is spotty.

Concession Stand: A concession stand is open daily from Memorial Day to Labor Day and on weekends in April, May, and September. It was not in operation during my visit.



The outdoor shower at the beach.



The concession building and sign pointing to the restrooms.

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