

Seattle, Washington to Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail to Missoula, Montana

I downloaded a map from RidewithGPS.com for the Great American Rail-Trail ([The Great American Rail-Trail \(draft 1\) \(to be reversed\) · Ride with GPS](#)) and followed it mostly from Seattle, Washington to Missoula, Montana. While on the trail east of Ellensburg, I met someone who has a YouTube channel called "Traveling with Seb." You can check out his episode 47 ([Episode 47, Rosalia to Ritzville on the Palouse to Cascades trail \(youtube.com\)](#)) for a sense of what the trail east of the Columbia River is like. Personally, I found the trail challenging and hard to follow, with numerous detours. Although I stayed on the trail most of the time, it was slow-going and mostly well maintained. It's quite a lengthy dirt trail!

Here's a summary of my experience on the trail, including accommodation options if you prefer to avoid camping:

Day 1 (Seattle to near Snoqualmie Falls)

- **Trail Condition:** Excellent, mostly paved with a slight uphill grade until a few miles before the Snoqualmie Falls, after which it transitions shortly to a highway and hiking trails near the falls.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels available (I camped under a bridge).
- **Approximate Miles:** 55

Day 2 (Near Snoqualmie Falls to Ellensburg)

- **Trail Condition:** Great trail with lots of downhill sections, mostly well-maintained gravel and dirt.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels available (I stayed at the Best Western).
- **Approximate Miles:** 82

Day 3 (Ellensburg to Othello)

- **Trail Condition:** Starts off well until I-90, then becomes sandy for 4 miles, followed by heavy gravel for a mile. After that, it's in good condition with a slight downhill to Beverly. The trail remains mostly good for about 10 miles, then transitions to a dirt road, and the last few miles are paved highway with a great shoulder leading into Othello.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels available, Quality Inn looked good (I camped in a ditch).
- **Approximate Miles:** 75

Day 4 (Othello to Ritzville or Ralston)

- **Trail Condition:** Mostly good gravel with some slow sections due to gravel or sand.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels in Ritzville or camping in the park at Ralston (I camped at the memorial park in Ralston, which allows free camping with tent pads, water available but no restroom at the campsite; one is located about ½ mile away on the trail).
- **Approximate Miles:** 55 (Ralston) or 65 (Ritzville)

Day 5 (Ralston or Ritzville to Rosalia)

- **Trail Condition:**
 - *Option 1 from Ralston:* The Cow Creek detour is slow due to out trestles. The trail beyond Cow Creek detour is OK.
 - *Option 2 through Ritzville:* This seems like (I did not go this way) an easier way to avoid the Cow Creek detour, staying on paved roads before returning to the trail.
- **Accommodation:** A hostel is set to open next year in Rosalia (I camped in a tunnel on the trail). For more info about the hostel, contact the owner of "Hole in the Ground Coffee" shop at 509-919-9559. She's excited about the new hostel and runs a great coffee shop at 508 S Whitman Ave, Rosalia, WA 99170.
- **Approximate Miles:** 60 (from Ritzville) or 65 (from Ralston)

Day 6 (Rosalia to Harrison)

- **Trail Condition:** Good gravel trail from Rosalia to the Idaho border. Then the trail transitions from dirt to pavement. Once in Plummer, Idaho you can take "Trail of Coeur d'Alene", a great paved trail.

- **Accommodation:** Camping in Harrison, Idaho.
- **Approximate Miles:** 50

Day 7 (Harrison, Idaho to Wallace, Idaho)

- **Trail Condition:** All paved trail with a very slight uphill grade.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels available (I stayed at Stardust Motel).
- **Approximate Miles:** 50

Day 8 (Wallace, Idaho to near Superior, Montana)

- **Trail Condition:** Great paved trail with a slight uphill to Mullan, followed by gravel roads uphill to Lookout Pass, and then a great downhill dirt road.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels in both St. Regis and Superior (I camped in Lolo National Forest between St. Regis and Superior).
- **Approximate Miles:** 68 (to Superior) or 54 (to St. Regis)

Day 9 (Superior or St. Regis to Missoula, Montana)

- **Trail Condition:** Mostly downhill and dirt. The Cry Bridge was closed, requiring a 3-mile detour back and a 3-mile stretch on Interstate I-90. The final third of the day was on good paved roads/trails to Missoula.
- **Accommodation:** Hotels available (I stayed at the Red Lion in Missoula).
- **Approximate Miles:** 70 (from Superior) or 85 (from St. Regis)