

# A North Coast Landmark

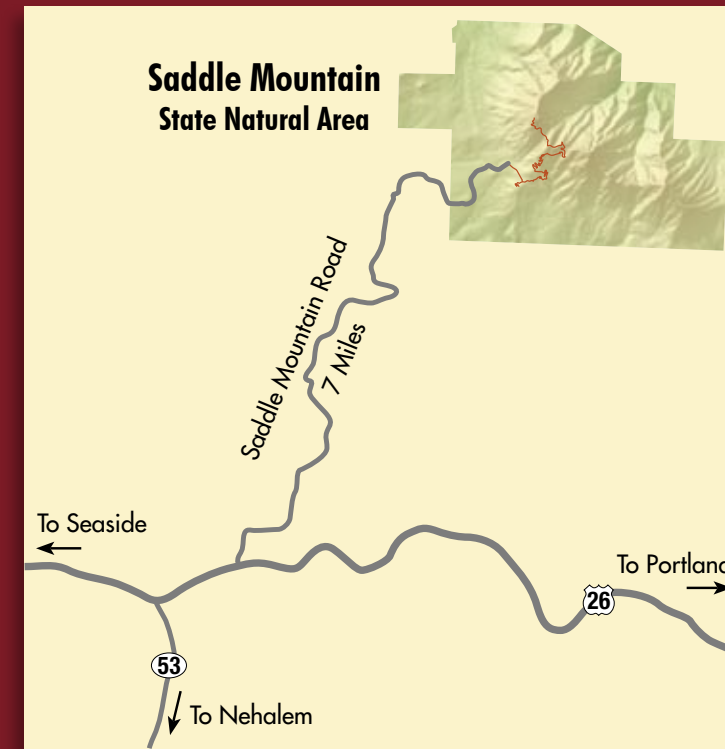
Early 20th-century park explorers described Saddle Mountain as a “strikingly picturesque pile of cliffed and chasmed rock.” Lewis and Clark mention the mountain in their Dec. 17, 1805 journal entries, depicting it as “rugged and uneven.” The peak is a feature in Native American tribal legends. The Clatsop Tribe called the mountain “Swallalahoost.”

Today, Saddle Mountain is cherished for its hiking, colorful wildflowers and rare plants. The site is an officially dedicated State Natural Area, the highest level of protection and recognition of natural habitat given under the Oregon Natural Areas Plan and Oregon Natural Heritage Act. Botanists and wildflower enthusiasts find the trail hike one of the most interesting in northwestern Oregon. The diversity and abundance of flowers, lichens and mosses is remarkable.

Saddle Mountain State Park is a rare living example of the northern Oregon Coast Range’s ice age past. Grasslands were once much more common in this area. Since the last ice age, much of the grassland of the coastal mountains has given way to forest. Over time, plant species became isolated in fewer and fewer grassland pockets. Some of the plants on Saddle Mountain’s grassy slopes are rare because of the habitat loss. Only a few coastal grassy “balds” remain that host the rarest species found on Saddle Mountain.

Amateur geologists also find Saddle Mountain intriguing. The mountain formed when a large lava flow of Columbia River basalt touched the ancient sea. Steam explosions caused by the hot rock hitting the cold water broke the rock into a giant pile of basalt fragments.

*U.S. Navy Lt. Charles Wilkes named Saddle Mountain in 1841 for the low, saddle-like curve between two peaks.*



# Saddle Mountain State Natural Area

## Trail Guide



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