

Kids in the Forest Hike Map



Kids in the Forest Hike Guide:

Meet your group outside the Mission Ridge Lodge

- Have students line up and count off for a head count
- Walk to Lake Clara Trailhead

Lake Clara Trailhead:

- Discuss Objectives: Exploring the difference between healthy and unhealthy forests, learning about forest habitats, and how humans and wildfire influence the health of forests.
- Give a few tips on trail etiquette: Leave no trace, stay on trails, pack-it-in/pack-it out, HAVE FUN! Ect. Identify a “caboose” or tail guide parent volunteer to take up the rear.

Stop 1: Healthy vs. Unhealthy Forest. Open forest on the uphill side of trail about 400m from trailhead. Nice place to look at well space ponderosa pine and discuss how the species has evolved to withstand low intensity wildfire. Sometimes I’ll have a group of kids try to run through the open pine, and another group run through the dense fir on the other side of the trail, and report back on how tough it is to get around in the dense forest. Use the tree ring photos to discuss fire scars and how we can learn from tree rings how often fires came through these landscapes naturally.

Stop 2: Habitat. Often we see Pikas in the Talas. Ask what the 4 things animals need are to survive. Food, water, shelter, and space. Discuss what types of animals might use this forest habitat and if the students observe any of the basic habitat components.

Stop 3: Tree Coring. At the intersection of the pipeline trail the group is generally pretty spaced out. This is an opportunity to re-group and “core a tree.” Have students guess the age of the tree, and all take turns drilling the increment bore into the tree. Pass the core around, count rings and see who guessed the closest.

Stop 4: Human caused Erosion. Stop at the failing roadbed and slump and ask if students think this was natural or human caused erosion. Ask what are some different ways erosion happens in nature? Discuss different types of erosion mechanisms, both natural and human caused; wind, rain, rivers, glaciers, gravity, landslides, etc. Human causes? Roads, development, bare soil on crop land, etc.

Stop 5: Landslide Lookout. Great spot to look across the valley at where “Castle Face” slid 2 years ago and discuss the natural role of landslides in shaping our landscape. Good spot to discuss the difference between deciduous and evergreen trees and to point out the larches in the Fall.

Stop 6: Decision Point. Based on time either continue up to the “midway” lift station and show the kids the lifts (most of the kids have never been to Mission or seen a ski lift). Or head back down the road to the lodge.

