

Smith Rock State Park

Central Oregon is a landscape of diversity. Flat plains, mountainous vistas, and scrambled volcanic features. To get to this popular state park you will travel over the flat plains that will lead you to a twisted topography that is home to the aptly named Crooked River. Although the river and the trails that follow it can be fairly level, there are gigantic rock features and their access trails, that are quite the opposite. These vertical volcanic features, along with providing very picturesque terrain, also draw thousands of rock climbers every year. In fact, the park provides staging areas and access trails to many of the main climbs. But for the more timid of us, the trails and views provide more than enough grandeur and excitement.

This is an Oregon state park, and the day use fee is five dollars. It is open year-round, but it can be extremely busy on weekends and sunny days. It is about 9 miles north of Redmond, Oregon, off of Highway 97. Take a right turn on NE Smith Rock Way. Because of its location in the high desert, distance from the Cascades, and lower elevation, it is quite hike-able in the winter. However, it can be quite hot in the summer, so bring plenty of water, and although pets on leash are allowed, for their safety, I would leave them home on hot days.

There are many trails as shown in the park map below. I took the Wolf Tree Trail for a bit, and the Misery Ridge/Mesa Verde/River Trail Loop, as shown on my maps. Any of the trails that follow the river will be fairly flat. Any other trail is likely to be very steep, and their gravelly surfaces can be slippery at any time of the year. Bicycles and horses are allowed on many of the trails, except for the steep ones.

Western Juniper and sagebrush make up a majority of the land cover, along with the basaltic, volcanic rocks. Ponderosa pines are sprinkled near the river. They aren't found on the upper terrain, as it is just too dry for them. The Wolf Tree Trail has a few oddly shaped ponderosa pines, that bear many trunks. Some say that they are a strange variety of conifer, but it's possible they are just subject to the extreme forces of water, heat, and time that have shaped these odd trees. The river supports a large population of Canadian geese. Hawks, Osprey, and Eagles often are seen above. In the warmer part of the year, I would be on the lookout for rattlesnakes as well.



The view to the west from the welcome center



The footbridge that leads to many of the Misery Ridge Trails



Looking northeast, up the Crooked River/the Wolf Tree Trail



One of the famous "Wolf Trees"



Looking up the steep Misery Ridge Trail



And down the trail



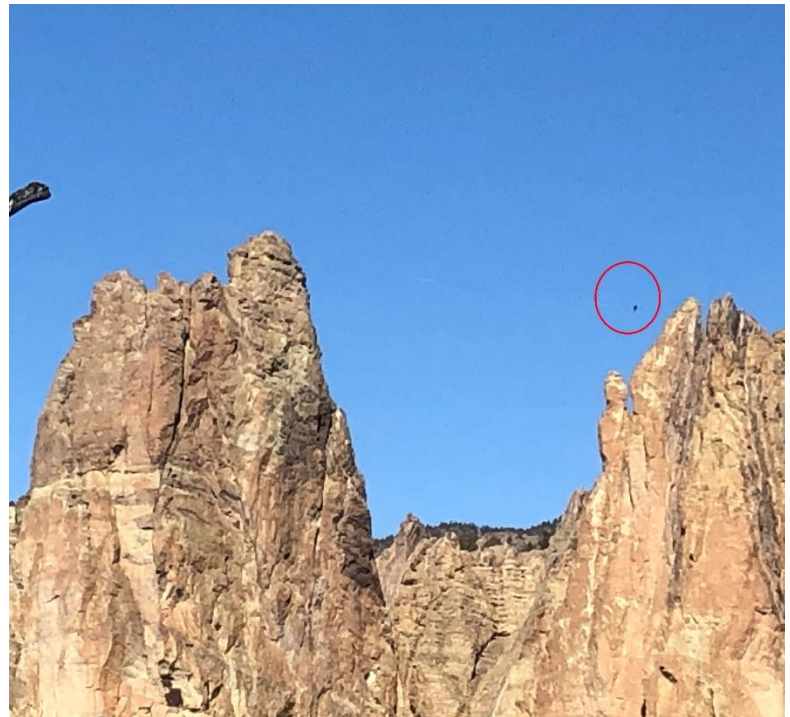
The Monkey Face rock looking west



Some climbers showing their skills on the Morning Glory Wall

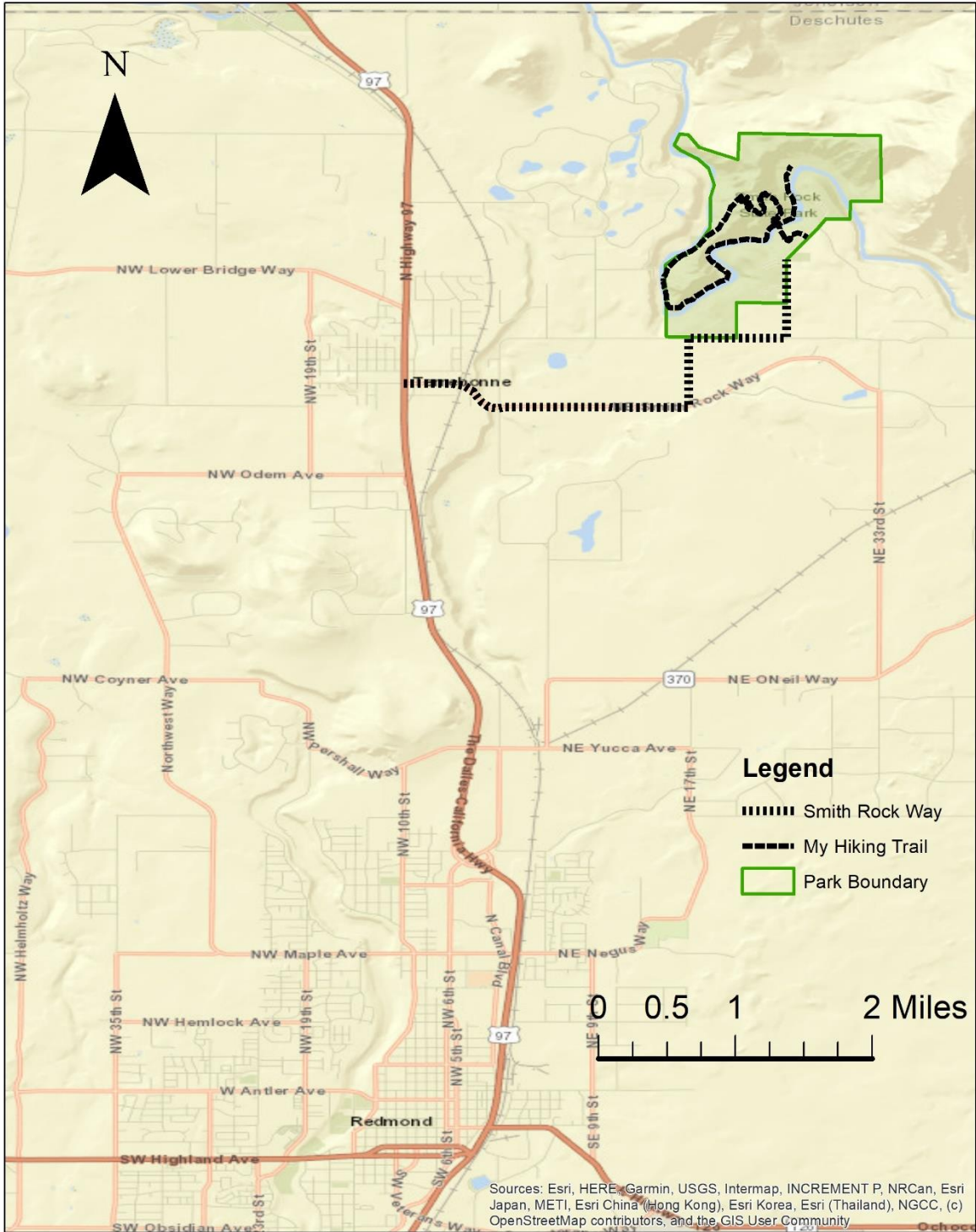


The ubiquitous Western Juniper



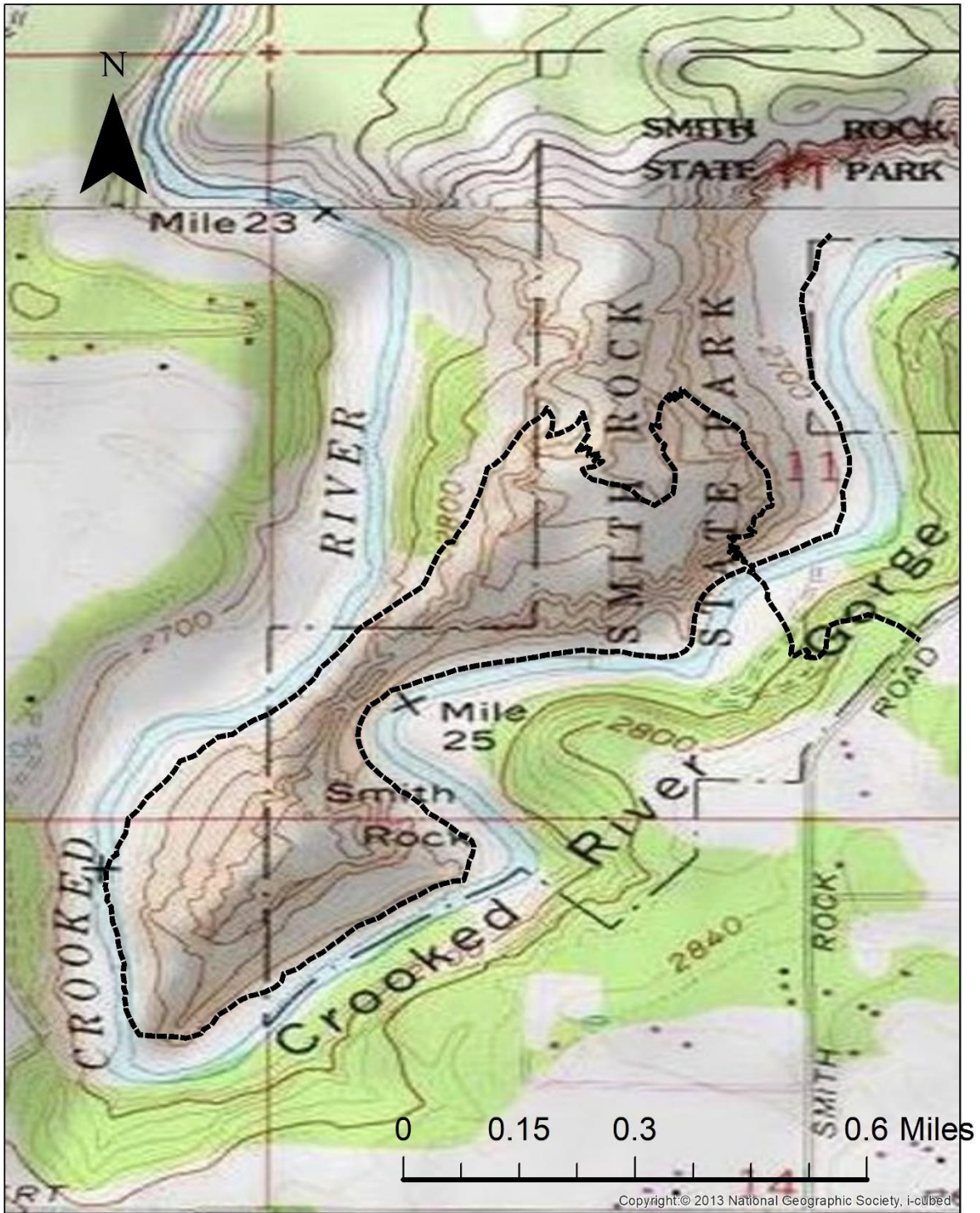
A tightrope walker in the red circle!

Smith Rock Trail



How to get there

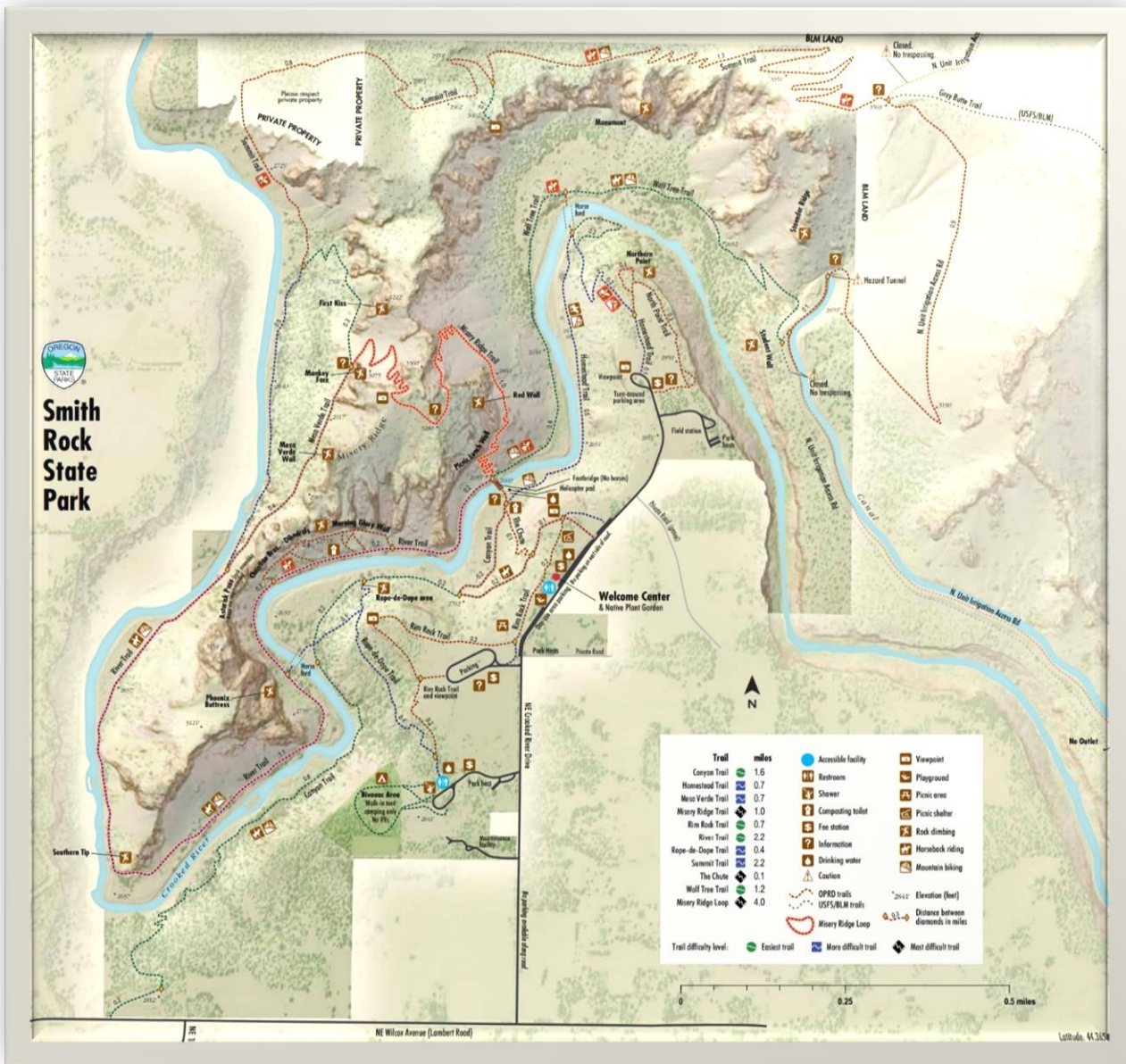
Smith Rock Trail



My routes shown in dashed black lines



Google Earth View of the park



The State Park Map