

Champoeg State Heritage Area

School Programming



Self-Guided Activities

Visitor Center

The Visitor Center is built on the 1860's site of the Donald Manson family home. The Manson wheat threshing barn still stands behind the Visitor Center. It was restored to its original structure.

Enjoy exhibits inside; outside you can tour the Mason barn and a 1960's kitchen garden.

Hours

October - February	11 am - 4 pm
March - May	10 am - 4:30 pm
June - September	9 am - 5 pm

Interactive Exhibits - Inside

- Champoeg History movie (~15 minutes)
 - Other movies available: bluebirds (nest box, recovery project), beaver, bears, wolves, steamboats & archeology
 - Can seat up to 30 people
- Life for the Kalapuya Indians
- Trappers
- Fur Trade
- From fur trade to farming
- The Vote to form a government
- The town of Champoeg and the great flood of 1861

Interactive exhibits - outside

- 1860s Heritage Garden (April - September)
 - See the monograph [1860s Kitchen Garden](#) for information
- 1860s wheat threshing barn

Riverside Day-use Area

Site of the monument commemorating the historic 1843 vote in favor of establishing an American government.

- See [The Origins of Champoeg Park](#) for the full history
- Interpretive panels on site
- Pavilion and Memorial Building are reservable (\$100)
- Four reservable picnic areas each with water and electric power

- Two restrooms
- A 4-mile walking and biking path leads from Riverside Day-use Area to the Butteville Store (open in summer)

Townsite Day-use Area

Site of the town of Champoeg, destroyed by a flood in 1861. The original streets are marked with wooden poles.

- See attached monographs [Champoeg Flood](#) and [River Rivals](#) for the full story.
- 2-mile walking trail from Townsite Trailhead to boat dock in Oak Grove Day-use Area passes our prairie restoration project.
- One reservable picnic area with water faucet and picnic tables
- Closest restroom is in the Riverside Day-use Area, a 1/3 mile walk on a paved trail.

Oak Grove Day-use Area

This location is named for its oak trees, part of an oak woodland that once thrived here. Before settlement, the Kalapuya Indians maintained the woodland by setting regular controlled fires.

- Six reservable picnic areas. Oak Grove #4 with covered shelter; Oak Grove 4, 6, and 7 have electric and water; Oak Grove 1, 2, and 3 have water only. One running water restroom and one vault toilet.
- Disc golf course (bring your own discs)
- Boat dock on the Willamette River (no safe swimming area in the park) with vault toilet nearby
- 2-mile walking trail passes a prairie restoration project and connects to the Townsite Day-use Area.

Nature Play Area

This playground replicates the local natural area with an osprey nest, tree fallen by beaver, beaver slide, fox den, growing willow shelters and river bed and pond.

Park in the Oak Grove Day-use Area and take the ¼ mile paved trail to the nature play area, located near campground Loop A. (No day-use parking at the playground)

Other Highlights

The ¼ mile Kitty Newell Trail leads north from the playground to the Kitty Newell gravesite, where the Nez Perce wife of a fur trapper was buried.

A ¼ mile walk over uneven ground leads south from the playground to the "Mother Oak." This 300-500-year-old Oregon white oak dates to the time when this entire area was an oak woodland.

Follow trail to Mother Oak, continue uphill and turn left to find the David Weston family gravesite, a blacksmith at Champoeg and one of the 52 men who voted to create the provisional government.

Ranger-led activities

We are happy to provide programs year-round from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We recommend scheduling at least one month in advance. Most programs accommodate up to 15 students, and we can tailor the program to the age of the students. We suggest teachers lead other activities/stations (depending on field trip goal) and students rotate through each station, including the ranger-led station.

Programs and Tours

Champoeg History (~20 minutes)

An overview of Champoeg history, with interactive use of the exhibits in the visitor center.

Wheat harvest demonstration (~20 minutes)

Students will visit the barn and learn why and how wheat was grown in the Willamette Valley. Ranger will demonstrate the process, from harvesting sheaves to grinding wheat berries to flour. Students can thresh (stomp on wheat) and grind wheat berries using the “quern” tool.

*Those with wheat/grass contact allergy shouldn't touch sheaves or berries

Barn Tour | ~30 minutes

An overview of the 1800's Donald Manson farmstead and discussion of the architecture of the barn. Students will learn about the clues archaeologists used to discover the barn was built from lumber damaged during the devastating 1861 flood.

Garden Tour (~20 minutes)

An overview of the plants found in a typical 19th century kitchen garden and their uses. Students plant, weed or harvest, depending on time of year.

Furs (~20 minutes)

Students will get to see and touch 15 furs of animals that once lived in the area, or still do. Optional activity: students match furs to animals.

Townsite Tour (~1 hour, with walk from Visitor Center)

Learn about life in the town of Champoeg and the flood that washed it away. Examine artifacts found during archeological digs.

Students will take a 1 mile walk from Visitor Center, or visitors can park at the Townsite Day-use Area.

Birth of Oregon Tour (~15-20 minutes)

Visit the monument in the Riverside Day-use Area and learn a brief history of the area and the historic vote. Using old photos and props, students become people of the time and recreate the vote that made this land American and not British.

Additional topics

- Habitat types at Champoeg: oak woodland, wet prairie, and dry prairie/grasslands..
- Wildlife of the Willamette Valley

Logistics

Cost: Events and programs are free. Parking is \$5 per vehicle. Day-use parking permits can be purchased at the park and must be displayed on the dashboard. Annual state park permits are for sale in the Visitor Center and at store.oregonstateparks.org.

Group Areas: Day-use picnic areas are reservable at oregonstateparks.reserveamerica.com (\$50). They are first-come, first-served when not in use. They are often unreserved and available weekdays during fall and spring.

Both Riverside and Oak Grove Day-Use Areas have areas that can accommodate groups of 100+. Covered areas are Oak Grove DU Area #4 and the Pavilion in Riverside DU area.

Additional picnic areas are always first-come, first-served and suitable for smaller groups. Example: Riverside, near restroom.

The picnic tables outside the Visitor Center are first-come, first-served and can accommodate a group of 30.

See our [park map](#) for details on facilities and landmarks noted in this document.



Government seal made by the Provisional Government that resulted from the 1843 vote at Champoeeg