

Scenic Hot Springs

Request for Permission to Visit

About Scenic Hot Springs

Scenic Hot Springs is located on forty acres of private property in-holding, bounded on all four sides by National Forest near Stevens Pass. This private property has been dedicated to remain in as pristine a state as possible while still providing an opportunity for people to enjoy the unique relaxing and therapeutic experience of soaking in natural hot springs. The main feeds at Scenic Hot Springs run 115F and 105F, respectively, except for the May-June spring snowmelt which brings the hotter feed down to 50-60F for a few weeks before rebounding back to 115F in late spring. The predominant dissolved mineral in the hot springs water is lithium, which might explain why everyone is so mellow after soaking at Scenic.

During the spring months only the 105F feed will be used, limiting the number of visitors during the day. Be sure to check conditions prior to requesting access . . . and an after-trip report is always welcome by the stewards . . . Matt or Rick.

Scenic Hot Springs is in the process of obtaining the necessary permits to re-open to the general public. This is a long, expensive and arduous process; necessitating strict access controls to the property. Everyone who wishes to visit must have advance permission balanced against on-site evaluation, inspections, and improvement work. Permit-related activities take precedence over requests for visits. Additionally, large bookings may result in closing the springs for exclusive access. Likewise, volunteer clean-up parties (to help remove trash and improve trails) will result in the closing of the hot springs to individual requests. Please be considerate of these events.

Scenic Hot Springs is nude-friendly, as is typical of wilderness-situated rustic hot springs. You may wear as much or as little clothing for your comfort as you wish within the property (including the trails and springs area). However, lewd activity (or any activity that discomforts others) will not be tolerated and will result in your expulsion from the property without recourse.

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To Gain Access

Step One: Read the Conditions of Access following this section before asking if it would be possible to visit. Supply the following information in an email to scenichotsprings@gmail.com stating that you “explicitly accept the Conditions of Access required prior to a visit to Scenic”:

Name of Responsible Party: _____

Desired Date & Time of Visit: _____ No of People: _____

A statement by yourself, and anybody else under your request, that all members “have read and will abide by the Conditions of Access while on the Scenic Hot Springs property”.

Step Two: Give back. If the date you request is available, make a contribution via the Paypal button on the Scenic website at <http://scenichotsprings.blogspot.com> to help offset maintenance costs. Give a least a few days advance notice to process your request. If short notice, email a copy of the completed PayPal transaction to scenichotsprings@gmail.com facilitate the process:

Mon-Fri visits: A contribution (\$5 x no. of people) of \$ _____ ,

Sat, Sun (and Holiday) visits: A contribution (\$10 x no. of people) of \$ _____ ,

Supply the make, color and license number of the vehicle you plan on using:

Step Three: We will email permission good for only the day you request. Please make two copies of this email. Carry one with you and place the other copy on the dash of your car.

If by some chance you are unable to visit the day you asked for we will try to accommodate you at a future date. Contributions are non-refundable.

By going through the above steps you acknowledge that you have read the Conditions of Access below and that you (and all members of your party) accept them. You also acknowledge that you are 18 or over.

Conditions of Access

Scenic Hot Springs is PRIVATE PROPERTY and you must agree to abide by the owner’s wishes, terms and conditions prior to conditional access. Application for a reservation constitutes acceptance of the following terms and conditions:

- 1) You acknowledge the rugged nature of the terrain you wish to visit and the nature of soaking in natural hot springs. You understand that the hot springs are not chlorinated and that sanitary conditions can not be guaranteed in such a primitive location. You will be appropriately prepared for unpredictable weather conditions and steep, rough terrain. You assume for yourself and your guests, any and all risks, implicit and explicit, while on the property known as Scenic Hot Springs. Your guests, by accompanying you, acknowledge and accept these risks and likewise release the owner and stewards from liability.
- 2) Minors under the age of eighteen (18) must be accompanied by a legally-responsible adult guardian. Parents or guardians are responsible to control the behavior of their children.
- 3) No children under the age of six (6). Young children do not have fully-developed thermo-regulatory systems, making soaking in the hot temperatures of the hot springs a potential danger of hyperthermia or heat stroke with few warning signs.
- 4) The pools are for soaking. Do not swim, horseplay, or dive in the pools! Keep your head above water to avoid inadvertently inhaling water and the algae present in all natural hot springs.

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- 5) Do not soak in the pools if you have open sores, an infectious skin condition, or suffer from intestinal distress. These pools are communal and you have a responsibility to fellow soakers. Make restroom breaks before entering pools. Rinse yourself off before entering pools.
- 6) No Nighttime Soaking: Myself, and my guests will be **OFF THE SITE** before sunset. For our purposes, sunset is defined as the moment the sun dips below the mountain ridgelines as seen from the springs. Give yourself adequate time to be off the property before darkness descends abruptly on the trail.
- 7) No Fires or Campfires: I understand that this is a fire restricted area.
- 8) No Dogs or other pets, No Camping, No Firearms, No Glass Containers, period.
- 9) Alcohol in moderation (preferably none).
- 10) Respect the site by soaking quietly and respectfully of other soakers who may be up there. Stay on the trails and take all litter out with you, leaving the site clean. Clothing-optional is the norm and you should expect that you will experience nudity in the pools and often on the trail up. Lewd behavior, however, is not tolerated.

Winter Conditions (Additional Requirements)

During winter conditions the owner and the stewards of Scenic Hot Springs reserve the right to close access to the property when conditions, in our sole judgment, are too dangerous. Anyone who has a reservation for Scenic during winter conditions is required to check the Scenic Blog just prior to heading out for closures. Any guests who have reservations for that date will be given an opportunity for a future visit.

During winter cold weather conditions, visitors are expected to carry sufficient clothing and survival supplies in the event you are stranded by deep snowfall or a sudden change in weather.

- 1) Practice layering of your clothing. Do not wear cotton as cotton, wet, saps body heat. Wear a hat and gloves, as needed.
- 2) Carry three days worth of food. Keep yourself hydrated.
- 3) Carry at least three different ways of lighting a fire in an emergency.
- 4) Carry your cell phone. Cell phones often work at the hot springs site.
- 5) Snow can get very deep at Scenic during the height of winter, making snowshoes an essential. Scenic also has steep slopes that may present snow-slide hazards in addition to severe icing of the trail. Spikes and/or crampons may be necessary.

Large Bookings & Exclusive Access

A request for access does not grant your party exclusive use of the springs. Your request simply allows you access during the daylight hours of the day you want to reserve. On busy days, such as weekends, you may be sharing the hot spring pools with other groups. To reserve individual time-slices for reservations is unworkable and limits enjoyment of the springs.

However, on occasion we will allow a large group to have Exclusive Access to the springs if there are not already existing requests or reservations. We generally do this for cultural, social and fraternal groups. If you would like to reserve Exclusive Access to the springs for your group, contact the stewards directly with the following considerations:

1. The contribution for an Exclusive reservation is \$100 during a weekday (Monday-Friday) and \$150 for a weekend (Saturday or Sunday) or traditional holiday. We will not make or accept any other reservations for that date.
2. Consider how you will make parking arrangements as we cannot allow unsupervised vehicle access beyond the gate. It is suggested that your group take full advantage of car-pooling.
3. We will supply you with Hot Springs Closure signs to post at the gate to deter casual trespassers but we cannot guarantee that trespassers will not try to crash your party. You will have your confirmation email to show to trespassers and urge them to leave.
 - a. With a large group it is sometimes prudent to assign one of your members to remain at the gate and inform casual trespassers that the springs are closed for an exclusive event.
4. If there is time, one of the stewards will siphon and flush the pools in advance of your visit; and also post signs.

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During the pre-permit phase, Scenic Hot Springs is not a commercial, for-profit venture. The cost of on-going maintenance, clean-up, and county-mandated control of access is partially offset by donations by those who request and would like to visit that keep the site available, controlled, and maintained. The majority of the funds used to manage and maintain the property comes out of the pockets of the stewards.

Your request will be determined primarily on your attitude, on acceptance of the Conditions of Access, on the number of pending requests, and our ability to maintain reasonable conditions (and conditions depend highly on contributions). If we, as stewards, are unable to control access or the conditions of the site due to inadequate contributions, then we must restrict access severely . . . we are, after all, not required to grant access to anyone. Your donations keep Scenic open.

We realize that these are trying times for some people and that even a \$5 or \$10 per person contribution is hard for a few to come up with. If you simply can't afford to offer a contribution and would still like to visit Scenic Hot Springs legally, let us know. We are reasonable people and I'm sure we can work something out. Options include acceptable in-place volunteer work on-site at the time of your visit or a verified, comparable donation in lieu to a local charity feeding and housing those less fortunate.

Clothing-Optional Nature of the Hot Springs

Scenic Hot Springs is clothing-optional . . . as are most rustic or primitive hot springs. That means you can wear as little (or as much clothing) as you are comfortable with while soaking at the hot springs. Since the Scenic property is private and surrounded on all sides by forest, clothing-optional is legal and accepted on the property.

There are many reasons for a clothing-optional nature. Hot springs are often perceived as very special (sometimes mystical) places to immerse oneself and relax in nature. Many people consider soaking nude as the only way to really immerse oneself in that experience. There is rarely any sexual overtone to soaking nude . . . it is simply the best way to experience the tranquil nature of the springs.

Hot spring waters do have a beneficial effect. The pH and minerals of the springs leave the skin feeling alive and soothing after a soak. Wearing swimsuits or clothing in the pools simply impedes the beneficial actions of the waters on your skin.

Wearing clothing also dissolves any detergents, sweat and dirt into the communal waters. Many people consider this unkind to the waters . . . degrading the beneficial properties.

There is also one other aspect of nude versus clothed that needs to be addressed at any remote and rustic hot spring . . . that is of the attitude of a conservative culture that results in clothed soaker's eventually pushing out the traditional way of soaking nude . . . to the point of scaring away any open-minded use of the hot springs. This has happened at several hot springs on the west coast, leaving the hot springs effectively in control of a small group of very conservative users. We will not allow this to happen at Scenic.

Nearby Camping

Until Scenic finishes the permitting and renovation phase we cannot allow any night-time use of the hot springs nor camping on the property. For those of you who would like to combine some camping, maybe hiking along with a visit to the hot springs, there are some very nice camping locations within 10-12 miles of Scenic. Two (Money Creek and Beckler River) are developed Forest Service campgrounds operated by Hoodoo Recreation Services. They charge a fee, and require advance reservations during the open season, which runs from May until typically Labor Day in September. During the off, closed season it is possible to camp in these locations free if you are discreet.

Beyond the developed campgrounds there are a large number of semi-developed sites scattered around the area for first-come, first-served camping at no charge. The ones of note and close to Scenic are along the Beckler River Road, beyond and further north of the developed campground; and a number of really nice sites along the Old Cascade Highway and the Tye River.

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Money Creek Campgrounds (fee site)

A developed Forest Service campground operated by a Hoodoo, this shaded campground on the banks of South Fork Skykomish River is tucked between busy Highway 2 and the BNSF railway tracks, and the traffic noise can be heavy at times. The surrounding forest includes majestic old growth trees. Popular activities in the area include hiking and fishing. The fee for camping is \$16-18 per night through the [National Recreation Reservation System](http://www.recreation.gov/welcome.do?topTabIndex=Home) (<http://www.recreation.gov/welcome.do?topTabIndex=Home>).

Directions: Drive US Highway 2 to Old Cascade Highway, just west of milepost 46. Turn onto the Old Cascade Highway (south) and continue for one mile. Turn right on Miller River Road (FS Road #6410). Continue approximately two miles to the campground entrance.

Beckler River Campgrounds (fee site)



Another developed Forest Service campground operated by a Hoodoo for the Forest Service, this campground's dense surrounding forest and river noise creates a nice escape from the bustle of the highway. Good jumpoff point for recreational activities in the North Fork Skykomish and West Fork Foss River areas. The fee for camping is \$16-18 per night through the [National Recreation Reservation System](http://www.recreation.gov/welcome.do?topTabIndex=Home) (<http://www.recreation.gov/welcome.do?topTabIndex=Home>).

Directions: Drive US Highway 2 to just west of milepost 50. Turn north on Beckler River Road #65. Continue 1.5 miles to the campground entrance on the left side of the road.

Undeveloped Beckler River Campsites



There are literally dozens of undeveloped campsites tucked up against the Beckler River at the end of short dirt roads off the Beckler River Road (FS65). During the summer and on weekends these sites are grabbed real fast but they are there for the taking (no fees). The further in you travel north on the Beckler River Road, the more elaborate and spacious these sites seem to become. A favorite is a large, multi-site campsite seven miles in at the confluence of the Beckler River with the Rapid River (right where the paved road ends and becomes gravel, but before the bridge). There are even more nice camp sites east along Forest Service Road 6530, the dirt road that parallels the Rapid River.

the Tye River



L-Chute Falls on the Tye River

Respect this private property.

Undeveloped Campsites near Deception Creek and

Six miles east of Skykomish, at milepost 55, is the turn onto the Old Cascade Highway (FS 67). This scenic, paved road somewhat parallels north of Highway 2 through mixed old growth on the other side of the Tye River before it rejoins Highway 2 at milepost 58 (the Iron Goat Interpretive Center). Along this stretch of tightly winding pavement there are a number of shaded campsites within sight and south of the paved road, most of which sit on cleared spaces overlooking the bedrock-cut gorges formed by the Tye River as it races down to join Deception and Martin Creeks to become the South Fork of the Skykomish River. There are a number of spectacular waterfalls near these campsites . . . the best known, L-Chute Falls. These campsites are known collectively as the Deception Creek Campgrounds and they are free for the taking on a first-come, first-served basis. Though the land between the Old Cascade Highway and the river is public land, several miles of the most eastward stretch of the Old Cascade Highway is posted private property on the north side of the road.

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Alpen Falls of the Tye River

There is one other campsite of note that few know about yet is one of my favorite places . . . and that is Alpine Falls (aka Alpen Falls). The Tye River does a sharp swing southward to the other side of Hwy 2, swings back around westerly and cascades with a roar over steep bedrock. The river curves carve out a spit of forest beside the highway that presents a cozy, relatively level area that locals have discovered and improved with a few campfire rings. It is extremely close to the highway yet secluded into it's own place by the constant roar of the waterfalls right by your campsites.

Getting there is simple: immediately past MP55 and the beginning of the Old Cascade Highway look for a large pullout on the right. That's where you park and fifty feet down you're into the campsites!

Parking and Security of your Vehicle

Car prowling, break ins and vandalism are continuing problems for many Forest service trailheads. A car parked at a secluded forest trailhead parking area is an inviting target because the thieves know that the owners of these vehicles are likely to be gone for an extended period of time and the area is not under routine observation. Scenic is no exception. A thief, seeing a vehicle pull into the forest service road leading to Scenic can expect that once the occupants start on their hike up the vehicle will be alone for at least several hours . . . plenty of time to break the glass and take what they want. The Forest Service cannot patrol all the trailhead in the forest. Chances of getting caught are next to nothing and a car parked at a trailhead is an easy target. You need to be proactive in securing and protecting your possessions before you head in to the springs.

If you have a choice of vehicles take the less attractive car . . . the beater. You are less likely to be considered of having anything in the vehicle of value. Secondly, don't leave wallets, cameras, cell phones or anything of value in plain sight inside the car. If it is of value, take it with you! Don't consider that locking items up in the trunks out of sight helps. It might a little but these thieves have plenty of time and privacy to force the trunk of the car open.

Consider that the damage they may do to your vehicle may render it undrivable. Tires have been slashed in the past. Invest in towing insurance such as AAA Preferred . . . enough to have your vehicle towed back home. Review your auto insurance to cover losses should they happen. Above all report theft to the sheriff's department and to the stewards so that we know what is going on. We have installed trail cameras in the parking area near the gate in hopes of catching these random crimes.

Tips for a Safe and Enjoyable Visit

Scenic is Wilderness

Wildlife: You may not see it but Scenic is teeming with wildlife. A simple forty-five minute hike up to the hot springs can reveal numerous clues to the presence of that wildlife . . . from Stellar Blue Jays to deer and bears.

Scenic is the home to a resident female black bear that has just given birth to her next set of cubs this year (2011). Our bear is difficult to spot as she avoids the trails and hot spring areas (probably because we are so noisy and smell. But the signs are there . . . bear tracks, claw sharpening on the trees, and torn-apart tree stumps. Because we do have a resident bear in the area, bear protocol is always a wise move. Be a noisy hiker . . . don't surprise mom and cubs. Our bear lives down in the extreme lower section of the property. In the very early morning and near twilight the bear traverses to and from the upper slopes in search of food such as the blueberries and huckleberries that are coming into ripeness during the summer months. Spend some time observing the trail and being aware of your surroundings for both your safety . . . and the experience. The presence of bears in the area is one reason dogs are prohibited and night-time soaking not allowed.

Twilight is the time to spot deer at Scenic. The BPA maintenance roads provide a favored path for deer to cross-country back and forth between side valleys. Deer bring the one other predator that is worth mentioning . . . a female cougar (or mountain lion) that is rumored to have a den on the slopes high above the hot springs. Signs of the cougar have not been reported for several years (large cat tracks in the snow near the trailhead) but the vacant den does exist at 4,000 ft (the main pools are at 3,500ft). If you do find yourself hiking down from Scenic near nightfall remember that cougars are ambush hunters. Scan the higher terrain around you with your flashlight and look for the telltale reflections of cat eyes.

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Stay upright, don't make yourself look like prey and stand your ground against a cougar. Again, no one has spotted this cougar or her kin in years but that doesn't mean they don't exist somewhere out there in the wild.



Recently, there have been several reports of a lone bull moose wandering the lower sections of the clearcut. Moose are an aggressive, multi-hundred pound animal with sharp, kicking hooves. If you see a moose on the property, keep your distance. If one charges you, get yourself behind something substantial (tree or BPA tower). Do not wander closer in hopes of petting or taking pictures. It's not worth the risks.

Terrain: The hike up to the hot springs is an arduous, albeit, short one. From the gate to the pools is one and a half miles with 1,100 feet of elevation gain . . . most of that gain in the last third mile. Two thirds of the route is on forest service and BPA maintenance roads to the trailhead, and I often describe the last third of the hike as the steepest and hardest part. Wear good hiking shoes or boots and watch your footing in areas of loose rock. During the winter months this upper stretch of trail can become particularly treacherous with deep snow and steep ice chutes for a trail. Only the promise of a superbly hot soak at the end drives many visitors on.

Hot Spring Waters: Watch out for hyperthermia (overheating), dehydration, and hypothermia (lowered body temperature). These are common problems when hot springs, a lack of awareness and wilderness are mixed.

Your body operates within a narrow range of temperatures and fights very hard (sweating to cool, shivering to warm) to stay within that range for efficient metabolism (the energy source that runs your body). Going only a few degrees in either direction can shut down the processes essential for life. Our bodies put out a prodigious amount of heat just staying alive . . . even immersing yourself in body-temperature water will eventually drive your core body temperature too high simply because all the heat you are producing internally has nowhere to go while you are immersed. Watch for the warning signs of heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke (collectively, 'hyperthermia') and cool yourself off occasionally outside the pools. Hyperthermia is discussed more fully in the "[Etiquette](#)" section.

Hot Spring Etiquette

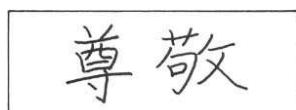
"Take one tired body, wash thoroughly, marinate for two hours in sudorific, brackish water, rinse, dry and put to bed for eight hours."
Paul Murray writing for the TravelDish website on [Japanese Onsen Culture & Etiquette](#)

When I was stationed in Japan in the early 70s, my Japanese pen-pal from grade school (whom I never stopped corresponding with) convinced me to join him on a trip to an onsen or hot spring in the central volcanic mountains of Japan. Our first attempt was at the Komaki Spa in Misawa, where I was stationed. Komaki is a huge rock pool where hundreds of soakers can take a bath at the same time. It was noisy, bustling and crowded with naked humanity.

My second trip to an Onsen came about because I was dating a Japanese girl in Hachinohe and her family disapproved. Her name was Michiko; her friends, where she worked as a tour bus guide, called her Chico. We were getting pretty serious about each other and yet nothing would happen without her family's approval, which wasn't coming. Only her older brother, who was much more cosmopolitan and Westernized, understood. It was suggested that I meet him. That meeting was prearranged at an old Ryokan inn on the side of a mountain that paid host to some of the most serene and tranquil hot springs I will ever see in my lifetime. I won't bore you with the details of that aborted love story. The point is that the culture of the hot spring (onsen) is important and needs to be respected.

The ritual of the bath strips titles and status symbols. One never knows if the individual soaking nearby is rich or poor; whether that individual has the power to shape economies or is barely scraping by. It doesn't matter. In the bath, all are equal . . . lord and serf alike. I met my girlfriends' brother on the sacred neutral ground of the Japanese onsen. That is pretty much how I approach natural hot springs forty years later as I rediscover the joys of soaking. The hot spring, like the onsen, is a sacred place; expectant of rituals and respect. Out of the Japanese rituals come the common-sense rules of conduct, or etiquette, for the Hot Spring. So on to the rules . . .

Rule # 1



Respect for others. We go to the springs to escape the stresses and pressures of a crowded, urban existence. We go to relax and enjoy the therapeutic joys of mineral-rich hot waters. It is not unlike soaking in your bathtub at home, locking out the days distractions and letting your mind empty of problems. The byword of hot springs is tranquility and you should endeavor not to disturb the tranquility of fellow soakers. Interaction in the pool should be low-key . . . not high-energy.

Rowdiness and partying are out of place in the pools. So is the boom-box and loud music. We want to hear the flutter of

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birds in the nearby trees . . . we want to 'hear' the quiet with our minds. That is why we drove miles from the city to escape the pressures and noise of modern civilization.

First-time visitors are often taken aback at the easy-going, clothing-optional nature of remote, natural hot springs. That's fair. After all, we all have our hang-ups and public nudity is just one of many. If you think about it though (ritual and culture aside) slipping into the hot pools au' natural makes a lot of practical sense . . . particularly if you have made a long, hard hike just to reach the springs.

Rule # 2

The Hot Springs are not baths. They are not places in which to wash yourself off. They are places of relaxation. In Japan, upon entering the onsen, you disrobe and with a small towel (usually draped on the head), you go to a soaping area outside the pools. Often you sit on a small wooden stool and completely soap yourself up from head to toes to cleanse your body. Then you douse yourself with water from a large ladle. Only then can you properly enter the pools and enjoy your soak. You respect the hot spring by entering clean. The towel is not for modesty but is rather to help cool the head through evaporation as you soak in those superheated waters. They also are used to cover ones face and direct contemplation inwards as you soak.

In practical terms it makes sense. Why do we shower before getting into a hot tub? Why do they ask us to shower prior to using a public swimming pool? The water in the springs is communal . . . shared . . . and you must do everything you can to keep it clean. Soaping is not practical at informal natural hot springs nor is it environmentally proper. However, we can rinse ourselves off before we step into the pool. Often there are containers set aside for just this purpose. As most natural hot springs are located in the wilderness and require the effort of a hike to get there, we should not pollute the beneficial powers of the springs with our sweat, sunscreen oils and insect repellents. Dip a jug into the water and douse yourself before getting in. Pay particular attention to the dirt you may bring in with your feet.

Rule # 3



Expect Nudity Communal bathing is a common practice in much of the rest of the world. Part of the reason is because bathtubs are a luxury in all but the most affluent countries. Japan is a prime example of communal bathing and the extension of that ritual to soaking at the numerous 'onsens' or natural hot springs dotting the volcanic backbone of that country.

Sharing a bath is a delightful custom and although a normally prudish North American might disdain the naturist or nudist lifestyles as unacceptable for them, attitudes often quickly change when presented with an inviting natural hot spring and a clothing-optional custom. Very often, these same prudish individuals will disrobe in front of perfect strangers and slide into the relaxing waters with them. Your reaction will determine how a new arrival behaves. If you are accepting, non-judgmental and respectful, you will find that you are treated the same. Gawking is taboo because you add an unwelcome and unexpected element that is often

perceived as sexual to the experience.

Scenic has been traditionally clothing-optional and since it is relatively obscure and difficult to reach, those who do come up are aware of the custom. Not all hot springs are like this and you must be considerate of those already there. Ask first if the pool is full of people wearing shorts. Usually, they will not object but if they do, respect that statement. Often, it only takes one person to get everyone else shedding their clothes as well and really enjoying the soak as it was meant to be. I always carry a pair of shorts with me just in case my fellow soakers are uncomfortable with the idea of nudity. Once in the pool and bonded with my fellow soakers (the threat is gone), a casual and friendly observation about soaking au' natural is usually enough to change objections. Remember . . . respect others first.

Be extremely respectful of couples and family groups. The protective urge comes to fore when an unaccompanied male appears, strips and slips into a pool with young children or wives and girlfriends. Again, ask. Or seek another pool if possible.

Keep sexual innuendo, sexual banter, gawking and displays to a minimum and everyone can relax and enjoy.

Rule # 4

Do Not Trash the Site Natural hot springs are often in remote areas with few, if any, amenities. So it is up to us, the users, to keep the site in as pristine a condition as possible. Despite the custom of serene soaking, there will be parties and happy gatherings, and that is fine as long as it does not disturb the enjoyment of others.

Do Not Bring Glass Anywhere Near the Springs. Period! The reason is obvious. One accident and you have to drain the pool before someone seriously injures themselves.

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Pack Out What You Bring In Better yet, pack out just a little more. Don't assume that because it is forest or wilderness that you can just toss that beer can down the slope and it wouldn't matter. It does and those beer cans quickly add up. When I go to a hot springs, I take a 33 gal trash bag with me. While I soak, my pack and clothes sit safe inside the sack protected from moisture. When I'm done for the day that same sack can carry down a lot of garbage that invariably accumulates around every hot spring by those less considerate.



Use sanitary facilities if possible and if not available, go into the tree-line well away from the springs to relieve yourself. The general Forest Service guidelines are 100ft from any open source of water. Since hot springs often spontaneously emerge out of the ground, I would add "and not above the springs" to prevent contamination of the springs.

Carry a small roll of toilet paper with you and something to dig a cat-hole no more than six to eight inches deep to take advantage of the soils natural ability to decompose human waste. Make sure you completely cover everything up with soil. When you return to the pools, do us all a favor and rinse yourself off before getting back in the pool. Think about what would affect you and behave accordingly. Obviously, don't piss in the pool.

Become a Steward of the Springs Teach through example. Natural hot springs are often unmaintained or at best by a few people who take an interest in keeping the site functional and open. Someone cleans those pools. Someone repairs the rock walls or liners, constructs the trails, builds little amenities to make the experience a little better. Learn from these people and pitch in a hand occasionally.

A hot spring pool should be completely emptied and scrubbed clean at least once every three days otherwise microorganisms and algae will grow. The only way to combat this growth in the wild is to scrub those pools clean and then completely drain them. If you are a frequent visitor to a spring, learn how to do this and offer to help. Do not use any chemicals or bleach or detergent in the pools as they will contaminate the runoff below . . . kill fish . . . and get the place shut down real fast.

Rule # 5

Soak Safely and make soaking for others safe. If you have to hike into a natural hot springs area then you are probably in reasonably good health. However, there are some important considerations for healthy and safe soaking.

The communal waters of hot springs are not chlorinated and maintenance on the pools is often hit-and-miss. Growth of microorganisms like algae, protozoa and bacteria are a real concern. Despite the good intentions of the volunteers that try to maintain the springs under primitive and rustic conditions, contamination can and does happen. The hot water has taken a trip deep into the earth and is probably as clean as any artesian well, but it must make its' way into the pools and that is where contamination can happen from animal and human waste.

Soakers often revel in the wildlife and get into the bad habit of feeding the chipmunks and birds without consideration of the consequences. Yes . . . they are cute. But where do these animals live? Where do they make their droppings? Hot spring waters are ground waters, sometimes traveling very shallowly below the surface. An abundance of 'tamed' wildlife has an adverse effect on the bacterial levels in hot spring pools. Please do not feed the wildlife!

Since natural springs are not regularly maintained, there will be some growth of algae in the pools. Volunteers get into the habit of scrubbing the pools every couple of days or so, and then completely draining the pools if feasible. The turn-over rate of water has an effect on how often this is necessary. However, you cannot rely on finding a pristine, clean pool. The rocks may be extremely slippery . . . the waters less than clear. You must be prepared and decide: is it safe? Just a note: the high mineral content of many springs will also often make surfaces slippery.

Don't become a Typhoid Mary. Do not slide into a communal pool with open cuts or sores. If you have a communicable disease . . . stay out! Do not compromise or infect others . . . that is an assault!

Take heat seriously. Pool temperatures range from tepid to scalding hot and you can easily be misled about your tolerance for the heating effect on your body. It is not unusual for a soaker to stand up and then promptly faint from 'head rush'. It happens all the time and to the most unlikely people. Learn your tolerance and don't overdo it. In the hotter pools the temperatures often reach 110 to 120 degrees F. That is heating your body to that temperature over time and 104 degrees F in the brain is heat stroke, a serious medical emergency. Learn the symptoms of too much heat.

Heat exhaustion is due to a lack of water, as funny as that sounds. You sweat and start to dehydrate yourself as the hot spring waters heat you up. You get a little chill, maybe a slight headache. As heat exhaustion progresses, your blood electrolytes drop and the blood thickens. Your skin may get pale and cramps begin. These are warning signs and you need to take action. Soak and cool. Drink plenty of water.

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When the core body temperature reaches somewhere around 104 degrees F, you start to shut down and go into **heat stroke**. Your skin is red-hot, no perspiration. Your body has given up and this is a serious life and death emergency. Your blood pressure will plummet and you will probably pass out right there in the pool. Treatment is cooling as rapidly as possible and then getting medical help.

I mention heat problems because they are very common; especially among neophyte soakers. Alcohol needs to be mentioned because it is common to have a drink or two or three at the special nature of hot springs. But alcohol can make heat problems worse but masking some of the symptoms . . . or hastening them along. Treat drinking and soaking much the same as drinking and driving. Have someone stay responsible to watch out for problems as they may develop. You are in wilderness, often a very long way from emergency help should something happen.

Rule # 6

Respect the Property Owners Rights and Rules Whether it be private property or public lands, there are expectations.

One, you don't own the property and you are there at the owners pleasure. Most private property owners don't mind people enjoying the springs if they are respectful of just about everything I've outlined above. Some will post their property but imply the use of the springs is okay. The property owner is responsible and liable for what happens on his or her property and posting is one way to limit that liability should something happen. Get a feel for what's allowed before heading off onto someone's private property. At Scenic, everyone is expected to ask for permission first.

Don't go around making 'improvements' to the springs. Nothing torques the property owner more than finding vast deck construction in violation of building codes. That is what closed Scenic Hot Springs in the past, arguably one of the best hot springs in the area. You jeopardize the owner and you will get access removed real quick for everyone.

On public lands the restrictions are often more severe. Building pools (no matter how rudimentary) around naturally-occurring hot springs in Wilderness Areas and National Parks is a felony and can get you jailed. If you are going to insist on those activities you must keep them as low key as possible. Rangers might cast their attention aside if it remains in consonance with the surroundings but don't push your luck.

Many other activities are restricted or controlled as well. Camping overnight is often not allowed except with permission. Fires are almost always forbidden. The short of it is: you are on the property owner's land at his or her sufferance. Respect that!

Originally posted in the Scenic Hot springs Blog, Oct 24th, 2004

What can you do to help keep Scenic available?

Leave No Trace!

Whatever you bring in . . . take back out with you. Better yet, take out a little of the garbage that other, less considerate visitors have so carelessly discarded on the property. Scenic has suffered from years of abuse. It is amazing the garbage we find up there years-after-the-fact. Don't add to the problem.

Make No Improvements without permission!!!!

You may think you are improving the flow of the hot springs by digging around at the sources but more than likely you are causing permanent damage. The nature of the sources is complex and best understood by the owner. The owner takes a dim view of people digging away at the plumbing of the spring sources.

Any changes to the site must be balanced against county ordinances . . . do the existing permits allow for such changes? Only the owner and his representatives can make that decision. By digging into the steep slope for another ad hoc pool, you put everything in jeopardy. Ask and then help out at a future clean-up party if approved.

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Do a Trip Report

Despite our attempts to be up there two to three times a week (we do have day jobs, afterall), the stewards very often do not make it to the actual hot springs . . . spending a large amount of our time down below taking care of other problems. We like to rely on our visitors for updates on the conditions of the hot springs and pools. Obviously we want to know about problems, like vandalism, garbage, evidence of fires and trespassers heading up late in the day. But if you can carry a thermometer or manually gauge temperature, those readings along with flow rates and water clarity come in handy. Does the pool need cleaning . . . what are the conditions of the liners, etc. Have your favorite photo at the springs? Want to see it posted in the blog?

Advocate for the Springs

More than anything else, the attitude and behavior of rowdy, drunk soakers got Scenic closed in the past. As visitors we would also like you to be ambassadors to educate and set an example of what soaking is all about. Inform late afternoon hikers that they shouldn't be heading up there at night . . . that they should be asking for permission. Some will ignore you but a few will get the message. Don't put yourself at risk but if an opportunity arises, educate.

Join a Clean-up Party

Clean Up parties are scheduled several times during the warmer months in order to maintain the status of Scenic Hot Springs. These events are not meant to be construction activities, which are subject to permits and governmental review. They are scheduled to remove the garbage left behind by inconsiderate soakers and to improve the trails with minor maintenance to make access safer for visitors.

Anyone is eligible to join in and lend a hand in keeping Scenic clean, beautiful and safe. We try to make these events fun and participatory, with barbeques when possible and, of course, free soaking afterward for the participants. Clean up parties are one of the few opportunities for camping on the property and night-time soaking as our way of saying thanks. As always (if the weather cooperates and the nature of the work is appropriate) clean up parties are clothing-optional . . . work on your tan and enjoy the sun, bare as you dare. Watch the Scenic blog for announcements of upcoming clean up parties.

About Your Scenic HS Stewards

Your Scenic Hot Springs Stewards are legally vetted to represent the owner in the owner's absence. We carry Letters of Authority to Act and the determination to stop trespassing and illegal activity at Scenic HS. In the course of our duties we deal with the King County Sheriff's Department, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and the National Forest Service Rangers in Skykomish.

Matt



Matt is the keeper of the hot spring pools and, aside from the owner, no one understands the complicated collector-plumbing that taps the hot spring sources to the soaking pools. Matt also does the lions-share of the heavy lifting maintenance on the site . . . from cutting fallen trees off the roadway to clearing slides and culverts.

Matt is an avid outdoorsman with an innate and consummate knowledge of wilderness activities that come in handy at Scenic. Both the Forest Service and the BPA rely extensively on Matt to keep them apprised of conditions in the Scenic Hot Springs area.

Matt is the primary contact for requesting access to Scenic Hot Springs.

Rick



Rick has been associated with Scenic Hot Springs since the early 1990s and with the present owner since the property was purchased to save the springs from demolition and permanent capping. Rick's main function is to topographically survey the property, prepare site plans, and assist in the permitting process before various governmental agencies.

Rick is a card-carrying member of the American Association for Nude Recreation, The Naturist Society, and the Sun Lovers Under Grey Skies (or SLUGS, a local nudist club). Rick is a firm

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believer in the wholesomeness of nude recreation. He advocates for the continued “nude-friendliness” of Scenic Hot Springs. For more information on nudism please visit Rick’s Nude Hiking and Soaking in the Pacific Northwest at <http://nudehiker.blogspot.com> .

Rick is a cancer-survivor . . . his leukemia in remission with maintenance therapy. His day job provides for that essential health insurance while a computer security teaching gig feeds his true love . . . teaching. Rick maintains the Scenic Blog for the owner and is a contributor to several hot spring guides (under the pseudonym “Banged Up Shins”).