

Eagle Creek

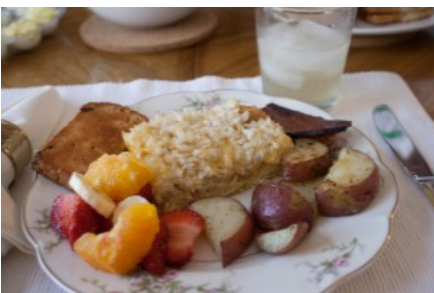
I hate this hike.

I really do. I hike [Eagle Creek](#) about once a year and then I remember just how much I hate that hike and vow to never do it again. The reason is not what you're thinking.



Yet somehow I always forget how terrifying Eagle Creek is, and do it again. And mid-hike I become a terrified, quivering mess of anxiety. The reason I hate this hike? I am afraid of heights and this lovely like Gorge Gem happens to have sheer cliffs and drop offs, narrow and terrifying paths edged into the side of the cliffs and expansive views of the valley and river below. I'll explain in a moment.

Our Sunday plans were busy ones. I got up early to go for a swim to soothe my aching hamstrings from weight lifting, and then we went to Michael's mom's house for brunch. I ate a lot, preparing for our afternoon hike. (One serving of a crab quiche, potatoes, fresh fruit, toast and just a few deviled eggs. There might have been a mojito or two in there too...)



It was unusually hot (nearly 80) and sunny and Michael and I drove out after brunch to The Gorge to hike Eagle Creek ([directions here](#)). We arrived at the peak of the heat of the day and the parking lots were full of eager hikers ready to get rid of their winter funk.



We packed a bunch of water and I slathered on sunscreen. There's a 1/2 mile walk from the parking lot to the trailhead. You walk along the creek, which was fast moving this time of year, and then the trail starts to climb the side of the mountain.



The trail isn't steep, it's pretty gradual as you climb. For the first few miles you're out in the open, full sunlight, then eventually you get some old growth shade.



There are a few waterfalls that you walk underneath and it's very refreshing on a hot day.



I think around the first mile it gets scary. You've climbed up a ways and there's the first very, very narrow trail that clings to the edge of the mountain. There's even a steel cable bolted into the rock to hold onto. There is NO railing. Just a sheer drop off to the racing water and rocks below.



Do you see the steel cable on the left in the above photo? And the very narrow trail? Yeah. This is the first one like this. And it's not the last. And my heart is pounding with fear and anxiety right about now.

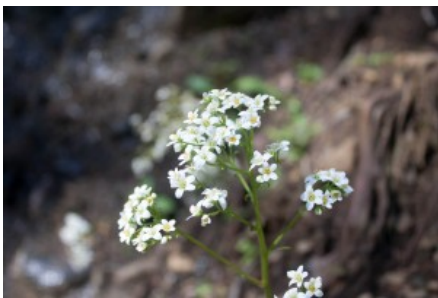


The trail climbs higher and higher until all you see on the other side is a vast open space and the tops of the trees. This is the part where I get vertigo and feel like dying. Fun, right?

I didn't get pictures of the truly terrifying part because I was trying not to die and I certainly wasn't looking at the drop offs! My internal monologue is "I hate this, I hate this, I'm never doing this hike again."



There's parts of the trail like that I think 3 times? Higher and higher, scarier and scarier. Then the path winds through the trees and it's quite enjoyable. We got to the above waterfall and turned around. And then you get to enjoy the scary parts all over again!



The butterflies LOVE Eagle Creek for some reason. Every time I've been I've seen dozens of them fluttering around. This time it was tiny purple butterflies. I couldn't get a photo, unfortunately. There were a bunch of beautiful wildflowers too, but most of the super colorful ones were growing on the side of the cliff--not exactly where I want to take pictures.



We finally got down to a manageable height and my fear subsided. It was a hot, hot day and we were both dripping in sweat. The day was growing a little dimmer.



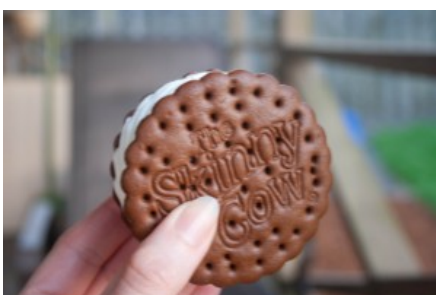
Not bad, huh? I burned over 1,000 calories on Sunday. Michael thinks we hiked 5-6 miles total, I think it was more like 4-5 miles. When we got home and cleaned up, we plopped our butts outside on the deck to enjoy the last little bits of the sunny day.



Dinner was bratwursts grilled outside, salad, and some pickled carrots to munch on.



I enjoyed one beer as we listened to the neighborhood kids playing in the sunshine. I also read some of my book (I started reading *The Game of Thrones*). It was such a nice day and a lovely end to a weekend. Dessert:



Now, the breakdown of the hike:

Good for Kids: Iffy. I saw a lot of kids on the trail but...those cliffs are pretty treacherous. Probably better for older kids.

Good for Dogs: Probably ok. Leash recommended because there are a lot of dogs there.

Cost: Pass required, or you can pay at the trailhead.

Activity Level: Medium in activity level. It's not super strenuous and the elevation is gradual.

Scenery: Spectacular.

Verdict: Good first hike of the season because it's not too difficult, but if you're afraid of heights in any way I'd skip it. It's also super crowded. Get there early.

QUESTION: Are you afraid of heights? Do you hike much?