

In Search of Frogs

By Romana 08/27/2015

I decided it was time to take a trip, for the first time since my wife died. I had to go alone, but I do not like travelling alone. I went to Mt. Rainier National Park on August 20, 2015. I wanted to visit *Frog Heaven*, which was supposed to be in an easy to reach meadow. Satellite images clearly marked it. There seemed to be a lot more trees than in previous times.

There were no instructions posted anywhere as to how to get there. I tried to mark the place, to stop, on the GPS for my car, before leaving. I also downloaded a GPS program onto my Samsung tablet, and marked the estimated stopping location there too.

SR-161 to Eatonville, SR-7 and then SR-706 to Mt. Rainier are not major highways. There are few clearly-marked restrooms along this route. Helpful restroom traffic signs led to streets with no further information. I had to use a restroom in a park in Eatonville.

Finally, I made it to the national park. They accepted my *Golden Age Passport* at the gate; I was off to Frog Heaven. It was located at a bend in the road, but there were a lot of bends. I hoped I had picked the right one.

There was a much-needed rest stop just before Longmire. Not long after I passed Longmire, my vehicle GPS said I was in the right area. False alarm, nothing looked right once I got out of my car! However, the GPS on my Samsung tablet said I was not there yet.

My tablet beeped, just as I approached a roadside pull-off. The area looked right. I tried climbing down the right side of the viewpoint. Access was terrible there. Descending and climbing back out with a heavy backpack was not easy. I moved to the left side. There were a lot of planted

rocks on the way down a steep bank. Keeping my balance was difficult, so I climbed back to get one of my balance poles out of the car.

Taking my backpack turned out to be a bad idea, especially since my heavy cameras were carried in it. Without easy access to cameras, I took no pictures. Explaining what I encountered on the way down would have been so much easier if I had taken pictures. My hiking shoes were inadequate; I needed boots instead. Of course, I was wearing a skirt; I'm always well-dressed, even for a hike.

The foliage, while not extremely dense, was full of hazards. There were many broken stumps, with dagger-like shards protruding upwards. None of these would have been a good place to land, if gravity suddenly propelled me down the hillside. I resolved to keep my balance and descend slowly.

There were a lot of fallen trees, where all but six inches, or so, of the branches had been broken off. The protruding branches made the fallen trees resemble the spikes of some siege weapon. No, I did not want to fall there either. After about two hundred feet, I realized that my prospects were fruitless. I was in a very dangerous place, and my cell phone had no bars. It was time to turn around. I could hear the frogs, but they were simply out-of-reach.

I felt like I could not keep ahead of my breath. I worried that I might run out of energy and fall. I got a second wind as I worked my way around the countless hazards. Finally, I climbed the bank of planted rocks back to my car. What had gone wrong?

I should have realized from the aerial photographs that Frog Heaven had become totally overgrown with new growth trees. What had once been a pleasant meadow had been transformed into Frog Hell. I concluded that

the area was a crater from a long extinct side-vent of Mt. Rainier. It has lost its charm over the years; I can't recommend anyone else try my stunt, ever.

Deer, elk, and other animals often help keep meadows free of new trees. I did not see any deer or elk, which are also not frogs. Without all the free cropping services provided by nature, the park service does not have the funds to hold back the trees.

I continued on toward paradise. I stopped at a major viewpoint to take pictures. There were two women with a girl driving the same direction in another minivan. One of the women seemed to be actually the husband, due to her deep voice. I presumed the other woman was the wife. Had I actually encountered another transgender woman in public, just being who she was? Of course, none of these people were frogs either.



Pinnacle Peak

When I reached Paradise, the parking lot was full, so I kept going, taking a lot of pictures along the way; soon it was time to head home.

After I passed Eatonville, I decided to stop at Northwest Trek. I got a nice picture of a bobcat in its habitat. This isn't exactly any kind of frog, but it was a superb animal.



I should have taken more selfies. My last picture was of me standing at a fence, no worse for wear, despite all my scratches and bruises. There were bison in the distance. I guess I cut all the bison out of the picture, as they were certainly not frogs.

