

Cool off at Phillips Lake

What: Phillips Lake County Park

Where: Near Shelton in Mason County

To do: On scorching days, this small park is a popular spot for Mason County people. This five-acre park has a small gravel beach on beautiful Phillips Lake, and that beach gets crowded with people trying to cool off -- and catch some rays.

The park has a small boat ramp, a grove of shady cedar trees and two grassy areas. Visitors launch boats, float tubes and air mattresses, picnic, fish, sun and wade in the water. Phillips Lake, which is 111 acres, has decent fishing for stocked rainbow trout and excellent fishing for largemouth bass. Many anglers launch their boats or float tubes at the park and then find a quieter area to cast their lines. The lake can be very busy on warm days, so the best angling is early in the morning and late in the afternoon.

Signs at the park make the swimming policy confusing. One sign says "No Swimming In Boat Traffic Lane," while others just say "No Swimming." Park visitors don't seem to swim very much, but they do like to get in the water and wade around.

Directions: To get to Phillips Lake County Park, take U.S. Highway 101 North. Take Route 3 exit toward Shelton. Take Highway 3 all the way into Shelton. Turn right on East Railroad Avenue. Turn left on North Front Street. Turn right on East Pine Street. You are following Route 3 through Shelton. After you leave Shelton, continue on Route 3 for about 8 miles to East Pickering Road. Turn right onto East Pickering Road -- watch for the park-and-ride parking lot. Follow Pickering Road to Phillips Lake Road. Turn right onto Phillips Lake Road. Follow Phillips Lake Road to Phillips Lake Loop. Turn left onto Phillips Lake Loop and you'll see the park right away.

Parking: There is plenty of parking.

Restrooms: There are two portable toilets, but know that they get a lot of use on warm days. Wise visitors plan ahead!

Safety: Watch children at all times -- especially if they're playing in or near the water.

Water: There are no fountains, so bring your own water.

Rules: The park gate is locked one hour after sunset. The park opens at 5 a.m. Dogs must be on leashes and under control. No overnight parking or camping. No swimming in boat traffic lane. No alcohol. No firearms or fireworks. No horses.

Equipment: Sunscreen, sunglasses, water, food, towels, picnic supplies, cameras, binoculars. If you're an angler, don't count on finding a place to cast unless you can launch a boat or float tube. Kids should wear life jackets.

More information: Call Mason County Parks at 360-427-9670, ext. 535, or go to www.co.mason.wa.us.

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