

Blue Mountains

Footsore, weary, and exhausted, traveler and beast alike faced the final third and the most difficult part of the trail. Yet speed was of the essence, for winter snows could close mountain passes or trap unprepared and tired groups of emigrants as they crossed both the Blue Mountains in eastern Oregon and the Cascades to the west.



After a long and arduous late summer climb up the Blue Mountains of eastern Oregon, wagon train emigrants headed for Oregon in the 1840s-1860s were rewarded with a walk in the cool shade of its coniferous forest.



This heavily timbered expanse of the Blue Mountains was full of steep grades that tried the weary emigrants and their animals. Many overlanders were astonished at the sight of 200 foot tall trees. From the crest could be seen the great volcanoes of the Cascade Range.

Nights in the Blue Mountains are often chilly in late August and September, and the cool, alpine nights reminded the emigrants that the mountains ahead were even higher.

"The hills here are all covered with fine timber. Some of them are awful steep, however. We went up one today and it took twenty-two head of cattle to haul up one wagon, and there was not much in the wagon, either. Emigrants will therefore see the necessity of kind and careful treatment of their teams at the outset and indeed through the whole of this long journey, to reserve their strength for these difficult places." (Elizabeth Wood, 1851)