

White Clouds **(From Sun Valley Golf and Nordic Center)**

Overview

White Clouds is a heavily utilized trail frequented by guests of the nearby Sun Valley Lodge as well as locals. While you never quite escape crowds or the sounds of nearby construction and landscaping on this trail, it manages to feature solid views without the challenge of a serious climb.

This out and back route is perfect for those looking to stretch their legs without demanding too much of themselves and also for hikers pressed for time but still looking to log some miles.

There are two trailheads for White Clouds. The more popular one is at the corner of Sun Valley and Saddle Roads. For directions from this trailhead, [click here](#). We prefer to start at the Sun Valley Clubhouse which is just over a mile north of the lodge.

The Numbers

4.7 mile out and back

440 total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 3.9% (Easy)

Water

There is very little water on this route and during dry seasons any sources are contaminated by the golf course above. Though the climb is moderate, much of the hike is in the sun, so keep some water handy for you and your dogs.

Drive

From downtown Ketchum, it is an easy 2.1-mile drive, all on paved roads. [Click here](#) for directions. There is plenty of parking in the Sun Valley Clubhouse lot. Park about halfway up the row closest to Trail Creek Road.

There are restrooms inside the clubhouse.



Trailhead

Season

Mid-April through mid-November

Route

From the Sun Valley Clubhouse parking lot, cross Trail Creek Road to get to the large trailhead sign. Keeping that sign to your left, begin a slight climb, passing two intersections within the first hundred yards, staying left at each. The trail rises gradually at the bottom of an open hill. Condos and mansions in the White Clouds neighborhood are directly to your left.

After passing through a small grove of shrubs and trees, come to Y-junction at .23 miles. Stay straight.



Y-junction (Stay straight)

The trail bends to the left and continues to climb, eventually offering solid views of both of Sun Valley's ski areas, Dollar Mountain and Bald Mountain. Continuing on, you will leave

the White Clouds mansions behind at the .7-mile mark and immediately come to a jumble of junctions. The first is a Y-junction. Stay left.



Y-junction (Stay left)

Immediately afterwards, come to a four-way junction and continue straight, then to a three-way junction where you will veer left and soon after pass a bench on your right.



Two more junctions in the jumble (Stay straight, Veer left)

As you curl around a small rocky knob, Ketchum's Big Wood neighborhood lays in the trees in the valley to your right. At .9 miles, come to a signed junction of White Clouds and the Big Wood Connector. Continue straight and access the high road that turns to the right.



White Clouds/Big Wood Connector junction (Go right on high road)

The high road marks the start of a pleasant gently rolling ridgeline walk over a valley that hosts a few Big Wood mansions. As you continue along, the Bigwood Golf Course becomes visible and the Wood River Valley opens in front of you offering views as far as the Adam's Gulch trailhead and the tree-covered Smoky Mountains.



Views of Wood River Valley and Smoky Mountains (1.15 miles)

At about the 1.35-mile mark, come to the first of three sweeping turns that follow the contours of the valleys as they cut through the hills. Where the turns tighten, there is often water running down the drainage. It is not recommended to let your dog drink this water, as it is runoff from the White Clouds golf course which is built into the hills above.

After the 1.5-mile mark, come to a bench honoring Dave and Marian Sellgren. Dave Sellgren was a longtime valley resident who developed the Bigwood Golf Course. After Marian died in 1986, Dave remarried Elizabeth "Ricky" Bosted. They owned a portion of the land that this trail was built on, so when the Sun Valley Company was developing the White Clouds trail, it asked Ricky if she would donate a .8-mile easement for the trail. She graciously agreed, allowing the company to connect White Clouds with the [Valley View Trail](#) to make a semi-loop.

Moving along the trail, views of downtown Ketchum appear, the city laying at the bottom of Bald Mountain. At 1.7 miles the White Clouds golf course comes into view. The trail

continues to wind along the hillside. At 2.3 miles, take the junction left and take the short climb to the destination, a grassy area with views down the White Clouds difficult 5th hole. There is a bench honoring Kelley Elizabeth Goldmanis, a young woman who died of cancer in 2021. Her memory is marked with a reminder to “Look around, take a deep breath. . .”



Junction at 2.3 miles (Turn Left) and Memorial Bench

After taking that deep breath, enjoy the 360° views before retracing your steps back to the trailhead.

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There are two trailheads for White Clouds. The other trailhead starts across the street from the Sun Valley Clubhouse. For directions from this trailhead, [click here](#).

The Numbers

3.65-mile out and back

490 total elevation gain

Ascent Grade: 4.1% (Easy)

Water

There is very little water on this route and during dry seasons any sources are contaminated by the golf course above. Though the climb is moderate, much of the hike is in the sun, so keep some water handy for you and your dogs.

Drive

It is a 1.3-mile drive from downtown Ketchum to the Sun Valley Lodge parking lot. [Click here](#) for directions.



Trailhead

Waypoints

Mid-April through mid-November

Route

From the Sun Valley Lodge, follow the main driveway that leads to the Trail Creek Road and use the crosswalk that leads to the large trailhead sign. Keep that sign to your left and come to two intersections within the first 65 feet. Stay right at the first intersection and then turn hard left at the second junction, which is signed.



Two junctions (Stay right, turn left)

The trail rises moderately along an open hillside. As you climb, there are good southerly views to Bald Mountain and Dollar Mountain. At .2 miles, come to a jumble of intersections. At the bench, turn left. (Those looking for a somewhat easier hike should stay straight and take a left at the signed intersection with [Valley View Loop](#).)



Bench junction (Turn left)

The climb intensifies significantly after the turn. At .28 miles, come to a Y-junction and veer left.



Y-junction (Veer left)

As you continue to climb, there are good views of downtown Ketchum with Bald Mountain rising above. At .35 miles there is a spur to the right, but continue straight up the hill. Soon after that, come to a T-junction and continue straight. A short path leads to a grassy area with views down the White Clouds difficult 5th hole. There is also a bench honoring Kelley Elizabeth Goldmanis, a young woman who died of cancer in 2021. Her memory is marked with a reminder to “Look around, take a deep breath. . .”

After taking that deep breath, enjoy the 360° views before heading back to the main trail and turning right. The path levels out and begins to wind around an open hillside, sweeping along the contours of small valleys that cut through the hillside. Views open to Ketchum’s Bigwood neighborhood and the golf course that shares its name.

You begin to ease away from civilization as the foothills of the Boulder Mountains rise before you. At 1.82 miles, come to a signed junction which serves as the turnaround point. If you decide to continue on, the trail runs for just less than a mile and ends near the Sun Valley Golf Clubhouse on Trail Creek Road.



Turnaround point