

Olympic National Park





Hurricane Ridge

Avian Graphics

One of the largest of the United States' 53 national parks, Olympic National Park has an incredible range of precipitation elevation, and diversity. Encompassing nearly a million acres, the park protects a vast wilderness, thousands of years of human history, and several distinctly different ecosystems, including glacier-capped mountains, old-growth temperate rain forests, and over 70 miles of wild coastline. Come explore!

About the park

Olympic National Park is on the Olympic Peninsula in western Washington State. The park has four regions: the Pacific coastline, alpine areas, the west-side temperate rainforest, and the forests of the drier east side. Within the park there are three distinct ecosystems, including subalpine forest and wildflower meadow, temperate forest, and the rugged Pacific coast.

President Theodore Roosevelt originally designated the park as Mount Olympus National Monument on March 2, 1909. The monument was re-designated a national park by Congress and President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 29, 1938. In 1976, Olympic National Park was designated by UNESCO as an International Biosphere Reserve, and in 1981 as a World Heritage Site. In 1988, Congress designated 95 percent of the park (1,370 square miles (3,500 km²)) as the Olympic Wilderness, which was renamed Daniel J. Evans Wilderness in honor of the former Washington state Governor and U.S. Senator Daniel J. Evans in 2017. During his tenure in the Senate, Evans co-sponsored the 1988 bill that created the state's wilderness areas. It is the largest wilderness area in Washington.



Grand Lake

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Hoh Rain Forest

olympicpeninsula.org

Visitor information

When should I visit?

Welcome to one of the wettest places in the US! Rain, and its avoidance, is a primary consideration for most visitors. The Hoh Rainforest gets nearly 130in of precipitation a year. Summer, between May and September, is the driest time with July logging an average of only nine rainy days. This is also when most of the park's facilities are open, from campgrounds to ranger-led hikes.

The winter season usually runs from late-November to late-March with snow activities centered around the small ski station at Hurricane Ridge.

If you hate crowds, January is the quietest (and wettest) month, while August (with over half a million visitors) is the busiest. Prices don't fluctuate much in the park itself. In the surrounding communities, winter and the spring/fall shoulder seasons work out slightly cheaper.

How much time should I spend in the park?

You could easily spend four or five days working your way

around Hwy 101, the Olympics' unofficial ring-road with overnight stops in Port Angeles, Lake Crescent, Forks and Lake Quinault. If you're planning on penetrating the park's extensive backcountry on longer hikes along the coast or in the roadless interior, bank on putting aside a week – or even two.

Is it easy to get in and around the park?

Getting to the park is relatively easy due to its proximity to Seattle. It's just over two hours by car from the "Emerald City" to the eastern park entrance at Staircase and 2.5 hours to Port Angeles in the north. Seatac, 15 miles south of downtown Seattle, is the nearest airport.

It's relatively easy to travel to Port Angeles direct from Victoria on Vancouver Island in Canada. The Black Ball car ferry runs four times a day in either direction in the summer (and twice in the winter). The journey time is 1.5 hours.

The park is encircled by well-maintained Hwy 101 (a state "Scenic Highway") with several more paved roads penetrating the interior where they dead-end at Hurricane Ridge, Hoh Rainforest, Lake Quinault, Sol Duc hot springs and Staircase.

While public buses exist, they are slow and discontinuous. You'll need to change buses between the different counties of Clallam, Jefferson, Mason and Gray's Harbor.

Top 5 things to do

Appreciate ancient trees in the Hoh Rainforest

For one of the most quintessential park experiences, take a deep dive into the greenest, wettest, and oldest temperate rainforest in North America. Hoh with its giant trees draped in spongy moss is what makes the Olympics unique, a temperate "jungle" of geriatric foliage that's humming with wildlife. The area has its own visitor center and several short interpretive trails, including the 1.25-mile Hall of Moss trail. Rangers arrange nature walks and talks in summer.

Observe the forces of nature on Ruby Beach

First designated in 1938, the Olympics was extended in 1953 to include a narrow coastal strip that stretches from Ozette in the north down to Kalaloch in the south. Of the coast's stormy collection

of beaches, Ruby Beach, characterized by its bruised clouds, eroded sea stacks, and piles of washed-up tree logs, is the easiest to reach from Hwy 101.

Climb a rugged path up Mt Storm King

Arguably the park's most rewarding day-hike is the 4.1-mile round-trip climb to the top of Mt Storm King, whose narrow craggy summit towers grandly above the timberline overlooking the blue-green waters of Lake Crescent and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The trail starts from a lakeside ranger station and ascends steeply through forest for just under 2 miles with the last section necessitating a challenging scramble over rough rock with ropes provided for assistance. It's well worth the sweat.

Feel the wind in your hair at Hurricane Ridge

The most-visited park enclave is, not coincidentally, the nearest to the urban hub of Port Angeles. Hurricane Ridge is home to a small family-orientated ski station (a rarity in US national parks), windy roadside lookouts, flower meadows, mountain goats and

superb views into the park's uninhabited interior. Trails, both short and long, penetrate the subalpine surroundings.

Soak in hot springs at Sol Duc

The most accessible and developed of the park's hot springs, Sol Duc sits at the end of a 14-mile-long approach road and funnels its recuperative waters into a quartet of tiled outdoor pools. Massage is also available and, if you're truly besotted, there's a rustic cabin resort, campground and restaurant dabbling in Northwest cuisine. A handful of trails embellish the area incorporating bubbling creeks, a pretty lake and a waterfall.



Olympic Park by the numbers

Natural Resources

- 922,651 acres
- 73 miles of wilderness coast
- over 3,000 miles of rivers and streams
- 32 named glaciers

Recreation Resources

- 14 developed campgrounds
- 660 miles of trail
- 4 overnight concession-operated lodges
- 2 day-use concession facilities
- 1 downhill ski operation

Visitor Statistics

- 2,947,503 recreational visits in 2023
- 31,000 people camped overnight in the park's wilderness in 2005
- 31 Search and Rescue missions in 2005

