 Signs of Spring

Spring comes slowly to the mountain. The sound of falling water marks the warmer days, although snow flurries in May and June may have you questioning the season. Yet in time, spring does arrive. You will see signs of spring while traveling through the park. Make time to let Mother Nature entertain you and you will be richly rewarded. For example, this is perhaps the best time of year to view waterfalls as they brim water fed by melting winter snow. Green leaves burst from their buds, mushrooms carpet the forest floor, and birds arrive back at the mountain.

Don’t overlook the forest wildflowers that bloom much earlier than their subalpine counterparts. You’ll find white coltsfoot and three-petaled trillium blossoms in lowland forests, and yellow skunk cabbage blooming in marshy areas. Look carefully for the elusive fairy slipper or calypso orchid (Calypso bulbosa), a great springtime discovery; they grace us with their presence for only a few short weeks.

Spring is a time of new birth. You may find wildlife with their young offspring in tow around the Trail of the Shadows at Longmire. Geese and goslings glide quietly on beaver ponds and black-tailed deer browse the meadow with their spotted fawns, while the chorus of frogs and songbirds fill the air.

What springtime treasures does the mountain have waiting for you to discover?
Visiting Your Park

Mount Rainier National Park was established in 1899 to preserve natural and cultural resources and to provide for public benefit and enjoyment. The following information will help you protect yourself and your park.

Have You Seen a Fisher?
The park is tracking recently reintroduced Pacific fishers by aircraft signals emitted from implanted transmitters. You can help by reporting fisher sightings to a ranger. Remember that fisher, marten, and mink are very similar looking species. Even the experts can get them confused and photos (even fuzzy ones) are very helpful. One thing to look for is a long, bushy tail (a third of the total length) that is bushy all the way to the base. Marten and mink tails are tapered at the base. Fisher’s ears are also much smaller in profile compared to marten and mink.

Camping
Camp in designated campsites only. Sleeping in vehicles outside of campgrounds is not permitted.

Fires in the Park
Make fires only in established fire grills. Collecting firewood is prohibited.

Marijuana is Illegal
While limited recreational use of marijuana is now legal in Washington State, possession of any amount of marijuana or other illegal drugs remains illegal in Mount Rainier National Park, surrounding national forests, and all federal lands.

Mercury in Park Lakes
Research studies have shown mercury is present in some trout in a few park lakes. Check the Washington Department of Health website http://www.doh.wa.gov/ for information on fish consumption.

Tree Hazards
Keep a lookout for dead, diseased, or leaning trees that could fall or drop branches. Avoid stopping or picnicking near these hazardous trees. On windy days be especially careful, strong winds and gusts can do great damage even to healthy trees—as well as anything in range of falling debris.

No Drone Zone!
Launching, landing, or operating an unmanned aircraft (drone) within the boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park is prohibited.

Wilderness Camping
Mount Rainier National Park offers outstanding wilderness hiking and camping opportunities. Wilderness camping permits are required for all overnight stays in the park’s backcountry year-round. Permits and backcountry information are available at all wilderness information centers and most visitor centers. Although permits are free, there is an optional, fee-based reservation system for campers and climbers in effect May through September.

Backcountry reservations are $20 per party (1-12 people) for 1 to 14 consecutive nights. Seventy percent of all backcountry sites and zones are available for reservation. The remaining 30 percent are issued on a first-come, first-served basis the day of or one day before the trip begins. Wilderness permits must be obtained in person at the Longmire Wilderness Information Center, White River Wilderness Information Center, or the Carbon River Ranger Station. See page 4 for hours.

Mount Rainier: An Active Volcano
Active steam vents, periodic earth tremors, and historic eruptions provide evidence that Mount Rainier is sleeping, not dead. Seismic monitoring stations around the mountain should provide days or weeks of advance warning of impending eruptions. Other geologic hazards, however, can occur with little warning. These include debris flows and rockfalls.

If you are near a river and notice a rapid rise in water level, feel a prolonged shaking of the ground, and/or hear a roaring sound coming from upsallay—often described as the sound made by a fast-moving freight train—move quickly to higher ground—200 feet above river level should be safe.

Detailed information is available at park visitor centers or from scientists at the U.S.G.S. Cascades Volcano Observatory, 1300 SE Cardinal Court, Building 10, Suite 100, Vancouver, WA 98661, vulcan.wr.usgs.gov.

Become A Mount Rainier Steward
Turn your passion for Mount Rainier into action that will benefit visitors today and tomorrow!

Consider joining our team as a park volunteer. Your contribution of time and energy will protect the magnificent natural and cultural areas entrusted to us, and you’ll go home with a sense of pride at having participated in something worthwhile. Volunteer in the park for a day, a summer, or on weekends as your schedule permits. Learn more at http://www.nps.gov/mora/getinvolved/volunteer.htm.

Washington’s National Park Fund serves as the park’s official philanthropic partner. The Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, accepts charitable gifts that are then given back to the park for projects focusing on these four main areas:

- Improving Visitors’ Experiences by maintaining trails, supporting the park’s Search and Rescue program, and improving campgrounds.
- Bringing more Youth and Families—many of whom might otherwise never visit—into the park.
- Funding necessary Science and Research on glaciers, rivers, flora, and fauna.
- Strengthening Mount Rainier’s Volunteerism and Stewardship activities.

The Fund provides support for nearly 2,000 volunteers whose efforts are valued at $1.8 million! Whether you adopt a trail mile, include Mount Rainier in your will, or purchase a Washington National Parks license plate for your vehicle, they all add up and have a major impact on this beloved place. Please consider giving back to Mount Rainier National Park through Washington’s National Park Fund.

For more information please go to the Fund’s website wnpf.org or email them at fund@wnpf.org.

Mount Rainier National Park

Superintendent
Chip Jenkins

Park Headquarters
(360) 569-2211

Lost and Found
(360) 569-6608

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Hazards of the Season
Many early season hikers are not prepared for challenges encountered by changing conditions and a snowpack that lingers late on the mountain.

Route-Finding Challenges
Trails may be snow-free at lower elevations but anticipate and prepare for snow at higher elevations. Conditions change rapidly during the day and footprints in the snow quickly disappear. This has left many day hikers disoriented upon their return trip, expecting to simply follow their own tracks back to the snow-free trail. This results in many lost individuals, injuries, and fatalities. When route-finding, note important landmarks. If the trail becomes difficult to follow, stop and find where you are on the map before continuing.

Be Prepared
If at any point you feel uncomfortable or unprepared, turn around. If you plan on retracing your route back to the trailhead consider using wands on snow-covered trails. Always carry a good map and compass, and actively use them on snow-covered trails. Also consider supplementing your map and compass with an external antenna GPS for best coverage beneath a forest canopy. Consider the steep snow slopes, melt holes, thinning snow bridges, and other early season hazards that you may encounter, and be honest with yourself in assessing your skills and experience. Watch for streams flowing underneath snow.

Snow Avalanches are Common in Spring
The greatest danger is an avalanche that you trigger by skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, or climbing. Be prepared for travel in avalanche terrain. Carry a transceiver, probe, and shovel and know how to use them. Determine if the location you are traveling is avalanche prone. If in doubt, ask questions or don’t go. Unstable snow may slide at any time... not just in winter! Even small avalanches can be deadly.

Mountain Weather Changes Rapidly
A pleasant outing can quickly transform into a survival ordeal. Proper gear (adequate boots, ice axe, the ten essentials, etc.) is a must. Navigation in spring storms can be extremely difficult. If you’re ascending and clouds or fog start rolling in, turn around and head back to the trailhead. If that’s not possible, stop, dig in, and wait for better weather.

Cross Streams Safely
Many hikers underestimate the power of moving water and some consider their former successful stream crossings as a ticket to the other side. This may not be true. Use these pointers in making wise decisions when crossing streams:
• Early morning when river levels are generally at their lowest is the best time to cross.
• Look for an area with a smooth bottom and slow moving water below knee height.
• Before crossing, scout downstream for log jams, waterfalls and other hazards that could trap you. Locate a point where you can exit if you fall in.
• Use a sturdy stick to maintain two points of contact with the ground at all times.
• Unfasten the belt of your pack so you can easily discard it if necessary.
• Staring down at moving water can make you dizzy. Look forward as much as possible.

Plan Ahead
• Protect yourself by wearing appropriate outdoor clothing including footwear.
• Be prepared for rapidly changing weather.
• Carry the ten essentials even on a short sightseeing hike.
• Always tell someone of your travel plans so they can notify the park if you fail to return.
• Do not travel alone.
• If visibility is poor, do not travel at all.

Most importantly, plan your route ahead of time and have a backup plan.

Climbing
Each year, approximately 10,000 people attempt to climb Mount Rainier. Nearly half reach the 14,410-foot summit. Climbing permits are required for travel above 10,000 feet and/or on glaciers. Climbing information—including fees, routes, and conditions—is available on the park website and at Wilderness Information Centers at Longmire, White River, and Paradise. See page 4 for hours.

Pay your annual climbing fee through pay.gov; keep your receipt and print or save it on your phone to serve as proof of payment; and bring a picture ID.

Guided climbs and seminars are available through: Alpine Ascents International (206) 378-1927 International Mountain Guides (360) 549-2609 Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. (888) 892-5462

You Can Help Protect Mount Rainier

Keep Wildlife Wild
Human food puts animals at risk and some die as a result. Birds like jays or ravens are effective nest predators—eating the eggs or young of other birds. By feeding birds, visitors concentrate these nest predators near roads and trails and inadvertently contribute to the death of songbirds in the same area.

• Please do not feed the wildlife.
• Store your food in an animal-proof container, or inside your car.
• Do not leave food, beverages, pet food, or toiletries unattended for any length of time.
• Clean up picnic areas after you eat.
• Please drive carefully and watch for wildlife.

Before you step off the trail...
...consider this: each step into a meadow crushes an average of 20 plants!

When exploring Mount Rainier’s fragile meadows hike only on maintained trails or thick patches of snow.

Be prepared for rapidly changing weather.
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• Always tell someone of your travel plans so they can notify the park if you fail to return.
• Do not travel alone.
• If visibility is poor, do not travel at all.

Mount Rainier National Park | Tahoma News | May–June 2019 | 3
Longmire Museum  
(360) 569-6575  
Ranger programs, exhibits, information, books  
May 1 - May 27  
9:00 am - 4:30 pm daily  
May 28 - June 11  
Closed  
June 12 - June 30  
9:00 am - 4:30 pm daily  

Longmire Wilderness Information Center  
(360) 569-6650  
Wilderness camping & climbing permits, general information  
May 24 - June 30  
7:30 am - 5:00 pm daily  

National Park Inn at Longmire  
Open year-round  
Lodging, dining room  
Front Desk: 7:00 am - 10:00 pm daily  

Longmire General Store  
Open year-round  
Lodging, dining room  
May 1 - June 7  
10:00 am - 5:00 pm daily  
June 8 - September 1  
9:00 am - 8:00 pm daily  

Carbon River Ranger Station  
(360) 829-9639  
Located on the Carbon River Road 5.5 miles east of the Mowich Lake (SR165) junction.  
Wilderness camping & northside climbing permits, general information  
May 24 - June 30  
9:00 am - 5:00 pm daily  

Services Outside Mount Rainier National Park  
Gasoline, lodging, dining, recreation equipment rentals, and religious and other services are available in local communities.  
GAS IS NOT AVAILABLE IN THE PARK.  

Drive-in Campgrounds  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campground</th>
<th>Open Dates</th>
<th>Elev.</th>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Group Sites</th>
<th>Toilets</th>
<th>Dump Station</th>
<th>Maximum RV/Trailer Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cougar Rock*</td>
<td>May 24 - Oct. 14</td>
<td>3,180’</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>RV 35’/Trailer 27’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohanapecosh*</td>
<td>May 24 - Oct. 14</td>
<td>1,914’</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>RV 32’/Trailer 27’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White River</td>
<td>June 21 - Sept. 30</td>
<td>4,232’</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>RV 27’/Trailer 18’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mowich Lake         | Primitive walk-in campground, tents only. 10 sites. No fee (must self-register at campground kiosk). Vault toilets, no potable water. No fires allowed. Elevation 4,929’. generally open July through early October, depending on road and weather conditions. Call 360-829-9639 for information.  

*Advance reservations are recommended for individual sites at Cougar Rock and Ohanapecosh Campgrounds from June 22 through the night of September 1. These can be made up to six months in advance. Reservations for group sites are recommended and are available throughout the season. These can be made up to one year in advance. To make a reservation online, go to www.recreation.gov or call 877-444-6777.