Mount Rainier's height and location influence the amount of snow that falls on its slopes. The mountain reaches into the atmosphere to disturb great sides of moist maritime air flowing eastward from the Pacific Ocean. The resulting encounter between moist air and the 14,411 foot mountain produces record snowfalls. The most recent record was set when the 1122 inches (93.5 feet) of snow fell at Paradise.

Located at 5400 feet elevation on the mountain's south slope, Paradise receives the greatest amount of snowfall. Although snow can fall here during any month of the year, the winter snowpack usually starts accumulating in late October or early November. It is no wonder that Paradise is a favorite destination for winter enthusiasts.

Winter Road and Driving Conditions

Mount Rainier conforms to Washington state guidelines for traction devices. Basically, four different signs will be displayed on park roadways. The restriction listed must be obeyed to reduce your chances of having an accident. You may be cited for ignoring snow tire or chain requirements.

**Watch for Ice**: The road ahead is mostly bare with patches of ice. You may be cited for ignoring snow tire or chain requirements.

**Approved Traction Tires Advised**: The road ahead has patches of snowpack or snow is falling or not yet completely plowed off. To proceed, your vehicle must have approved snow tires or chains on the drive wheels. Approved snow tires are designated by the "M-S", "M/S", "MS", or "All Season" lettering on the sidewall of the tire. Vehicles over 10,000 pounds GVW and busses must have chains installed when traction tires are required.

**Chains Required**: The road ahead is snowpacked or icy or snow is falling heavily. You can expect some difficulty. To proceed, your vehicle must have tire chains (link, cable or plastic) on the drive wheels. Four wheel drive vehicles may proceed without chains if they have snow tires on all four wheels and are in four wheel drive. Chains must be available for use on one set of drive wheels.

**Winter Driving Tips**

The arrival of snow on mountainous roads should herald a warning to winter enthusiasts: It's time to change driving habits and techniques. Reduced traction, uncertain braking and poor visibility should all be expected on any winter day. The following tips should help you compensate for the poor driving conditions.

- Reduce speed.
- Keep headlights on for visibility.
- Use low gears, especially when driving downhill.
- Maintain momentum while driving uphill.
- Stop only in pullouts to adjust or install tire chains.

Please observe the following:

- Use brakes sparingly. Apply light pressure to avoid locking your wheels.
- Leave extra room between vehicles to compensate for longer stopping distances.
- If your rear wheel drive vehicle skids, let up on the throttle and steer in the direction you want to go. For front wheel drives, accelerate slightly and steer in the direction you want to go.
- Obey posted traction requirements.
- Drive carefully and maintain control so you can avoid those who are less careful.
- Watch for snowplows operating on the road. Avoid hard braking when you meet them, and stay well back when following plows.

**SNOW PLOWING & ROAD CLOSURES**

The road between Longmire and Paradise is open daily, weather permitting. At 4:30 p.m., the gate is closed to uphill traffic. Check signs at the Longmire gate for time of opening. Park cars in the parking lot, not in line near the gates when waiting for the road to open. Paradies road closes each evening as soon as conditions permit safe travel. Check signs at the Longmire gate for time of opening. Park cars in the parking lot, not in line near the gates when waiting for the road to open.

**Paradise Road Closures**

Paradise road is open by 10:00 a.m. Exact time of opening will be earlier or later depending on weather, snow depth, avalanches, or equipment breakdowns. If you plan to camp anywhere above Paradise, first talk with a ranger at Longmire or Paradise to obtain a back country permit and to arrange for parking your vehicle. Next morning, be sure your moving operations have been completed before moving your vehicle. Always stay well away from snowplow crews while it is working.

Highway 123 is usually open from US Highway 12 north to the Ohanapecosh ranger station. Highway 123 north from the ranger station to Cayuse Pass is closed by snow from December through March.

**WAITING FOR THE ROAD TO PARADISE TO OPEN?**

- Ski or Snowshoe 0.7 mile around Longmire meadow (easy) 1 mile past Longmire Campground to national forest roads (easy). 2 miles to Cougar Rock Campground

**Skiing**

- Visit the Longmire Museum for maps, information and to view the nature and history exhibits.
- Please stay off the road toward Paradise.
- Remember, sliding is permitted ONLY in the designated area at Paradise.
Facilities & Services

Visitor Centers

Longmire — Museum: 9:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday - Friday; 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

Paradise — Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center: weekends and holiday long hours, weekends and holidays.

White River, Carbon River, and Mowich Lake areas.

Backcountry & Climbing Permits

Longmire — Museum: Information on backcountry permits and maps are available. Permits are required for backcountry camping.

Highway 410 Entrance: Backcountry permits, required for all camping, and climbing register cards are available at the U.S. Forest Service office in Enumclaw and at the north boundary arch on Highway 410 (self-service).

For reservations call: Mount Rainier Guest Services at (360) 569-2211 extension 3314, and ask for snowshoe reservations.

Food & Lodging

Longmire — National Park Inn: Lodging desk 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily. Dining room 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Sunday - Thursday 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Friday, Saturday and holidays.

For reservations call: Mount Rainier Guest Services at (360) 569-2215.

Paradise — Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center: 11:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. weekends and holidays only, plus December 18 - January 1. Food services, showers and gifts are available. A small indoor picnic area is available between the gift shop and Jackson Center.

Oceanpesh: Closed for the season.

Sunrise: Closed for the season.

Ranger Stations

Paradise: Open daily, located in the Jackson Visitor Center basement.

White River & Carbon River: Three ranger stations open in winter within these areas of the park. The U.S. Forest Service District Office in Enumclaw, (360) 825-6585, provides information, maps and permits for White River, Carbon River, and Mowich Lake areas.

Winter Activities

SNOWSHOE WITH A RANGER

Looking for something different this winter? Would you like to learn the reasons why Mount Rainier receives so much snow?

Join a Park Ranger/Naturalist for an exciting introduction to the art of snowshoeing and find out how the park receives so much snow?

Snowshoe walks begin on December 26, 1995, are offered daily through January 1, 1996, then on Saturdays and Sundays only through April 7, 1996. General public walks are offered at 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. and last for about 2 hours. The sessions are limited to 25 people, ten years old and older, on a first-come-first-served basis. A sign-up sheet is available at the Jackson Memorial Visitor Center information desk one hour before each walk.

Organized groups are offered snowshoe walks by reservation only, starting December 30, 1995. These walks begin at 12:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Groups of up to 25 people may inquire at Longmire Museum or Jackson Visitor Center information desk; or telephone (360) 369-2111 extension 3314, and ask for snowshoe reservations.

Visitors would like to make a personal contribution to ensure that your national parks will continue to be enjoyed by future generations, then consider becoming a VIP at the National Park Service.

To apply for volunteer service at Mount Rainier National Park, or to receive more information on the VIP program, contact a park ranger at any visitor center or ranger station or write: Clay & Daisie Gaschel, Lead VIP Coordinator, P.O. Box 1344, Renton, WA, 98057-1344.
**CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING**

With all the snow at Mount Rainier, cross-country skiing trips are popular. Be sure to mark some trails near Paradise for skiing. These are the Nisqually Valley Trail, open and plowed, and possibly the trail from the valley road over Mazzama Ridge to Reflection Lakes. A map of these trails and other unmarked ski routes is available at the Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center. If you will be using waxable skis, prepare for fairly warm snow. A waxing guide is available at the Visitor Center or snow information desk. Knowledge of the local avalanche danger is extremely important. Be sure to inquire at the Visitor Center or ranger station before you leave. A good handout on avalanches is available at the main park area, near the unpaved roads or in parking lots. Cross-country skis and snowshoes are available for rent at the Longmire General Store daily during the winter season. Cross-country ski rentals and snowshoe rentals are also available. Inquire at the General Store for details.

The OHAANAPECOSH Ranger Station is the starting point for cross-country skiing trips on snow-covered Highway 123 and on the Stevens Canyon Road to Box Canyon. The Stevens Canyon Road, not a cross-country skiing, but not snowmobiling.

Highway 123 north from Stevens Canyon Road offers a gentle 2-mile ski trip. The highway continues northward through Cedar Flats, a stretch of road frequently frequented by elk in winter. Skiing is not recommended beyond the Shriner Basin peak trailhead 5 miles north of Ohanapecosh, because of increased avalanche danger. The Stevens Canyon Road is a more challenging ski trip than the Backbone Ridge to Box Canyon. A beautiful view from Backbone Ridge is worth the effort to reach it. Overnight camping is permitted on this area, with permits available at the Ohanapecosh Ranger Station. Travel beyond Box Canyon is not recommended because avalanche danger increases on the upper portion of this road.

From the Stevens Canyon Road, trails branch north along the Ohanapecosh River to the Grove of the Patriarchs and south past Silver Falls to the Ohanapecosh Campground. These trails can be hard to find and rough going through the trees. Snow conditions on these trails are often poor.

The MOWICH LAKE road, State Route 165, is unpaved for the last 4 miles. Four wheel drive vehicles are recommended for travel on this roadway during winter. This road is closed to all motorized vehicles beyond Paul Peak trailhead. The snowcovered road between Paul Peak trailhead and Mowich Lake is a good 10-mile round trip for intermediate skiers looking to avoid the more popular areas of the Park.

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**SNOW CAMPING**

For the hardy and prepared, snow camping offers a special kind of experience. At Mount Rainier, snow camping is allowed when the snow depth reaches five feet at Paradise and two feet elsewhere in the park. A handout is available with complete winter camping information. In snow camping, you choose your own campsite, but the site must be at least 200 feet from any roadway. For safety reasons (to avoid being buried by snowshoers), at least 300 feet from buildings, and a minimum of 100 feet from camping sites. The smallest group size limits are not imposed. Leaders of large groups are encouraged to call the park for advice on avoiding those week-ends when many other groups are expected.

**PERMITS ARE REQUIRED YEAR-ROUND for backcountry and wilderness camping. In winter, permits are available at the Longmire Museum, Jackson Visitor Center at Paradise, Ohanapecosh Ranger station, and the USFS ranger station in Enumclaw.**

When you finish camping, please collapse igloos and snowscoves so someone does not fall through the roof. Snow camping requires many safety precautions. Be prepared for quick weather changes which can transform a pleasant tour into a survival ordeal.

**Overnight Parking**

If you will be leaving a vehicle overnight, be sure to park in a designated overnight parking area at Longmire, Nisqually Falls, Paradise, Ohanapecosh Ranger Station, the snow park on SR 706, Enumclaw (360) 825-6855 provides infor- mation, maps and permits for White River, Carbon River, and Mowich Lake.

Highway 410 is closed near its junction with Crystal Mountain Ski Area road at the North Park Boundary. A State "Sno-Park" permit is required to park in the parking area 100 yards east of the park entrance arch. Sno-Park permits are available at the U.S. Forest Service Office in Enumclaw and the Greenwater Store.

Snowmobiles are permitted on the 12-mile section of unpaved road from the North Park Boundary on Highway 410 to the White River Campground. Be aware of avalanche danger and forecast.

Backcountry permits, required for all cross-country skiers, are available at the north boundary arch on Highway 410 and the U.S. Forest Service office in Enumclaw.

**SNOWMOBILES**

On the east side of the park, Highway 123 north from U.S. Highway 12 is usually open to the Ohanapecosh Ranger Station. Highway 121 south from the ranger station to Cayuse Pass is closed by snow from December through March. Snowmobiles are permitted on Highway 123 between the Ohanapecosh Ranger Station and Stevens Canyon Road, and as far as Box Canyon on the Stevens Canyon Road. Snowmobiles are not permitted beyond Box Canyon because of the avalanche danger, or north of the Stevens Canyon junction because elk winter near the Grove of the Patriarchs and Cedar Flats.

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**AVALANCHE DANGER**

An avalanche occurs when a layer of snow loses its grip on a slope and slides downhill. Mount Rainier combines two of the most hazardous kinds, an avalanche and a rockslide. Avoid being caught in an avalanche. Getting killed can really ruin your day! Avalanche danger increases on the upper portion of this road. From the Stevens Canyon Road, trails branch north along the Ohanapecosh River to the Grove of the Patriarchs and south past Silver Falls to the Ohanapecosh Campground. These trails can be hard to find and rough going through the trees. Snow conditions on these trails are often poor.

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**TIPS TO STAY WARM**

- Use stove only.
- Open fires not permitted.
- Pack out all litter.
- Camping in vehicles is allowed only at Sunshine Point campground.

**WEAR WOOL OR SYNTHETICS like polypropylene—they are effective insulators even when wet.**

**AVOID WIND—Exposure to wind robs your body of more heat at any temperature.**

**SNOW and STEEP SLOPES.** but no CHAUFFEURS! If you're willing to make the hike, we'll provide the gravity. Not many rules to follow—just stay off plowed roads and keep out of the Paradise Snowplay Area and don't damage vegetation (that's trees too, dudes). Don't snowboard too early in the fall or too late into summer.

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**ES - Mount Rainier has two of the three ingredients any snowboarder would want: the most popular slopes.**

The daily avalanche hazard, for the Paradise area only, is posted at the Nisqually Entrance, Longmire Museum, Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center at Paradise, and ranger stations, and is also available from any ranger.

The four avalanche hazard levels are:

- **Low—Snow is more stable.** Avalanche activity is unlikely, except in isolated pockets, on steep slopes and gullies. Note: even with a low hazard avalanche can occur on some slopes.
- **Moderate—Areas of unstable snow, and avalanches are possible on steep, open slopes and gullies. Backcountry travelers should use caution.**
- **High—Mostly unstable snow with avalanches likely on steep slopes.** Backcountry travel is not recommended except on known, well-used routes.
- **Extreme—Avalanches are certain on steep slopes, with large destructive possibilities.** Backcountry travel should be avoided and may be prohibited.

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Treat avalanche hazard with utmost caution. Taking a route around an avalanche-prone slope is not a substitute for avoiding the avalanche. The survival rate for victims buried in an avalanche is grim. Only 50% of victims survive after 30 minutes of burial. In the event of an avalanche accident, your party is the first line of rescue. Do NOT go for help unless it is very close. Remember, only 50% of victims survive after 30 minutes of burial. Take these steps:

- **Ensure the safety of survivors.**
- Mark positions where victims were caught and last seen.
- Quickly search the snow surface immediately downhill from last seen points for clues such as clothing and equipment. Sculling the snow surface is a good procedure.
- Search the avalanche debris below the last seen points with probes, ski tails or ski poles, by probing the snow in a grid pattern.
- Keep Searching!—The victim could be inches away from your boots.

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Nisqually to Paradise

1. Longmire

- Westside Road (unplowed) - Snowmobiling for 3 miles - Skiing
- Nisqually River

2. Narada Falls

- To Paradise
- Paradise River

3. Paradise

- Mount Tahoma Scenic Ski Trail System
- Nisqually River Campground

Driving Tips
- 24-Hour Information: (360) 569-2211 TDD: (360) 569-2177 Emergencies: 911

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