It is the time of year when snowshoers, snowboarders and skiers look to the mountains hoping for a blanket of white. After last winter’s record low snowpack, a snowy winter would be welcomed by park visitors hoping to play in the snow, as well as by fish, farmers, hydropower managers—all the region’s residents!

Will this winter be a repeat, with bare mountain meadows in February? Probably not, but the National Weather Service reports we are in a strong warm stage of the El Niño climate cycle. The cycle affects ocean temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, which in turn affect weather worldwide. This includes the position of the jet stream—the high altitude river of air that brings weather to our door.

During El Niños, Washington has a higher chance of a warmer and drier than average winter. So there may be more snow than 2014-15, but there will likely be less than the average 30-35 feet of snow that usually blankets Hurricane Ridge.

Watching the Sky
What falls from the sky this El Niño winter will be closely watched as part of the Olympic Mountains Experiment (OLYMPEX)—a four month deployment of weather radars, aircraft, rain gauges and other weather monitoring equipment. The goal is to help NASA evaluate and refine a new Global Precipitation Measurement mission satellite. This satellite has advanced sensors to study clouds, rain and snow around the globe. At the local scale it will help meteorologists better predict daily weather and improve forecasting of extreme events.

To ensure the satellite’s instruments accurately interpret what is happening, NASA chose the Olympic Peninsula. Our infamous wet weather systems that travel from the Pacific Ocean, over the coast and into the mountains—nourishing temperate rain forests and bringing snow to the peaks—make this an ideal place to study precipitation.

Photographing Snowflakes
The project will use planes flying through and above clouds to study storm fronts. Teams also installed a variety of land-based instruments along the Washington coast, on Vancouver Island, in the Quinault Rain Forest and even at Hurricane Ridge—where high-speed video will photograph snowflakes, revealing details about conditions in the atmosphere above.

Researchers from NASA, University of Washington, the National Park Service and partners from around the country and Canada are deploying and monitoring these weather instruments and data. You too can track the weather at http://olympex.atmos.washington.edu or follow on facebook.com/OLYMPEX. The results will not only help refine understanding of global climate, but also paint a detailed picture of what El Niño delivers this winter.

It is a soft green place where rain rules... where the rivers and the seas and the clouds conspire...  
Robert Michael Pyle
Services and Facilities

**Hurricane Ridge Road**

Call (360) 565-3313 for a 24-hour recording of current road and weather conditions or follow road condition updates on twitter at: twitter.com/IRWWinterAccess.

To improve public safety, all vehicles (including 4WD) traveling above Heart O’ the Hills on the Hurricane Ridge Road between November 15 and April must carry tire chains. Weather permitting, the road is scheduled to be open Friday through Sunday and holiday Mondays (January 18, February 15, March 21, April 17, May 23 and June 20). Weather permitting, it will also be open December 28 through 31. The road usually opens at 4:00 a.m. at conditions. At 4:00 p.m. the road is closed to private vehicles after 11:00 a.m. on December 27 through 29 (December 26 closed Christmas). Weather permitting, the road will be open December 28 through 31. The road usually opens at 4:00 a.m. at conditions. At 4:00 p.m. the road is closed to private vehicles.

Storms, high winds, drifts or other hazardous weather conditions may delay or prevent road opening, or force an early closure. To minimize closures due to a full parking lot, pet owners are encouraged to park and close to other vehicles. The Hurricane Ridge Road opens with weather, staffing and road conditions conditions. By early May the road is usually open 24 hours a day. From mid December to late March the local business community works to provide shuttle service to Hurricane Ridge. Inquire at the Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center (360) 253-5623. (www.portangeles.org) for contact information on reservations, schedules and prices.

**Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center**

Open 9-4 daily except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day; free for adults, $2 for children. The center features exhibits, movies, and book sales and staff to help you plan a visit. Wilderness camping, hiking and permit information, as well as bear canisters, are also available. Pets are not allowed in public buildings, on trails in winter use areas, and must be on a leash in parking areas or within 100 feet of vehicles. Check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for a list of places pets are allowed. Please do not approach or feed any wildlife, including birds. It is illegal, harmful to the bird and hazardous to you. Visitors are subject to a $100 fine.

**Port Angeles Area**

Olympic National Park Visitor Center & Wilderness Information Center is open 9:00 - 4:00 daily. Call (360) 565-3130. For information, call (360) 565-3130. Park information, maps, wilderness permits and campground information on wilderness fees are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles. For the park’s audio tour, call (360) 406-5056 and follow the instructions for information about different areas of the park.

Pet owners are not allowed in public buildings, on trails in winter use areas, and must be on a leash in parking areas or within 100 feet of vehicles. Check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for a list of places pets are allowed. Please do not approach or feed any wildlife, including birds. It is illegal, harmful to the bird and hazardous to you. Visitors are subject to a $100 fine.

General Park Information

For park information see the park website: www.nps.gov/olym or call (360) 565-3130. Park information, maps, wilderness permits and campground information on wilderness fees are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles. For the park’s audio tour, call (360) 406-5056 and follow the instructions for information about different areas of the park.

For park information see the park website: www.nps.gov/olym or call (360) 565-3130. Park information, maps, wilderness permits and campground information on wilderness fees are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/Wilderness Information Center in Port Angeles. For the park’s audio tour, call (360) 406-5056 and follow the instructions for information about different areas of the park.

**Roads**

Some park roads regularly close in winter and others may be closed temporarily by weather conditions. Call (360) 565-3313 or see www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/current-roads-condition.htm for current conditions. Deer Park Road is closed at the park boundary (9 miles from Highway 101, 2,000 feet elevation) from mid October until early summer, depending on snow. Obstruction Point Road is closed mid October until mid summer, depending on snow. Downvalley Road is washed out 4 miles from the park boundary. Roads in the Steinaberg, Quilcene and Quinault areas are open-year-round, weather permitting although November storm damage closed roads in some park areas, including the Elwha.

**National Park Campgrounds**

The following park campgrounds are closed this winter: Alttair, Deer Park, Faithhome and South Beach. Other may be closed by snow, storms, high winds, flooding or downed trees at short notice. Several have primitive winter camping with pit toilets and no running water. Most are open fully in April or May. Fees at most campgrounds are $20 a night, but range from $15 to $22 depending on facilities and season. Check at the Visitor Center, see www.nps.gov/olym/planyourvisit/campgroundstatus.htm, or call (360) 565-3313 for current conditions. The following campground usually have some loops open year-round.

**Lake Crescent Lodge**


**Olympic Raft & Kayak**


**Snowshoe With a Ranger**

Join a park ranger at Hurricane Ridge to experience the wonders of winter on snowshoes. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! Equipment rentals and information are provided. Cost is $7 for adults, $3 for youth 6-15 years old, free for children 5 years old and under. Participants should prepare for wintry weather, with cold, snow, wind or even rain. Dress in layers, wear warm, waterproof boots and bring hats, mittens, sunscreen and sunglasses. If the road is closed, walks are canceled.

Snowshoe Walk: Starting December 15, 2015 from March 27, 2016, snow permitting, this easy to moderate walk is offered at 10:00 a.m. on weekends and holidays Mondays (January 18 and February 15) as well as January 1, May 1, July 4, September 1, and November 29, 2015.

Snowshoe Walks for Community Groups: Clubs, youth groups or schools can schedule a reserved service for groups of 7 to 25 people. From December 15, 2015 through March 27, 2016, walks last 1.5 hours and cover less than a mile. Reservations MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE, by calling (360) 565-3136.

**Quilcene:**

Lake Crescent Lodge

Kalahlo Campground: Kalaloch Campground Reservations can be made for Kalaloch campgrounds for June through September 17, 2016 by calling (877) 444-6777 or at www.recreation.gov no more than 6 months ahead.

**Hoh: Hoh Campground**

Mora: Mora Campground

Ozette: Ozette Campground (primitive in winter, flooding may limit sites)

Sol Duc: Sol Duc Campground (primitive in winter, flooding may limit sites)

**Elwha**

Call first. Campgrounds are closed by November storm damage.

**Hurricane Ridge:**

Area: Heart O’ the Hills (walk-in sites, boots only)

**Staircase:**

Staircase: Staircase Campground (primitive in winter)
Hurricane Ridge Area in Winter

Before heading out, check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current avalanche conditions. Wear an avalanche beacon, carry a probe, snow shovel and the 10 essentials (see page 8), and avoid avalanche terrain such as cornices, gullies and steep lee slopes.
Avalanche!

Olympic Mountain terrain and weather create ideal conditions for avalanches. Before heading out, check the Northwest Avalanche Center forecast at www.nwac.org, and check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current local conditions. Avalanches can occur at any time during the month of March. Be alert to the potential of a loose snow or cornice to fall or be triggered. Use proper safety equipment, and wear appropriate clothing and gear. Surface snow conditions can vary widely throughout the park. The avalanche danger is considered HIGH at this time. Weather changes quickly, and avalanches can occur even when other conditions seem to indicate that they should not.

Do your part to help everyone enjoy this area. Snowshoers, walkers and snowboarders, please stay to one side to avoid damaging ski tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.

Before heading out on any trip remember to register at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center and check current avalanche conditions. Below are descriptions of routes in the Hurricane Ridge area.

Snowshoeing is a favorite pastime for some, but it has also been some of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. Serious injuries and even permanent disabilities occurred when people collided with trees, other sliders, or lost control and ended up in the road.

For your safety, sliding/tubing is permitted in only two locations:
- The Small Children’s Snowplay area near the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center where children eight and under may slide.
- The tubing park operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club in the downhill ski area.

Sliding is not allowed anywhere else in the Hurricane area or along the Hurricane Ridge Road.

If conditions are too icy to allow safe sliding, the sliding areas may be closed. For the safety of participants, metal or hard plastic runner sleds and wooden toboggans are not permitted. Only tubes provided by the ski areas will be permitted in the tubing park. Compacted air for inflating tubes is not available. To be safe as possible, please:
- Slide only in the designated areas.
- Be sure the path is clear before starting your slide. Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for skiers and snowboarders crossing below the areas.

**Cross-Country Skiing and Snowshoeing**

**With its easy access and 15 to 20 miles of routes, Hurricane Ridge is the focus of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in Olympic National Park. Through winter explorers of all abilities can enjoy the area, flat, easy, beginner ski terrain is limited to the meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Backcountry skiers can explore several slopes and bowls in the area. No trails are groomed or marked; however, two routes use unpaved roads which can usually be navigated.**

**Tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.**

**NOTE FOR SNOWSHOERS, WALKERS, SNOWBOARDERS AND SKIERS:** Do your part to help everyone enjoy this area. Snowshoers, walkers and snowboarders, please stay to one side to avoid damaging ski tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.

Skiers and snowboarders should stay well to the windward (southwest) side of the ridge. Under good conditions, advanced skiers or snowshoers will find this a rewarding trip with good views and some nice slopes.

**Obstruction Point Road: To Waterhole** 3.4 mi/5.5 km one way

Rather than downscarping, exposed, steepsided avalanche gullies and ridges of the summer Obstruction Point Road, the winter route starts at the sharp curve along the Hurricane Ridge Road. 0.5 miles below the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center, in the ple mention pull-off the curve, cross to the east side of the road and walk the snow bank back uphill to the curve. After descending a steep but short meadow, the route intersects and follows the unplowed Obstruction Point Road.

Other than the initial descent, the first 1.5 miles are relatively easy and sheltered by forest. After a steep climb beyond a saddle, the road gains 900 feet, climbing steadily for 0.5 miles to open slopes on Eagle Ridge. In clear weather, views can be spectacular but steep sidehills and exposure to storms make this a difficult route. It is recommended only under good conditions for experienced skiers. Travel beyond Obstruction Point can inland steep terrain with high avalanche potential.

**Sunrise Ridge** 2.1 mi/3.4 km one way

Begin this route by crossing below the intermediate rope tow and tube park, then climbing to the right of the ski hill (stay right of the trees). After crossing the upper part of the ski hill, this route follows a narrow ridge toward the south side of Mount Angeles. There are several avalanche prone areas along the way. Be aware of changing conditions and extreme caution under unstable conditions. Be especially careful to stay off cornices that form at the ridge and along side ridges. Several nice slopes on the east side descend to the Hurricane Ridge Road.

**Other Areas**

Depending on the snow level, other roads and trails in the park and in Olympic National Forest may be snow-covered. Check at the visitor center for current snow levels. The Deer Park Road may provide opportunities. For safety, this steep, narrow road is closed at the park boundary. 9 miles from Highway 101, at around 2,000 feet of elevation. The road climbs steadily about 9 more miles from the park boundary up to Blue Mountain. If the snow level is low, there may be only a few feet of snow on the boundary, but users usually need to hike several miles before reaching snow.

For other routes on the Olympic Peninsula, refer to guides such as 100 Best Cross-Country Ski Trails in Washington, by Tom Kilkendriff and Vicky Sprung, Snowshoe Routes: Washington by Dan Nelson, or Backcountry Ski and Snowboard Routes: Washington by Martin Volken.

**Snow Play**

Snow sliding in a favorite pastime for some, but it has also been some of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. Serious injuries and even permanent disabilities occurred when people collided with trees, other sliders, or lost control and ended up in the road.

For your safety, sliding/tubing is permitted in only two locations:
- The Small Children’s Snowplay area near the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center where children eight and under may slide.
- The tubing park operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club in the downhill ski area.

Sliding is not allowed anywhere else in the Hurricane area or along the Hurricane Ridge Road.

If conditions are too icy to allow safe sliding, the sliding areas may be closed. For the safety of participants, metal or hard plastic runner sleds and wooden toboggans are not permitted. Only tubes provided by the ski areas will be permitted in the tubing park. Compacted air for inflating tubes is not available. To be safe as possible, please:
- Slide only in the designated areas.
- Be sure the path is clear before starting your slide. Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for skiers and snowboarders crossing below the areas.
Find Your Park in Winter

Olympic is a park for all seasons. Don’t wait for summer to find your special park place during this 100th anniversary year of the National Park Service. Visitors prepared for unpredictable weather can experience the beauty and solitude of winter without summer crowds. But winter is the wet season. Snow and rain can swell streams overnight, making crossings treacherous and washing out trails. Camp above flood plains. Boardwalks and bridges are very slippery when wet or icy. On the coast, storms push tides higher, creating huge waves that easily move beach logs or trap hikers on rocks. Winter storms can blow down trees, blocking trails. Be prepared, always carry the 10 essentials, even for short hikes: extra clothing, extra food and water, map, compass, flashlight, knife, sunglasses, matches, fire starter/candle, first aid kit.

But don’t let winter chase you inside! There are always options. Stop at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/Wilderness Information Center (WIC) in Port Angeles for maps, tide tables and trail reports or check the park website www.nps.gov/olymp. If you plan to camp overnight in the park’s wilderness, check the above website for information on bear canisters, wilderness fees and required permits, or call the WIC (360) 565-3100. May through September some popular spots, including the coast, have camping limits. See the website for making reservations. For you and your pet’s safety, pets are not allowed on trails in the park. The following options are usually accessible in winter, depending on snow level and storm damage.

Low-Elevation Hiking

Elwha Valley: Madison Falls, Smokey Bottom, West Elwha, Griff Creek, Cascade Rock and Geyser Valley/Humes Ranch and lower parts of the Elwha River trail, or check out the view at Glines Canyon Spillway Overlook. But call first as late November storm damage washed out the main access road. Lake Crescent: Marymere Falls, Barnes Creek and Spruce Railroad trails. Ozette: Cape Alava or Sand Point trails. Mora and La Push: James Pond, Second, Third and Rialto Beaches. Kalaloch: Short trails to beaches, beach hikes and the forest nature trail. Hoh: Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature trails, or lower Hoh River trail. Quinault: Maple Glades and Kestner Homestead trails at the national park ranger station, Irelly Lake and Cascading Terraces trails, or lower parts of the North Fork and Graves Creek trails. There are also several nature trails in Olympic National Forest along the South Shore Road.

High Country Trips

Snow camping requires preparations, but offers a glimpse into a season that few truly experience. Weather changes quickly. Places like Hurricane Ridge and Blizzard Pass earn their names, and whiteout conditions can occur anytime!

Hurricane Ridge has the easiest high country access. For safety, observe these rules:
- Overnight campers must get a permit at the WIC, and register and check with a ranger at Hurricane Ridge for camping and parking locations.
- Plan trips for weekends since the road is usually closed Monday through Thursday. If a storm forces a road closure, you may need to use tire chains and have a shovel in case of a snowy descent. Use caution as plow operators may not see you! If you are locked in uphill from the gate, call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 (before 5:30 p.m.) or (360) 417-2459 after hours.
- Because of the risk of sudden storms, winter overnight parking is not allowed at Hurricane Ridge. You must park 3.3 miles below the Ridge at Third Peak (see map on pages 4-5). Check with rangers at Hurricane Ridge to see if a car shuttle is available.
- Camps must be 1/2 mile away from the Hurricane Ridge parking lot and out of sight of ski/snowshoe trails. Check with a ranger for suggestions.
- Use a camp stove. Campfires are prohibited.
- Share the trails—avoid walking or snowshoeing in ski tracks.
- In emergencies, dial 911 from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center foyer.
- Check avalanche conditions and carry beacons (see page 7).

Every Kid in a Park

If you have a fourth grader in your family, Every Kid in a Park, a White House initiative, is for you! The National Park Service, in celebration of its 2016 Centennial, invites fourth graders to go to www.everykidinapark.gov to earn a pass. The pass gives them and their families free entry to over 2,000 national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other federal lands and waters from Alaska to Florida. These passes are valid through August 31, 2016. Every Kid in a Park offers all children a chance to discover what their public lands offer, while being active and spending time with friends and family. As living classrooms, these outdoor places and historic sites also provide hands-on opportunities to learn about the natural world and our nation’s past. Activities are as varied as the network of federally protected places around the country. To help families plan, the National Park Service created 4 for Fourth—four simple ways to explore each national park in this region. Possibilities for Olympic National Park include:

Do something seasonal! There are fun things to do year-round. In winter sign up to take a ranger-guided snowshoe hike at Hurricane Ridge. Spring is a time to visit the Pacific coast to watch gray whales migrate north to summer feeding grounds. Head to the mountains in summer to hike trails or throw a snowball in June! In fall watch salmon jump at Salmon Cascades in the Sol Duc or listen to Roosevelt elk bugle in rain forest valleys.

Become a Junior Ranger! You can explore the park and earn badges or patches at the same time. Pick up a Junior Ranger book and/or an Ocean Steward book, complete the activities in the book, and earn a Junior Ranger badge or an Ocean Steward patch. Or check out an Olympic Discovery Pack with binoculars, field guides and activity ideas to help your family connect with Olympic’s coast, forests and mountains.

Visit the Discovery Room! This activity room at Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles is filled with fun puzzles and games for families to explore at their own pace.

Hike to a waterfall! Olympic National Park is known for water! Walk short trails to beautiful waterfalls including Madison Falls in the Elwha valley, Marymere Falls near Lake Crescent, orSol Duc Falls at the end of the road in the Sol Duc valley.

Get your pass on the website, and come explore Olympic! Kids show off their new passes with Park Ranger Jared Low.