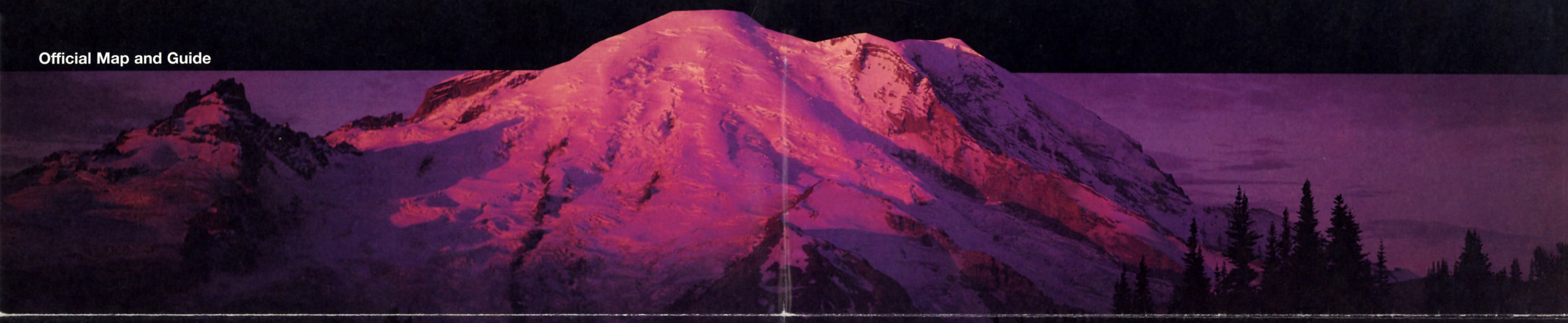
Mount Rainier

Official Map and Guide

Mount Rainier National Park
Washington

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



October Sunrise (above) by Loren E. Lane

Welcome to a mountain wonderland of dense forests, dazzling wildflowers, tremendous snowfields, and rugged glaciers. Enjoy the fresh smell of trees and soil, the soothing—and sometimes deafening—sound of falling water, and the refreshing cold breezes off the glaciers. Towering above all this scenic display is magnificent Mount Rainier. This is a complex landscape, but the explanation of its origins are simplicity itself: fire and ice. The mountain is a volcano born of fire and built up above the surrounding country by repeated eruptions and successive flows of lava. It is a relatively young volcano, only about one million years old. By contrast the mountains of the Cascade Range that Mount Rainier looks down upon are at least 12 million years old, created by the folding, buckling, and uplifting of the Earth's surface. Mount Rainier is not an isolated volcano, for from Lassen Peak in California to Mount Garibaldi in British Columbia an entire line of volcanoes defines the north-south march of the Cascades. These peaks dominate the skyline, ever a reminder that they are only dormant and may at anytime, like Lassen Peak in 1914-21 and Mount St. Helens in 1980, erupt in fury and rage at the fragile world built by humans. One of the unexpected side benefits of these eruptions has been the deposition of ash and pumice layers that are rich in nutrients and support the abundance of wildflowers throughout the mountainous Pacific Northwest. Even as volcanic forces were building up this land, the slow, inevitable power of glacial ice began to shape and form it. Glaciers come from the snow that does not melt from year to year—it accumulates to greater and greater depths. The weight of the snow presses the air out, packs it tight, and compresses it into ice. Gravity pulls the ice down the mountainside, both scouring and smoothing the bedrock as it goes. Freezing and thawing break rocks from the adjacent stones, and they fall onto the glacier's surface. More debris is picked up by the passing ice. This is an inexorable process that continues today and will alter the mountain in the tomorrows to come. Yes, the process is simple, but it deals in forces that are beyond the control, and perhaps comprehension, of humans. Take a look at this mountain; it may be gone in a million years.

Enjoying the Park

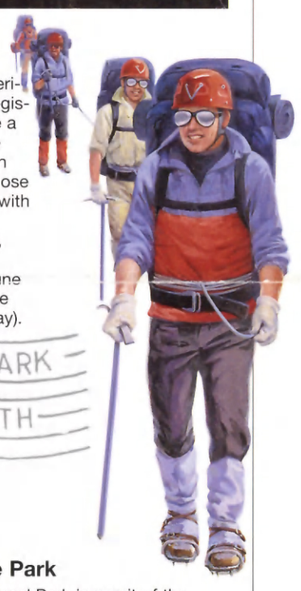
On the Roads

Carefully engineered roads lead through the old-growth forest and up into the subalpine areas. A major road system runs from the southwest entrance through the southern and eastern parts of the park with a spur to Sunrise on the northeast side of the mountain. A separate road leads into Carbon River in the northwest. The roads were designed to make the least impact on the landscape. They are narrow, and, especially in the lower elevations, trees grow close to the road. All but the 18 miles of road between the southwest entrance and Paradise are closed in winter.

Mount Rainier's roads lead through spectacular mountain scenery at all seasons of the year, from the cool lushness of summer to the wonderlands of winter.

On the Mountain

Climbing the mountain is hazardous and should be undertaken only by those well experienced, equipped, and fit. All climbers must register with a ranger whether they intend to make a short climb or go to the summit. Climbers are strongly urged to wear hard hats as protection against the hazards of falling rock and ice. Those heading for the top are encouraged to do so with the long-established guide service—Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. For information on rates, reservations, and equipment, write: Rainier Mountaineering, Inc., Paradise, WA 98398 (June through September); or 535 Dock Street, Suite 209, Tacoma, WA 98402 (October through May).



Wildlife The seasons and elevation play a big role in determining where you may best find wildlife. In the summer, chipmunks, chickarees, ground squirrels, marmots, and pika are commonly seen mammals; Steller's jays, gray jays, Clark's nutcrackers, and ravens are commonly seen birds. Deer are frequently seen, but black bear, elk, and mountain goats are more elusive. Look for elk on the east side of the park in September. The color of black bears may be brown, tan or blond, and to see one is a rare treat. Mountain goats stay close to high country cliffs.

Illustrations by Patricia Topper
Photo *(left)* by James Randklev

The issuance of commemorative stamps was of great interest to both President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Postmaster General James Farley, both avid stamp collectors. This view of Mount Rainier is from the National Parks Issue that was released August 3, 1934, in commemoration of National Park Year. The view of Mt. Rainier is across Mirror Lake.

Hiking, Walking, and Other Joys of the Wilderness

The more than 300 miles of trails in the Mount Rainier National Park are usually snow free from mid-July through September. For the traveler who really wants to see the park, a few days in the wilderness is well worth the time and effort. Even if the weather is foggy or misty, you will discover a world that is beautiful and quiet. The fog can be a blessing, for it may force you to look at the world close by rather than always straining to see the mountain. You can examine close up the radiant wildflowers that take on a deeper coloration in the mist, or search for signs of the wildlife that inhabit the forest floor and the meadows. The 93-mile Wonderland Trail completely encircles the mountain, providing perspectives from every angle. A complete circuit takes about 10 to 14 days.

Precautions

Almost 97 percent of the park's 235,612 acres was designated wilderness on November 16, 1988. To keep it so requires that we extend special respect to the land. Because of the tremendous snowfalls, many trails are not clear until mid-July, so be prepared for some snow-covered slopes in the spring. You must have a wilderness permit for any overnight trip. You can get one at any ranger station or at the Longmire or White River Wilderness Information Centers. Rangers can give you advice on the condition of trails, tell you what to expect, and help you plan your trip. For safety, make sure you have a traveling companion. Be prepared for sudden and extreme weather changes. Mount Rainier is a weather-maker, and storms can come up suddenly, even in summer. Always carry raingear. Stay on the trails, shortcutting causes erosion in the fragile mountain environment. Bury human waste more than 200 feet from water. Pack out everything that you bring in; leave no litter. Use of a portable camp stove is required in the wilderness.

Preserving the Park

Mount Rainier National Park is a unit of the National Park System, one of more than 370 parks that are important examples of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. The park is a fragile ecosystem under heavy use, so we ask you to help preserve it so that future generations may see what you see today. Please stay on the trails. Shortcutting causes erosion, and scars on the land in alpine areas heal much more slowly than at lower elevations. Finally, respect the results of meadow rehabilitation work that you see during your visit. Respect the wildlife, too, and remember that no matter how cute and tame they look, they are still wild animals.

Mountain Wonderlands

Longmire

This is the park's oldest developed area, the site of Mineral Spring Resort that James Longmire opened in 1884. After the park was established in 1899, Longmire became the park headquarters. Today the original administrative building houses a museum with exhibits that tell the story of those early days. The National Park Inn, a concessioner-operated hotel, is open year round for guests. The road from the Nisqually Entrance to Longmire is one of the world's most beautiful forest roads.

Paradise

When Elcaine Longmire's wife first saw this subalpine meadow, she exclaimed, "This must be what Paradise is like!" The name is appropriate and remains with us today. With its spectacular view of Mount Rainier in the distance, the meadows and forests in the foreground, and the clear mountain air all around, it is almost beyond description. Because many trails radiate from here into the subalpine meadows and because of the nearby access to the Wonderland Trail, this is a major point from which to begin a hike. Paradise is also the prime winter-use area in the park; an average of 630 inches of snow falls each winter. Though the Paradise Inn is open only during the summer, the road is kept plowed throughout the winter. Snowshoeing, crosscountry skiing, and tubing are the major winter activities here. Some winter sports equipment can be rented at Longmire. The visitor center has exhibits and audiovisual programs. Naturalists lead walks and give talks; check the information desk for times.

Ohanapecosh

Here the lowland forest reigns supreme and reaches its true glory in the Grove of the Patriarchs, which is a short walk from the parking area near the Stevens Canyon Entrance. Here Douglas-fir, western red-cedar, and western hemlock rival the grandeur of the coastal redwood forests in California and Oregon. Exhibits in the visitor center tell the story of the northwest forest. Ohanapecosh is the major approach to Paradise and the high country for travelers coming from east of the Cascades.

Sunrise

At 6,400 feet this is the highest point in the park that is reached by road. From here the views of Emmons Glacier, the largest on Mount Rainier, are breathtaking. On very clear days, this is also the spot for views of some of the other volcanoes in the Cascades Range. Sunrise lies in the rain-shadow of Mount Rainier, thus the area is much drier than Paradise. Nevertheless, these high mountain meadows abound with wildflowers, too. The visitor center exhibits focus on the subalpine and alpine environments.

Carbon River

Named for the coal deposits found in the area, Carbon River is located in the park's northwest corner. Of all park areas it has the heaviest rainfall and most luxuriant forest. Some botanists suggest that rather than a lowland forest what you find here is an example of a temperate rainforest. Trails lead into the wilderness and connect with the Wonderland Trail. The Mowich Lake area, though nearby, is reached by a separate road. Campgrounds are located at both sites; Mowich Lake is walk-in only.

Things You Need To Know

Approaching the Park
Mount Rainier National Park is located in west central Washington within an easy drive of Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland. The Nisqually entrance is open year round. Travelers coming from east of the Cascades may enter the park directly during the summer, but these eastern mountain passes are closed in winter. To reach the Carbon River area of the park, take Wash. 165 (not shown on map) from Buckley. Shortly after passing through Wilkenson, the road forks, with Carbon River entrance and Ipsut Creek to the left and Mowich Lake to the right.

Getting Here Airlines, AMTRAK, and buses provide service to Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and other cities. Rental cars are available. Gray Line runs buses to the park from mid-spring to mid-fall from Tacoma and Seattle.

Bikes and Horses In the park bicyclists will find that there is little room to maneuver, since the roads are relatively narrow. The use of saddle and pack stock is permitted on more than 100 miles of trails. Check with a ranger about regulations.

Fees Mount Rainier National Park is a U.S. fee area. Three categories of entrance passes are available: a Single Entrance pass; a Park Pass valid at Mount Rainier for one calendar year; and a Golden Eagle Pass valid at all U.S. fee areas for one year. Two special passes are available: a Golden Age pass for U.S. citizens 62 years of age or older and a Golden Access pass for disabled persons. Information about fees for these passes is available at the park.

Floods and Landslides Historically, glacial floods, landslides, and debris flows (mud, rocks, and trees) have swept down the river valleys—and they will again. Be alert in valleys. If you hear a rumbling noise or see a rapid rise in water level, move to higher ground quickly. Do NOT run downstream. Ask for more information.

Facilities, Services, and Regulations

Visitor Centers Begin your visit at one of the visitor centers at Longmire, Paradise, Ohanapecosh, or Sunrise. Park rangers can answer questions and help you plan your visit. Ask about the many naturalist talks and walks that take place in summer and the snowshoe walks in winter. Exhibits in each visitor center are geared to a specific aspect of the park; all are worth seeing.

Accommodations In the park overnight rooms are available at Paradise Inn at Paradise in summer only. The National Park Inn at Longmire is the only lodging that is open all year in the park. For reservations write: Mount Rainier Guest Services, 55106 Kernahan Road East, Ashford, WA 98304, or call 360-569-2275. The nearby communities have motels, restaurants, and gasoline stations to serve travelers, as well as stores selling groceries and supplies for hikers and campers.

Access Limited facilities and trails are accessible by the disabled. Address specific questions and needs to the park staff.

Winter The road from the Nisqually entrance to Paradise is kept open year round. Winter at Paradise provides a glimpse into another world. Snow covers everything and muffles the sounds of the everyday world. Bright sunshine turns the area into a white wonderland. Use caution when driving the snow-covered roads. Carry tire chains in your vehicle and exercise caution.

Regulations
• Mount Rainier is famous for its wildflowers; do not pick them. Leave them for everyone to enjoy. • Make fires only in a fire ring or grill at the picnic areas and campgrounds. Use a portable stove in the wilderness. • No fishing license or permit is required to fish in the park's lakes and streams. Some streams and lakes are closed, and on some only fly fishing is allowed; check with a ranger for details. Since the park waters are not stocked, "fishing for fun" is encouraged: use barbless hooks and release uninjured fish. The daily limit is six pounds plus one fish, not to exceed a total of twelve fish. • Pets must be caged or leashed. They are not allowed in buildings or on trails. • A permit for an overnight wilderness stay is required year round. Inquire at any visitor center or wilderness information center. • Firearms must be unloaded, broken down, and cased. Hunting is prohibited. • Do not drive or park off roads.

More Information
Write: Superintendent, Mount Rainier National Park, Ashford, WA 98304-9751; or call 360-569-2211. Find more information about the park at **www.nps.gov/mora/** on the Internet.

	Sites/Rooms	RVs	Tents	Fee	Limit of Stay	Drinking Water	Flush Toilets	Sanitary Dump	Food	Groceries	Gifts
Cougar Rock campground	200		•	•	•	14	•	•	•		
Cougar Rock group camp	5			•	•	14	•	•			
Ipsut Creek campground	29	•	•	•	•	14	•				
Ipsut group camp	2			•	•	14	•				
Jackson Memorial Visitor Center							•	•		•		•
National Park Inn	25				•		•	•		•	•	•
Ohanapecosh campground	205	•	•	•	•	14	•	•	•			
Paradise Inn	126				•		•	•		•		•
Sunrise Lodge							•	•		•	•	•
Sunshine Point campground	18	•	•	•	•	14	•					
White River campground	112	•	•	•	•	14	•	•				

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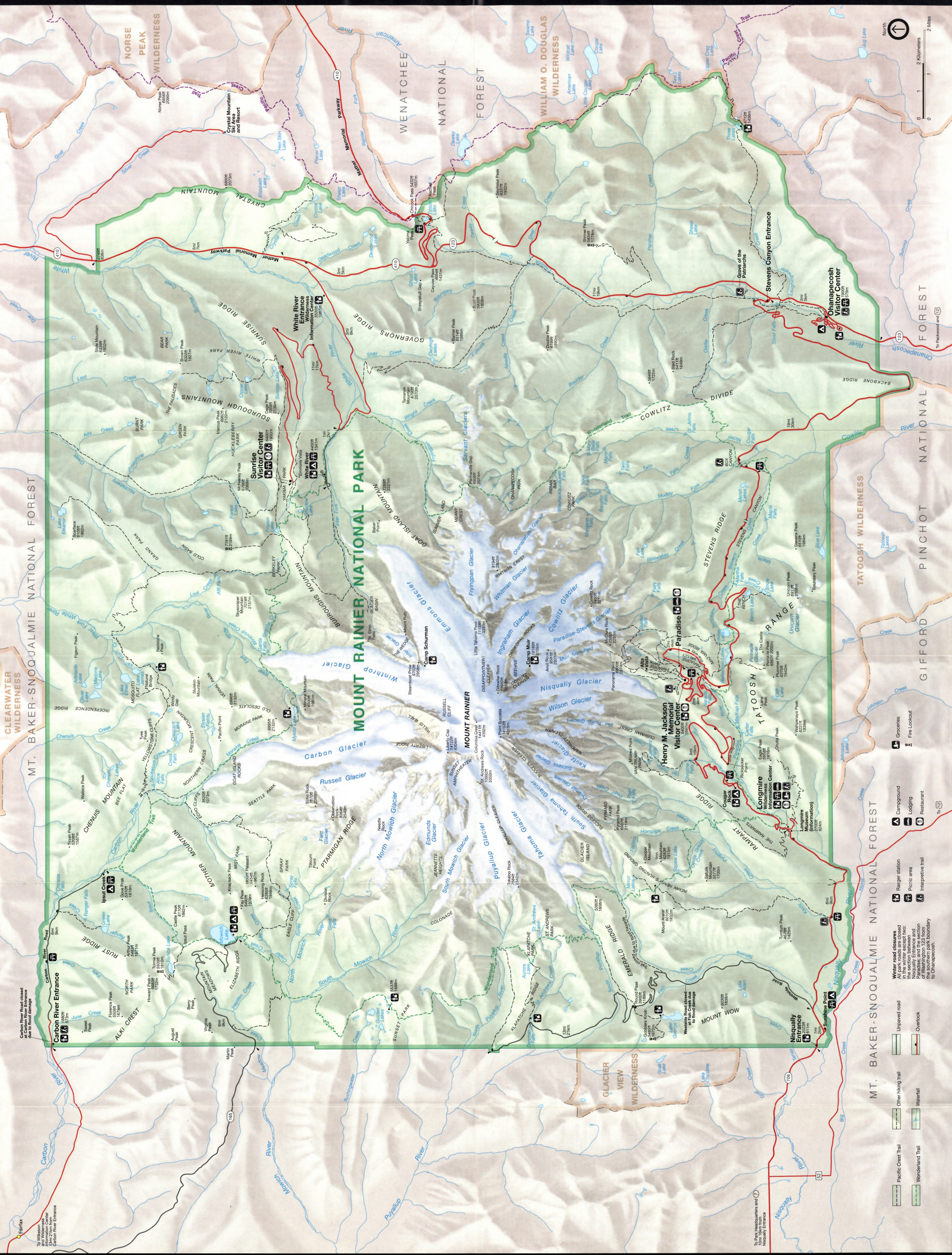
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