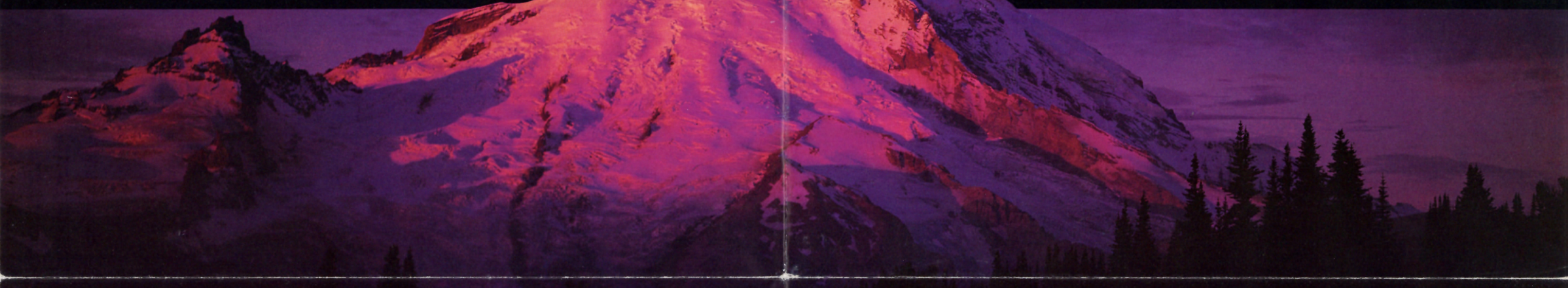
Mount Rainier

Mount Rainier National Park
Washington

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Welcome to a mountain wonderland famous for its dense forests, dazzling wildflower meadows, tremendous snowfields, and rugged glaciers. If you visit on a sunny day take time to absorb the fresh smell of living trees and soil, the soothing and sometimes deafening sound of falling water, and the intense green of the Pacific Northwest. If you visit on a cloudy day, remember that you are experiencing the park in its most frequent guise: cloaked in moisture and hooded by snow. Moisture-laden weather systems move off the Pacific Ocean, batter the sides of Mount Rainier, and drop record-setting quantities of snow at higher elevations before drifting eastward. The huge amount of total precipitation—about 87 inches each year at Longmire and 126 inches at Paradise—shapes everything you see, from the 26 glaciers that cap the mountain to the dense stands of Douglas fir, western redcedar, and western hemlock that contribute to the old-growth forest at its base. In the subalpine parks, or meadows, on the mountain's shoulders abundant moisture blends with volcanic soils and intense summer sunlight to bring forth some of the most breathtaking wildflower meadows on Earth.

As an active volcano Mount Rainier stands as a reminder of the beauty and power of nature. The Cascade Range has been volcanically active for millions of years, thanks to its location close to the western edge of the North American tectonic plate. The mountain we see today is relatively young in geologic terms: it formed about 500,000 years ago. Like Mount St. Helens and other Cascade volcanoes, Mount Rainier has the potential to erupt again at some unknown time. Volcanologists expect the mountain to give ample warning before entering an eruptive period, but the threat of unexpected mudflows exists throughout the park. See Volcanic Hazards *(below)* to better understand how this might affect you. Mount Rainier National Park was established in 1899 after the enthusiastic and persistent advocacy by American citizens, European dignitaries, and national and local scientific and business groups. The story of the park's establishment and protection shows the power of people who are committed to an idea of national significance. Today the issues are more complex, but the strength of stewardship still comes from the power of commitment.

October Sunrise *(above)* ©Loren E. Lane

Enjoying the Park

Christine Falls © Loren E. Lane

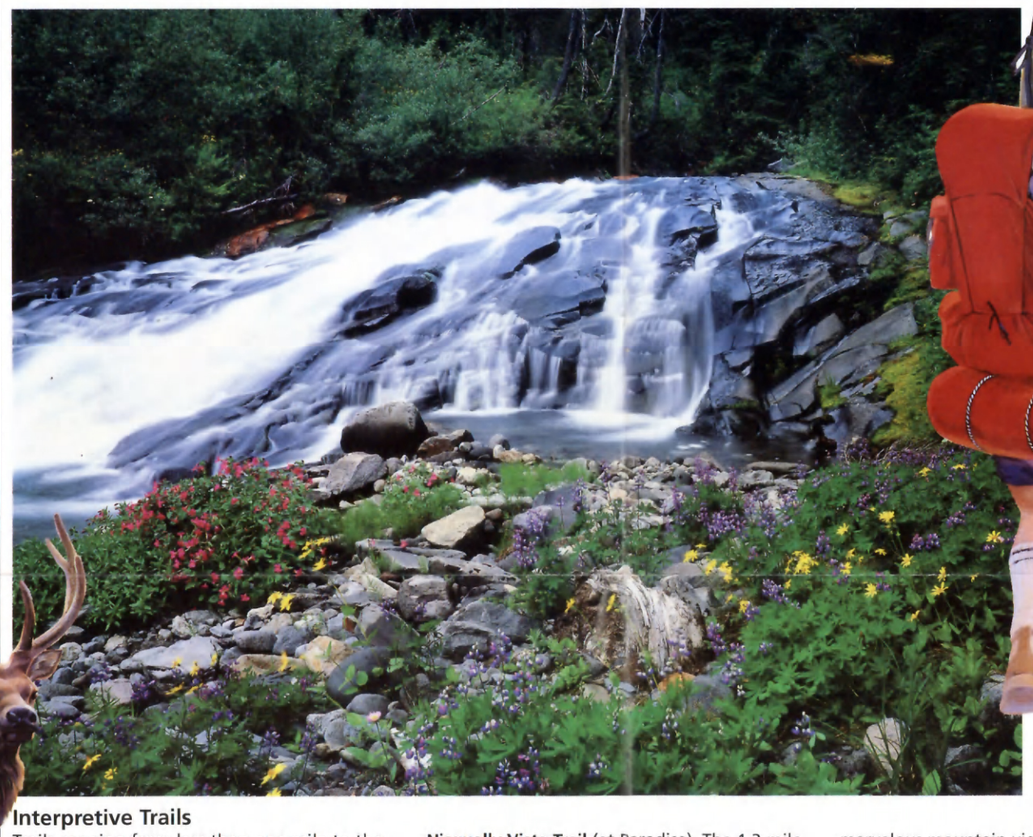
NPS

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

On the Roads

Roads lead through the old-growth forest and into 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 18 miles of road between the southwest entrance and Paradise are closed in winter. Carbon River Road is open year-round.

Wildlife The seasons and elevation help determine where you might see wildlife. In the summer, watch for chipmunks, squirrels, marmots, and pikas. Keep an eye out for these birds—Steller's jays, Clark's nutcrackers, gray jays, and ravens. You may see black-tailed deer, but elk, black bears, 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. Mountain goats stay close to highcountry cliffs.



Illustrations: Patricia Topper
Photo *(left)*: ©James Randklev

Interpretive Trails

Trails ranging from less than one mile to the 93-mile Wonderland Trail offer chances for pleasant ambles or overnight backpacks. Short hikes suitable for all ages include:

Kautz Creek Trail (between Nisqually Entrance and Longmire) This two-mile-roundtrip hike parallels Kautz Creek, site of the 1947 mudflow that covered the highway with 30 feet of cement-like mud. A short spur is wheelchair-accessible.

Trail of the Shadows (at Longmire) The 0.7-mile-roundtrip trail leads through the site of the Longmire family homestead. The **Rampart Ridge Trail**, a 4.5-mile loop, begins on the Trail of the Shadows and is moderately strenuous.

Nisqually Vista Trail (at Paradise) The 1.2-mile loop begins near the visitor center and leads through wildflower meadows to views of the Nisqually Glacier—guided walks available in summer.

Grove of the Patriarchs Trail (near Ohanapecosh) This 1.5-mile-roundtrip trail passes through a beautiful old-growth forest. It leads across the Ohanapecosh River to an island of ancient giant trees. Ask about guided walks in summer.

Emmons Vista Trail (at Sunrise) This 0.5-mile-roundtrip walk will whet your appetite for more hiking, with overlooks of the Emmons glacier and marvelous mountain views. Many trails begin at Sunrise; ask for other suggestions.

Precautions Be prepared for rain in any month and for snow and freezing temperatures from September through May. Trails are usually snow free from mid-July through September, but low clouds may hide landmarks at higher elevations. Carry maps and compass, a first-aid kit, and extra food and water. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Stay on trails; never cut across switchbacks. In the Paradise and Sunrise areas off-trail travel is prohibited.

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Climbing Mount Rainier

Climbing Mount Rainier is hazardous and requires skill, proper equipment, and excellent physical condition. Climbers must register to climb and pay a fee if climbing above 10,000 feet. Rock and icefalls are a problem—wear a helmet and climb early in the day. Novices and those lacking glacier travel experience are strongly encouraged to climb with one of several guide services authorized to lead climbs on Mount Rainier. Ask at visitor centers for more information.

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Preserving the Park

Mount Rainier National Park preserves very fragile ecosystems. In 1988 about 96 percent of the park was designated as the Mount Rainier Wilderness. Each year more than two million people visit the park. Please help us protect this area by honoring these regulations: • Do not feed birds or animals; they need natural foods to stay healthy. • Collecting, damaging, or disturbing plants, dead plant material (including firewood), rocks, and historic or cultural items is prohibited by federal law. • Always practice minimum-impact camping, pack out your trash, and use recycling containers in the park. These fragile and heavily used areas are easily damaged. Protect the park for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Mountain Wonderlands

Longmire Administration Building NPS

Longmire

This is the site of Longmire's Medical Springs that James Longmire and his family developed in 1888 and 1889. It is now a national historic district. After the park was established in 1899, Longmire became the park headquarters. Today the original headquarters building houses a museum with exhibits that tell the story of those early days. The National Park Inn, a concessioner-operated hotel, is open for guests year-round. The road from the Nisqually Entrance to Longmire is one of the world's most beautiful forest roads.

NPS

Paradise Inn NPS

Paradise

When James Longmire's daughter-in-law Martha first saw this subalpine meadow, she exclaimed, "This must be what Paradise is like." Paradise is world-famous for its glorious views and wildflower meadows. It is also the most heavily visited area in the park. In the summer parking can be difficult, particularly on weekends. Try to visit on weekdays, arrive early, and carpool if possible. Excellent long and short hikes begin here. The park's main visitor center is located at Paradise. Interpretive programs are offered daily through the summer and on weekends and holidays in winter. Fall colors turn the hillsides crimson in September, and visitation slows after Labor Day. Paradise is also the prime winter-use area in the park; an average of 680 inches of snow falls each winter. Paradise Inn is open only in the summer, but the road is plowed throughout the winter. Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and tubing are the major winter activities here. Some winter sports equipment can be rented at Longmire.

Silver Falls ©Loren E. Lane

Ohanapecosh

Named for a riverside Taidnapam or "Upper Cowlitz" Indian habitation site, Ohanapecosh is thought to mean "standing at the edge." Ohanapecosh is nestled between the Douglas firs, western redcedars, and western hemlocks of an old-growth forest, and demonstrates the complex structure of old-growth forest habitat. Ohanapecosh Visitor Center and campground are open from late May through mid-October.

Mount Rainier from Sunrise ©Loren E. Lane

Sunrise

At 6,400 feet above sea level Sunrise is the highest point in the park that you can reach by vehicle. These high mountain meadows abound with wildflowers. On clear days Sunrise provides breathtaking views of Mount Rainier, Emmons glacier, and many other volcanoes in the Cascade Range. Sunrise is open from July to late September.

A glacier's snout ©Loren E. Lane

Carbon River and Mowich Lake

Carbon River, named for the coal deposits found here, is in the park's northwest corner. Of all the park areas it has the greatest precipitation and hosts an example of a temperate rainforest. Carbon River Road has been damaged by a series of floods. Check with the park for motor vehicle access. The road is usually open to bicyclists and hikers, despite vehicle restrictions. Mowich Lake is reached by a separate road *(see map on other side of this brochure)* that leads to wilderness trails and a walk-in campground.

Planning Your Visit

Approaching the Park Mount Rainier National Park is in west central Washington, an easy drive from Seattle, Tacoma, or Portland.

The Nisqually entrance (southwest corner) is open year-round. Travelers from east of the Cascades may enter the park directly in summer, but eastern mountain passes are closed in winter.

To reach the Carbon River area, take Wash. 165 from Buckley. Shortly after passing through Wilkeson, the road forks, with the Carbon River entrance and Ipsut Creek to the left and Mowich Lake to the right.

Getting Here Airlines, Amtrak, and tour buses serve Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and other cities. Private carriers provide bus or van service spring through fall: Gray Line Tours, 800-426-7532; Rainier Shuttle, 360-569-2331; Ashford Mountain Center, 360-569-2604. www.nps.gov/mora/general/directions.htm

Bikes and Horses Bicyclists share narrow roads with vehicles: always wear a helmet. Bikes are prohibited on park trails. Saddle and packstock are permitted on only Laughingwater and Pacific Crest trails. Ask about the rules.

Fees Mount Rainier is a recreation fee demonstration area. Most fees collected here remain in the park to help fund long-standing projects. Single noncommercial vehicle passes valid for seven days cost $10; individual passes for visitors on noncommercial buses or vans or on foot or bicycles cost $5 per person. Other passes are available; ask at entrance stations. For information on commercial fees call 360-569-6003.

Volcanic Hazards Hazards include unpredictable mudflows and glacier-generated floods. Be alert in river valleys. If you hear a loud rumbling or notice a rapid rise in water levels, move to higher ground—fast! Do not run downstream. Longmire and all campgrounds are in potential flood zones.

Facilities, Services, and Regulations

Visitor Centers Begin at Longmire, Paradise, Ohanapecosh, or Sunrise. Ask about interpretive talks and walks in summer and guided snowshoe walks in winter.

Accommodations The National Park Inn at Longmire is open year-round. Overnight lodging is available at Paradise Inn in the summer only. For reservations contact: Mount Rainier Guest Services, P.O. Box 108, Ashford, WA 98304; 360-569-2275; www.guestservices.com/rainier.

Nearby communities have restaurants, motels, gas stations, and grocery and camping supply stores.

Access Limited facilities and trails are accessible for people with disabilities. Ask for information. TDD: 360-569-2177.

Winter Weather permitting, the road from Nisqually entrance to Paradise is open year-round. Driving to Paradise in midwinter offers you a chance to experience a landscape that is shaped by tremendous snowfall. You can snowshoe, cross-country ski, and tube around Paradise—in the designated snowplay area only. Extra preparedness is essential. Carry chains, drive carefully, and obey all traffic directions. The road to Paradise closes for the night at dusk in winter; check the closure time before leaving to ski or snowshoe. The visitor center at Paradise is open and staffed *only* on weekends and holidays from mid-October until early May.

Regulations • Pets must be on a leash when not in your vehicle. Pets are not permitted on trails, on the snow, or in the wilderness. • Collecting plants, dead plant materials, firewood, rocks, and historic or cultural items is illegal. Leave all wildflowers for everyone to enjoy. • Keep wildlife wild. Do not feed or harass wildlife, including birds. • Permits are required for all overnight stays in the wilderness. • Climbing permits are required for all climbs above 10,000 feet and for all glacier travel. • No hunting is permitted. Firearms must be unloaded, broken down, cased, and stored in your vehicle; they are not permitted in the wilderness. • Do not drive or park off roads. • Fishing requires no license or permit, but certain waters are closed or open to fly fishing only.

More Information
Mount Rainier National Park
Ashford, WA 98304
360-569-2211
TDD 360-569-2177
www.nps.gov/mora

	RV Sites/Rooms	Tents	Fee	Limit of Stay	Drinking Water	Flush Toilets	Sanitary Dump	Food	Groceries	Gifts	Reservations/Summer	Accessible Site/Room
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						●	●		●		●	
Mowich Lake Campground (walk-in only)	30		●		14							
National Park Inn (Longmire)	25			●		●	●		●	●	●	●
Ohanapecosh Campground	205	●	●	●	14	●	●	●				●
Paradise Inn	126			●		●	●		●		●	●
Sunrise Day Lodge						●	●		●	●	●	
Sunshine Point Campground	18	●	●	●	14	●						●
White River Campground	112	●	●	●	14	●	●					

Summer campground reservations:
www.nps.gov/mora/recreation/camping.htm

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