



Visitor Update| Spring 2026

Visiting Mount Rainier in Spring

Spring comes slowly to the mountain. The sound of falling water marks the arrival of warmer days, although snow flurries may leave you questioning the season. Yet, in time, spring does arrive. As you travel through the park, take time to let nature entertain you—you will find the beauty is well worth the wait.

This is perhaps the best time of year to view waterfalls as they brim with snowmelt. Leaves burst from their buds, mushrooms carpet the forest floor, and migratory birds return to the mountain. Don't overlook the forest wildflowers that bloom much earlier than their subalpine counterparts, gracing the trails for only a few short weeks. Local favorites include the white, three-petaled western trillium, the elusive pinkish-purple Calypso orchid (also known as Fairy Slipper), and the bright yellow, hooded western skunk cabbage.

Longmire to Paradise: Day Trip

For snow-free hiking, consider trails at Longmire. Snowshoe rentals are available at the Longmire General Store.

Whether you are visiting for a few hours or the entire day, there is plenty to do at Longmire and Paradise. Take a hike, enjoy the views, hunt for elusive forest wildflowers in the lowlands, or enjoy the snowy landscape at Paradise. Choose your favorites to easily fill your day:

Enjoy the beautiful drive along the road through old-growth forest from the Nisqually Entrance. Stop at Kautz Creek for your first view of the mountain and hike the short nature trail to learn about the dynamic geology of the area. Just up the road stop at Twin Firs Trail for a quick hike through majestic old-growth forest.

Longmire

Visit Longmire to walk in the footsteps of those who first founded the area and learn about the history of the park. Enjoy trails leading through meadows, old-growth forest, and for the more adventurous, amazing views.

Walk the Trail of Shadows. 0.7 miles round-trip. Average hiking time: 30 minutes. A self-guiding loop around the Longmire Meadow explores the early history of the Longmire Springs Resort. The Trail of the Shadows begins across the

Spring is a season of new life. You may find wildlife with 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 meadows with their spotted fawns while a chorus of frogs and songbirds fills the air.

In spring, crews clear trail debris, repair bridges, and plow winter roads while preparing buildings to welcome summer visitors. For your safety, give snowplows plenty of room to work.

At higher elevations, expect snow-covered trails well into June. These areas receive heavy snowfall during the winter that lingers late into the summer. For the best snow-free hiking, consider the trails at Longmire, though you should still prepare for patchy snow on the upper sections of these paths.

main park road from the Longmire Museum. *For your safety, do not drink the water from the springs!*

Drive the 30 minutes up to Paradise making a few stops along the way:

- Christine Falls - 4 miles from Longmire. Park at the designated pull outs to view the falls. *The short path down to the viewpoint of the waterfall may be hazardous when snow-covered.*
- Narada Falls - 8 miles from Longmire. A quick but steep trail leads to the base of the waterfall. *If snow is present it is not recommended to walk on this trail.*

Paradise

Expect snow-covered trails well into June. This area receives many feet of snow in winter and it lingers well into spring. This time of year, the melting snowpack at Paradise and other high elevation locations, creates unique hazards. Are you prepared to safely navigate snow bridges, cornices, ice and rock fall, icy slopes, and snow moats around trees? Recognizing and avoiding these hazards is critical.

Check for trail and conditions information at the Paradise Jackson Visitor Center.

Spring Recreation Access

Hours listed are subject to change.

- The **Longmire Museum** is open 10 am - 4:30 pm daily.
- The **Jackson Visitor Center at Paradise** is open:
May 5 - June 18, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm daily
June 19 - Sept. 26, 9 am - 6:30 pm daily
- **The road is open between Longmire and Paradise, conditions permitting.**
- The **sledding runs at Paradise are closed**. Sledding is not permitted elsewhere in the park.
- **Food and retail** at the Longmire National Park Inn and General Store.
- **Climbing permit self-registration** is available at the Paradise Ranger Station and the White River Entrance.
- **Wilderness camping permits** are available at the **Longmire Museum**, the **Longmire Wilderness Information Center** (closed May 3-21), **Paradise Jackson Visitor Center**, and at **road closures on the east side of the park** (self-registration).
- The **east side of the park** is open to backcountry recreation. Be prepared for snow-covered trails, well into spring.
- **Stevens Canyon and east side roads are closed** while crews work to reopen them for the summer.
- **Carbon River and Mowich Lake** areas are not accessible by road due to the closure of the Fairfax Bridge to vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.
- The **Ohanapecosh Campground and Visitor Center** are closed for construction.
- **Do not cross the Longmire Suspension Bridge if your vehicle exceeds 3 tons (6,000 lbs).** This is not on the road to Longmire or Paradise.

Mount Rainier National Park

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Lost and Found

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Connect with @MountRainierNPS on

Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube, Twitter

NP Mobile App

Learn about trails, visitor centers, campgrounds, directions, and much more.

Navigating the Melt: Spring Safety

End of season snow conditions create hazards specific to this time of year. As you head up the mountain for a short snowshoe walk or a multi-day climb be aware of conditions and have a plan to self-rescue, if necessary. The park does not mark hazards, stabilize avalanche slopes, or designate safe routes.

- You will need a **reliable map and compass skills** in many areas of the park because snow-covered trails can be difficult to follow.
- **Before starting your hike, check the posted snow-cover map for current trail conditions.**
- **Avoid crossing steep, snow-covered slopes where a fall could be disastrous.** Turn around instead.
- Comet Falls and Pinnacle Peak trails often have hazardous slopes. Take an ice axe if you know how to use it.
- Avoid the Myrtle Falls area until it's snow-free. Several hazards exist including snow cornices, punching through snow, and steep, icy slopes.
- **Falling through thin snow bridges is a hazard anywhere**

streams remain snow-covered. Stay alert for the muffled sound of flowing water.

- **Avoid stepping onto snow cornices.** They may collapse under your weight.
- **Falling into snow moats around trees, and adjacent to logs and rocks, can cause injury.** Avoid getting too close.
- **Avoid stepping on wet, slippery rocks,** especially near rivers and waterfalls.
- **Obtain a current weather forecast and be prepared for winter-like weather even in June.** Spring and early summer are notorious for unpredictable and rapidly changing weather. If you're ascending and clouds or fog start rolling in, turn around and head back to the trailhead. If descending is not possible, stop, dig in, and wait for better weather.
- **Hypothermia and frostbite** are cold weather hazards which can lead to serious injury or death. If you are spending time outside, dress sensibly, drink lots of fluids, and take warm-up breaks indoors.
- **Cell phones don't work in most locations in the park.**

Spring River Crossing Safety

In spring, the melting snowpack swells rivers causing them to run high and fast. Having the experience and understanding to determine whether to cross or not are key to survival. Use these pointers to help make wise decisions when crossing streams.

- Early morning when river levels are generally at their lowest is the best time to cross.
- When crossing rivers and streams use a sturdy stick to maintain two points of contact with the ground at all times.

- Look for an area with a smooth streambed 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.
- 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.
- Protect yourself by wearing appropriate footwear.

Avalanche Aware!

Snow avalanches are common in winter and spring. The greatest danger to you is an avalanche that you trigger by skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, or climbing in avalanche terrain. Summer trails may lead through avalanche terrain.

Consider snowpack, weather, and topography in selecting your route. Ask yourself, "Will this slope slide?" and "if it does, where will I or my partner go?" Carry an avalanche transceiver, probe, and shovel. Even small avalanches can be deadly.

Winter storms along the Muir Snowfield can produce hurricane force winds, blinding snow, and white

out conditions. Avalanches occur with frightening regularity in the Paradise area. Each person in the hiking party should carry and know how to use a beacon, probe, and shovel.

Avalanche conditions challenge even the best mountaineers. Before your hike, consult the park website, [nps.gov/mora](https://www.nps.gov/mora), or a park ranger for current conditions on the mountain.

Give advance notice of your plans to a responsible person so they can contact rangers if you fail to return. Cell phone coverage is limited inside the park.

Carry the Winter 10 Essentials and know how to use them:

1. Shovel (avalanche rescue, emergency shelter/dig a snow cave)
2. Full Length Insulated Sleeping Pad
3. Stove & Fuel (melt water)
4. Heat Packs
5. Goggles & Wool/Pile Hat
6. Gloves (waterproof/lined)
7. Avalanche Transceiver
8. Avalanche Probe
9. Reliable Weather & Avalanche Forecasts
10. Map, Compass, & GPS (with extra batteries)

Protect Yourself and Your Park

- While limited recreational use of marijuana is legal in Washington State, possession of any amount of marijuana or other illegal drugs remains illegal in Mount Rainier National Park and all federal lands.
- People who can legally possess firearms under federal, Washington State, and local laws may possess them (but federal law prohibits discharging them) in the park. However, federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities in this park; those places have signs at public entrances.
- Fires are not permitted in the backcountry.
- Bicycle only on roads, not on trails.
- Sleeping in vehicles outside of campgrounds is not permitted.



No Pets on Trails

Pets are not permitted on trails or snow. Leashed pets are permitted only in parking lots and along roads open to public vehicles.



Keep wildlife wild

Do not feed, approach, or disturb wildlife.



No Drone Zone!

Drones are not allowed anywhere in Mount Rainier National Park. This includes launching, landing, and operating drones.



Protect Fragile Vegetation

Hike only on maintained trails or thick patches of snow.



Gas is not available inside the park.