

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

CLIMBING MOUNT OLYMPUS

Mount Olympus, highest mountain in the Olympic Range, rises to a height of 7,965 feet (2,428 meters) less than twenty-five miles (forty kilometers) from the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Under the influence of latitude elevation, and its proximity to water, much precipitation falls on Olympus in the form of snow. Snow accumulation in excess of melt has led to the formation of ice bodies known as glaciers. A large glacial complex covers a major portion of its slopes and is the most significant force in shaping its contours.

A relatively unknown mountain, except by the climbing community, the peaks of Olympus, West (7,965 feet or 2,428 meters), East (7,780 feet or 2,371 meters), Middle (7,930 feet or 2,417 meters), and South (Athena, 7,360 feet or 2,240 meters) have remained elusive, hidden from view by surrounding mountains and ranges. Climbers leaving human comforts behind have enjoyed breathtaking views of this glacial complex from choice viewpoints for many years.

Climbing is possible as soon as the snow firms and can be easily walked over. This can be as early as April. Late June through early September are generally the best months in terms of weather to make the climb. Trail travel in June may be slow until muddy sections dry out and crews clean blowdowns and repair washouts.

Equipment needed for an Olympus climb is the same as for any major glacial mountain; ice axe, rope, crampons, slings (for crevasse rescue), warm and waterproof clothing, map, compass, and survival equipment. Rock fall on the summit block makes a hard hat advisable.

Olympus is a major glacial mountain and can be climbed safely only by persons experienced in correct climbing techniques. Falling into a hidden crevasse is the major hazard and practice in crevasse rescue technique is essential. At times when the snow surface turns very icy, long falls on glaciers are an additional danger. Foul weather can also trap a party on exposed parts of the mountain. For safety's sake, inexperienced people are referred to local guide services, climbing schools, and climbing literature.

Follow the Hoh River Trail for eighteen miles to Glacier Meadows (4200'). The last eight miles gains 3000' in elevation.



From Glacier Meadows, follow the way trail on the east lateral moraine of the Blue Glacier. Cross to the west side of the glacier and begin to ascend Snow Dome from 5550' to its crest at 6600'. Approximately three hours are needed to reach Snow Dome from Glacier Meadows.

Traverse the Snow Dome heading south toward the Five Finger Ridge. The most often used route follows the east margin of Five Finger Ridge to the false summit. Cross over the false summit and descend the talus or snow slope into the notch between the false summit and the summit block.

Ascend the steep snow field to the summit block. There are several short and steep rock routes on the north and east side of the summit block.

From the gentle Snow Dome area, the route climbs south towards a rock ridge called "Five Finger Ridge". The summit block is across this ridge on the west side. In some years a direct crossing of the ridge is possible up steep snow. Most of the time, a large crevasse (bergschund) makes this route too difficult. A pass on the east end of the ridge is the usual route around Five Finger Ridge. Watch for a bergschund here also. Once past the ridge, you are on a gentle upper glacial basin separating West and Middle Peaks. Climb westerly parallel to the ridge then up onto the ridge at the west end or the "False Summit". This is just across a notch from the West Peak, the highest summit of the Olympus Range.

To climb the summit block, a number of rock routes are possible on the north and east sides. Difficulty is moderate and falling rock a problem especially for large groups. Average route trip time from Glacier Meadows to the summit is ten hours for the eight miles (12.9 kilometers) and 3,500 feet (1,067 meters) of elevation gain. Return trip can be difficult in poor weather.

More detailed information may be obtained in the following reference and additional reading material available from:

Northwest Interpretive Association
3002 Mt. Angeles Road
Port Angeles, Washington 98362

Olympic Mountain Trail Guide
by Robert Wood

Custom Correct Map

Climber's Guide to the Olympic Mountains
Mountain Rescue
The Mountaineers

A "blue bag" policy for removal of human fecal waste has been adopted for the Mount Olympus climbing routes including the Blue Glacier. This is an effort to reduce the amount of human waste encountered while climbing on Mt. Olympus. The free bags, available at the climb registry box at Glacier Meadows, will be used by climbers to collect their human waste. The collection site for the used blue bags is in a container on the Lateral Moraine about 1 mile above Glacier Meadows.

There is no ideal solution to this problem. Help us by doing your part, so all can enjoy the best possible climbing experience.

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