

Mt. Rainier National Park

by
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It's one of the West's greatest parks, and, yet, one of the least known....Mt. Rainier National Park.

It's located in southeast Pierce County and northeast Lewis County in Washington state. It was one of the US's earliest National Parks, having been established on March 2, 1899 as the fifth national park in the United States. The park contains 368 square miles including all of Mount Rainier, a 14,411-foot stratovolcano. The mountain rises abruptly from the surrounding land with elevations in the park ranging from 1,600 feet to over 14,000 feet. The highest point in the Cascade Range, around it are valleys, waterfalls, subalpine wildflower meadows, old growth forest



and more than 26 glaciers. The volcano is often shrouded in clouds that dump enormous amounts of rain and snow on the peak every year and hide it from the crowds that head to the park on weekends.

Mount Rainier is circled by the Wonderland Trail and is covered by several glaciers and snowfields totaling some 35 square miles. Carbon Glacier is the largest glacier by volume in the continental United States, while Emmons Glacier is the largest glacier by area. About 1.3 million people visit Mount Rainier National Park each year. Mount Rainier is a popular peak for mountain climbing with some 10,000 attempts per year with approximately 25% making it to the summit. The park contains outstanding subalpine meadows and 91,000 acres of old growth forests.

Major Attractions: *Paradise* is the name of an area some 5,400 feet on the south slope of Mount Rainier and is the most popular destination for visitors to the park. It contains the historic Paradise Inn (built 1916), Paradise Guide House (built 1920) and the Henry M. Jackson Visitor Center (built 1966; demolished and replaced, 2008). The Park Service says that "Paradise is the snowiest place on Earth where snowfall is measured regularly." 1,122 inches (93.5 ft, 28.5 m) of snow fell during the winter of 1971/72, setting a world record for that year.

Longmire is a visitor center in the park, 6.5 miles east of the Nisqually Entrance. Longmire is surrounded by old-growth Douglas fir, western red cedar and western hemlock and is the location of Mount Rainier's National Park Inn, the Longmire Museum, and the 1928 National Park Service Administration Building, which is now a Wilderness Information Center. The National Park Inn is the only accommodation in the park open all year round. Longmire is the second most popular destination for visitors to Mount Rainier National Park after Paradise. Longmire is one of the starting points of the Wonderland Trail.

Sunrise is a lodge and visitor center located in the northeastern part of the park. At 6,400 feet, it's the highest point in the park that is accessible by vehicle. There are miles of trails located all around Sunrise, such as Mount Fremont and Sourdough Ridge.

Ohanapecosh is a campground, visitor center, and ranger station located in the southeastern portion of the park. Located in a deep valley among old growth forest at an elevation below 2,000 feet, it is the only developed area of the park without a view of Mount Rainier. The Ohanapecosh Hot Springs, Grove of the Patriarchs, and Silver Falls are all located in the Ohanapecosh area.

The *Carbon River Entrance Station* is located in the northwest corner of the park and is the site of the only rainforest at Mount Rainier. There is a campground and a short trail through the rainforest, as well as a trail to the Carbon Glacier, one of the lowest glaciers in the contiguous United States. The ranger station at the Carbon River entrance is staffed during the summer.

Mowich Lake is the largest and deepest lake in the park, located south of Carbon at the south end of Highway 165. A campground, picnic area, and hiking trail are located near the lake. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Rainier_National_Park]

