

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 19, 2023

WASHINGTON'S NATIONAL PARK FUND RELEASES ANNUAL "TOP 10 THINGS TO DO THIS SUMMER IN WASHINGTON'S NATIONAL PARKS" LIST

Hiking, Picnicking, Astronomy and More on the List for Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks

SEATTLE – In anticipation of the official start of summer on Wednesday, June 21, and recognizing that many people are looking for ways to get outdoors and enjoy Washington's beautiful natural scenery while avoiding massive crowds, Washington's National Park Fund (WNPF) – the official nonprofit partner to Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks – today released its much-anticipated "Top 10 Things to Do This Summer in Washington's National Parks" list for 2023.

"Washington's national parks offer some of the most beautiful scenery and outdoor adventures in the country," said Laurie Ward, CEO of Washington's National Park Fund. "With just a little bit of planning and preparation, visitors can enjoy all that Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks have to offer while helping to preserve their natural beauty for future generations."

Between early season snow, road and trail closures, and potential line-ups at some of the parks' most popular destinations, it can be intimidating to figure out how to find true solitude outdoors. WNPF has put together this much-anticipated list of how to experience the parks in the summer to help visitors find ways to get off the beaten path and avoid the crowds, along with some important tips to help visitors make the most of their trip while ensuring the safety of themselves, other visitors, and the parks' natural resources.

WNPF's Top 10 Things to Do This Summer in Washington's National Parks

Mount Rainier National Park

1. **Find the Right Hikes for You** – With more than 260 miles of diverse maintained trails, Mount Rainier National Park is truly a hiker's paradise, offering something for hikers of any level and views that will awe and inspire. For a hiker interested in the path less traveled (but just as rewarding), some favorite alternatives to the heavily trafficked Skyline or Wonderland Trail include the trails around Reflection Lakes, along Westside Road in the southwest corner of the park, and along state routes 123 and 410 (Cayuse and Chinook passes). Find trail recommendations [here](#).
2. **Enjoy Lunch with a View** – Packing a lunch and enjoying it somewhere with a view is a great way to experience Washington's national parks. After all, everything tastes better with fresh air on the side. We recommend Mowich Lake in the northwest corner of the park, Ohanapecosh Campground in the southeast corner of the park, and the Sunrise Picnic Area (at 6,400', this picnic site is located in the highest point that can be reached by vehicle in the park). Just be sure to check the [road status](#) first, as several of these locations are only accessible via roads that aren't opened until later in the summer. More [here](#).

3. **See the Park After Dark at a Night Sky Program** – Consider visiting Paradise later in the afternoon when the crowds have lessened, consider a dinner picnic or dinner at Paradise Inn, then take in a Night Sky Program later that evening. View constellations and the Milky Way and learn about the importance of preserving dark night skies from the park’s astronomy interns, a [WNPF donor-supported program](#). Check the park calendar for dates and details [here](#) and call the Night Skies Hotline at 360-569-6230 for program updates.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Mount Rainier National Park has five developed areas: Longmire, Paradise, Ohanapecosh, Sunrise, and Carbon River & Mowich. The [“Plan Your Visit” page](#) is a great place to start if you’re not sure where you’d like to go. Be aware that the popular Grove of the Patriarchs area in Ohanapecosh is currently closed to the public due to significant damage from flooding. Check the park’s Alerts & Conditions page before you visit for more information on this and other park closures. In the peak summer months, congestion can create long lines at entrances; check [@MountRainierNPS](#) on Twitter for wait times at the Nisqually Entrance, and know that the park is going cashless beginning May 26 (learn more [here](#)). Keep in mind that snow-covered trails at popular, higher-elevation destinations such as Sunrise and Paradise are common well into summer. Plan ahead so you’ll have a backup option if the hike or activity you wanted to do isn’t possible.

North Cascades National Park

4. **Take a Hike on a Less Busy Trail** – Less popular trails are still beautiful and if you plan to start your hike before 9 a.m. your odds of getting a parking spot at the trailhead are much higher. Trails right off State Route 20, like Thunder Knob, and trails in the northwestern part of the park bordering the Mount Baker Wilderness and Mount Baker Recreation Area (managed by the Forest Service), like the Baker River Trail, are great choices. Stehekin Valley, one of the most remote parts of the park complex due to being only accessible by boat, plane, or foot, offers a number of hikes for those in search of true solitude, including the Stehekin River Trail, Agnes Gorge Trail, and Imus Creek Trail. More on these trails [here](#).
5. **See Diablo Lake at Dusk** – If stunning, turquoise Diablo Lake is on your itinerary, consider stopping by in the evening rather than during the day. Not only will you avoid crowds, but you’ll also beat the heat and be able to bask in the alpine glow! Discover Diablo Lake Overlook location and amenities [here](#).
6. **Pack Your Picnic Basket** – There’s no shortage of beautiful views and viewpoints in the North Cascades. Choice picnic spots include the benches along the Happy Creek Nature Trail off State Route 20, Goodell Creek Campground on the banks of the Skagit River, the Gorge Lake picnic area, Buckner Orchard if you’re heading out to the remote Stehekin Valley, and for views up and down the Valley, pack your lunch to go and hike the Old Wagon Trail. More [here](#).

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

North Cascades National Park is one of the least visited and most remote national parks in the National Parks Service...and one of the only ones that has NO ENTRANCE FEE! In the winter, the park feels even more remote due to the seasonal North Cascades Highway (State Route 20) closure and in most years, SR20 re-opens in late May (WSDOT status [here](#)). Plan your trip to the North Cascades National Park Service complex in advance using the [NPS App](#) and find trip-planning information on the [park’s website](#). Before you leave, be sure to check conditions and closures on the [park’s Conditions page](#). Currently, the popular Cascade River Road is closed at milepost 6 (U.S. Forest Service boundary) due to a rockslide. It’s good to know before you go and come prepared with a backup plan. Be bear aware! For both day use and overnight visitors, keep and store food properly when not in use to help protect yourself and the bears, too.

Olympic National Park

7. **See the Park from a Hiking Trail** – With more than 611 miles of trail and 64 distinct trailheads, Olympic National Park attracts hikers of all abilities to its diverse ecosystems. For a less crowded hiking destination, we suggest checking out Sol Duc Valley, an old growth forest located in the northwest region of the park, and the Quinault Rain Forest in the southwestern region of the park for those who prefer to hike through the shade of a temperate rain forest. Want to see what the Olympic Coast has to offer? Visit the tidepools at Beach 4, Ruby Beach,

or Hole-in-the-Wall (familiarize yourself with tide tables for optimal tidepool viewing). Find more trail recommendations [here](#).

8. **Take in the Views with a Picnic** – Olympic's vast wilderness offers a variety of diverse ecosystems, and countless picnic site locations worth stopping by. We suggest La Poel on the shore of Lake Crescent near Storm King Ranger Station or the July Creek Picnic Area on North Shore Road near Lake Quinault (and you can even bring your furry friends, who are allowed on the July Creek Loop Trail!). More [here](#).
9. **Join in on a Ranger Program** – In the summer, there are ranger-led programs including guided nature walks and talks at popular destinations and campgrounds throughout Olympic National Park. This is a great way for visitors of all ages to learn more through ranger-guided interpretive walks, campfire programs and more. Find park events, dates, and times in the [Calendar](#).
10. **Volunteer Your Time at the Matt Albright Native Plant Center** – Get your hands dirty and give back by assisting Olympic National Park staff with native plant revegetation. [With support from WNPF donors](#), volunteers collect seeds and cuttings, assist with propagation and care of native plants in the nursery, and help conduct germination tests. Drop-in volunteer days are Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Contact the park by [email](#) or call (360) 565-2976 for more information.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Olympic National Park is different from many national parks because there are no roads that go all the way across the park; this means that visitors can expect to do a lot of driving to travel to different areas of the park and traffic and road construction, inside and outside of the park, can make drive times longer than expected. Be sure to have a backup plan in case of closures of in cases where parking lots are already full (temporarily restricting access) when you arrive. Check the park's [Conditions & Alerts page](#) before you head out. *Note: On Sunday, May 7, Olympic National Park's Hurricane Ridge Day Lodge was destroyed by a fire. As of now, it is unknown when the Hurricane Ridge area of the park will reopen to visitors. Find the park's press release [here](#). Those who wish to donate to help the park respond to the fire may contribute to WNPF's Olympic National Park Fire Relief Fund at wnpf.org/fire.*

Safety Tips to Protect You and the Parks

To ensure a safe and enjoyable trip, WNPF recommends following park rules and regulations, staying on designated trails, and properly storing food to prevent attracting wildlife. Visitors should also pack plenty of water, sunscreen, and insect repellent, and plan to dress in layers and wear close-toed shoes or boots to prepare for sudden weather changes. Before heading out to the parks, it's important to check the parks' websites for the latest information on closures, weather, and trail conditions.

###

About Washington's National Park Fund

Washington's National Park Fund (WNPF) is the official nonprofit partner to Mount Rainier, North Cascades, and Olympic National Parks. Founded by former governor and senator Dan Evans and legendary mountaineer Lou Whittaker, WNPF is the only philanthropic organization dedicated solely to Washington's three largest national parks and has awarded more than \$7 million to the parks in the last decade. Learn more about how we support the parks at wnpf.org.

Media Contact

Alex Day (she/her), Director of Marketing, Communications, and Database, 206-623-2063, fund@wnpf.org