

Moterra Campervans

Washington: The Evergreen State

Insiders Guide



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Welcome to the Evergreen State!

Whether you have come for the lush evergreen forests of the Olympic Peninsula, the rocky peaks of the North Cascades, or the saltwater inlets of Puget Sound, there is no doubt that Washington State is best explored in a Moterra campervan. Bypass the expensive hotels and tourist traps with the freedom of your 19-foot home on wheels and spend more time exploring the hidden gems of the Pacific Northwest!

This guide will give you the building blocks for your dream Washington campervan adventure, including insider recommendations on camping, dining, scenic drives, and must-do hikes and activities.

Even with all the free advice in this guide, it can still be daunting to plan and book a trip that makes the most of your time in the Evergreen State. At Moterra, we offer itinerary planning services to take the hassle out of doing it all yourself! Our itineraries are designed to give you the best experience while allowing you to explore at your own pace. **Click [here](#) for more information.**

However you choose to travel with us, we sincerely hope you have an unforgettable experience in spectacular Washington State!

Happy Exploring,

The Moterra Team

Seattle

City Maps: [HERE](#)

Bustling Seattle is the perfect bookend to your campervan adventure. Known for tech titans, scenic vistas and fillet-flinging fishmongers, Seattle has something to offer every traveler. Our Moterra hub is located in the SoDo

neighborhood just south of the city center; be sure to spend some time wandering Seattle's streets and parks before picking up or after dropping off your campervan!



Activities in Seattle

Seattle is overflowing with activities and attractions; here are just a few of our favorite things to do in the Emerald City! Are you an art aficionado or an outdoor junkie? Check out these links for more information on [hiking](#), [biking](#), [shopping](#) and the [arts](#) in and around Seattle.

PIKE PLACE MARKET Mingle with the locals (and plenty of visitors!) at [Pike Place Market](#), one of the oldest and largest continually operating public markets in the United States. For over a century, hundreds of farmers, craftsmen and performers have hawked their wares in the market stalls. You could spend an entire day wandering the shops and alleyways (and stuffing your face with delectable treats), but if you have limited time, be sure to carve out a couple hours to check out our faves... and be sure to come hungry!

- Snap a photo in front of the well-known clock and giant red letters from the corner of [Pike Street & 1st Avenue](#)
- [Gum wall](#)...you gotta do it
- Flying fish and Alderwood smoked salmon at [Pike Place Fish Market](#)
- Doughnuts at [Daily Dozen](#) (get the cinnamon-sugar...you won't be sorry)
- [Rachel's Ginger Beer](#) in Post Alley (try a float if it's a super hot day)
- [Beecher's Cheese](#), with Oprah's favorite mac & cheese (salmon-topped if you're feeling it, or Mariachi for extra spice)
- [Pike Place Secret Garden](#)
- The "[original](#)" Starbucks - go if you must, but chicer coffee places abound ([Storyville](#) for the lattes and views, [Ghost Alley](#) for the espresso and...the [apparition of Arthur](#))
- [MarketSpice](#) for endless shelves of unique loose-leaf teas; cinnamon-orange is the signature flavor

Taking a [guided tour](#) is well-worth it for the dose of history and extra fun sprinkled atop your market visit. And during peak summer season, the main drag of the market is verrrrrry crowded...get there early (and spend more time exploring the lower levels and less-visited alleyways!)

CATCH A WAVE Watercraft of all types dot the shimmering waters of Puget Sound. The Sound's shoreline actually extends for over 2,500 miles, making it the nation's second-largest estuary (after Chesapeake Bay). Seattle is a busy and important port for maritime trade, especially from Asia and the South Pacific. But it's not all work - you'll find thousands of recreational yachts, sailboats, and paddleboards scattered on Elliott Bay among the ferries and commercial shipping vessels.

On a sunny Seattle summer afternoon (or overcast mid-winter morning!), there's nothing more "Seattle" than to hop on a boat and join the shipboard throngs! If you left your kayak at home, you still have several options. To hang with business commuters and see the cityscape from a different point of view, take the [King County Water Taxi](#) on a 15-minute ride to Alki Beach. Stroll along the sandy shore and take in the gorgeous views of the Seattle skyline (tip: hit up recommended restaurant [Marination](#) for the spam musubi while you're there).

If you'd like some history along with your voyage, check out the [Locks Cruise](#) offered by [Argosy Cruises](#). This 2-hour narrated tour takes you along the shore and through the Ballard Locks, the busiest lock system in the nation. It is a one-way trip; take the opportunity to explore the city a bit more by [foot, bike, or scooter](#) as you make your way back to your campervan!

To go a bit further afield, walk on to the [Bainbridge Island Ferry](#) and enjoy the 30-minute crossing to Bainbridge Island, located directly west from Seattle across Puget Sound. Stroll around the quaint downtown area of Winslow and grab an ice cream at [Mora Iced Creamery](#) (about a half-mile walk from the ferry dock). Meander back to the ferry at your leisure; ferries back to Seattle leave frequently. Time your visit to coincide with the golden hour - the skyline views are extraordinary!

PARK HOP through Seattle's wonderful green spaces (over 485 within city limits)! Beaches, cliffs and mountain views await at [Discovery Park](#), the city's largest urban oasis; stretch your legs on the 2.8 mile [Loop Trail](#), offering both shaded forest and panoramic Puget Sound vistas. Bring a picnic and watch seaplanes land at [Gas Works Park](#), just north of Lake Union (face north to check out the remains of the last remaining coal gasification plant in the United States, and do a 180 for a stellar cityscape of Seattle!)

If beachcombing is your thing, check out [Golden Gardens Park](#) in Ballard at [low tide](#); hunt for crabs and sea urchins while enjoying picturesque views of the Olympic Mountains. Head up to [Kerry Park](#) in Queen Anne to snag the iconic photo of the Space Needle and Mount Rainier, or take a stroll through the [Washington Park Arboretum](#), where the beautiful and unique assortment of plants is ever-changing with the seasons. (*Sound Like a Local* pro tip: Saying that "the mountain is out" indicates good weather; the sky is clear and the sun is shining!)



Recommended Restaurants

Voted one of the best foodie cities in the nation, Seattle has cuisine from every corner of the globe. Fresh seafood tops the list, and Asian restaurants (especially Vietnamese) serve up tantalizing authentic and creative fusion dishes. Here are just a few of our top eateries; if we listed all our favorites, this guide would be 100 pages long...

RAY'S BOATHOUSE & CAFÉ | Seafood Boat rental facility turned fine dining, [Ray's](#) has been a quintessential Seattle staple for decades. For a fancy experience, book a table downstairs in the Boathouse; for a less-pricey meal with the best view around, wait in the walk-in line for a seat on the outdoor upstairs patio in the Café. Both kitchens serve up freshly-caught seafood from the Sound (the Pacific Northwest Sablefish is a favorite), but upstairs is where you want to be at sunset: you'll forget about your food as soon as the golden rays dip behind the rugged Olympic peaks framing Shishole Bay. (\$\$\$)

THE WALRUS AND THE CARPENTER | Seafood Looking for the freshest oysters around? Make your way to the [Walrus and the Carpenter](#), a nationally renowned eatery in Ballard (it's on multiple lists of the best seafood/oyster bars in the country. James Beard award-winning chef Renee Erickson had a vision to meld the "elegance of France with the casual comfort of a local fishing pub", and has been churning out plated excellence for over a decade. They don't take

reservations, so plan to wait a bit; the tapas-style plates are worth the time in line! Come for the oysters and stay for the panna cotta. (\$\$ - \$\$\$)



LOCAL TIDE | Seafood It began as a pop-up in Pike Place Market, serving a Northwest Dungeness take on the classic New England lobster roll. Nowadays this [counter service joint](#) operates out of an industrial space in Fremont, piling fresh shrimp, salmon and crab atop buttery bread just pulled from the oven. The Fried Fish and Salmon Sandos are hot commodities (ask for the house chili oil if you like spice). If you're lucky enough to stop in on a weekend, vie for a taste of the famous Crab Roll; they only make limited amounts per day and when they're gone, they're gone...but oh-so-good. Check out the [Fremont Troll](#) after you nosh! (\$\$)

PHO BAC SÚP SHOP | Vietnamese There's good pho around every corner in Seattle, but if you want great pho, head to Little Saigon. Family-owned for over 40 years, [Pho Bac Súp Shop](#) serves up flavorful bowls of delicious spiced broth, slow-cooked for hours. Try the massive bowl of Rib Pho or stick to a classic like steak or brisket; if the slow-poached chicken happens to be available, take advantage - it is divine. BONUS: Just across the street, you'll find some of the best banh mi in Seattle at [Saigon Deli](#). (\$\$)

MARINATION MA KAI | Hawaiian-Korean Fusion One of the earliest arrivals on the Seattle food truck scene, [Marination](#) has since expanded to three cheerful brick-and-mortar spots around town. All serve up delightful Aloha cuisine, but the West Seattle location (straight off the water taxi!) has the best views of the city skyline. Wash down your plate of spam musubi, kimchi fried rice and pork katsu with a lychee margarita or shave ice. (\$)

IVAR'S | Seafood Sometimes you just want a good ol' plate of fish and chips, and you'll find it at [Ivar's](#) - a local chain going strong for almost 90 years. There are three full-service restaurants in the group, but for the greasy spoon fish 'n' chip vibe, head to one of the 18 quick service shops. We recommend the [Pier 54 fish bar](#), with takeout service of seafood favorites (chicken is available for fish-phobes). The award-winning fish and chips and clam chowder are a must. Eat on the patio or pier - you'll be surrounded by friendly seagulls; founder Ivar Haglund would often slip the birds a few bites of his fries. (\$)

Recommended Breweries

With almost ten breweries per 100,000 residents, there's no shortage of craft brews to be found in Seattle! A few hotspots are listed below. Breweries in Seattle tend to pop up in groups - find one, and you're sure to come across a few other sweet sites within walking distance!

FREMONT BREWING The spacious Urban Beer Garden at [Fremont Brewing](#) is a must-visit on your Seattle brewery tour. Most of the hops for the rotating on-tap selection come from the Yakima Valley in central Washington, and Fremont has won multiple local awards for sustainability. Nab a bowl of free pretzels (just ask your beertender) and grab one of the

world-class IPAs - the Interurban is Washington's leading craft beer. You can also order delivery from any nearby eatery to nosh while you sip! Bonus: a quarter-mile stroll will bring you to the [Fremont Troll](#).

STOUP BREWING If you're looking for no-frills, classic pilsners and IPAs, be sure to check out [Stoup Brewing](#), an unassuming Ballard spot with seriously good beer. Little ones will be entertained by the butcher paper and markers while you debate your first pint and mouth-watering food trucks are on a permanent rotation. Enjoying a pint here is like having a homebrew in your best friend's garage - that is, if your buddy also has a charcuterie vending machine (serving up Cle Elum's famous [Owen's Meats](#)).

REUBEN'S BREWS You'll feel like a local at [Reuben's](#) (named after brewmaster Adam's eldest son). The extensive beer list caters to all palates (but the IPAs, especially citrusy summer versions, are the most popular). Sports days can get crowded as neighbors stream in to catch the latest Huskies or Seahawks game, but there always seems to be a place to sit. Hungry? Grab a spot on the covered outdoor patio and order pizza from [Zeeks](#) next door (or BYO).

SCHILLING CIDER Home to America's biggest craft cider collection, [Schilling](#) is Seattle's only 100% cider taphouse. The 35 draft choices for flights mainly feature PNW ciders, but European and South American flavors sometimes sneak onto the list, too. Order at the counter and pull up a stool to one of the big shared tables; you may be challenged to a game of cards or Jenga by one of your new friends.

Recommended Coffee Shops

It's a rite of passage to wait in line at the ubiquitous "[first Starbucks](#)" - but also make time to visit one (or more!) of the local java haunts! Seattle is world-renowned for its coffee roasteries and distribution, and Seattleites consume more coffee per capita than any other city in America.

ZOKA | Greenlake A local, four-café chain, [Zoka](#) (which means "rebirth of the coffee tree") sources beans directly from South American independent farmers. The beans are roasted daily in small batches at the Bellingham roastery, which means that the small bags for sale by the register are assuredly fresh! This is a great spot to grab a cup o' joe for a walk around nearby [Green Lake](#) or a visit to the [Woodland Park Zoo](#). Plenty of indoor and outdoor seating, and the lavender lattes and mochas are top-notch!

CAFFE LADRO | Upper Queen Anne When they opened next to Starbucks in 1994, [Caffe Ladro](#) ("coffee thief" in Italian) had a goal of luring customers away from the java giant. 30 years later, there are Caffe Ladro locations in 16 neighborhoods around the greater Seattle area; they've definitely succeeded in their quest. Try the flagship espresso or the Medici (a mocha with orange zest) along with a fresh, house-made bakery treat.



VICTROLA COFFEE ROASTERS | Capitol Hill Specialty beans, sourced from Central American farmers, are roasted on-site at [Victrola's](#) main digs on Pike Street in Capitol Hill. It's a great spot to relax with a Streamline Espresso, with cozy

furniture and wide sunny windows. Alternatively, grab your joe to go and meander around Capitol Hill - it's Seattle's hippest neighborhood and center of the city's LGBTQ+ scene.

STARBUCKS RESERVE ROASTERY | Capitol Hill Even if you're over the 'bucks, the massive [Seattle Reserve Roastery](#) deserves a visit - it's what you would imagine "if Willy Wonka had built the ultimate coffee shop instead of a chocolate factory". Try one of the rare Reserve coffees roasted on-site, grab a flight of diverse flavors, chat with some of the world's leading roasting experts, and watch as raw beans make their way down the roasting, grinding and brewing line to your cup.



Local Campgrounds

If you're looking at state park camping options, book early - Washington state parks open for reservations nine months in advance.

SALTWATER STATE PARK One of the closest urban campsites to Seattle, [Saltwater State Park](#) is located 25 minutes from Moterra HQ, halfway between Seattle and Tacoma. It's a small park (only 35 campsites) and fills with locals on sunny days, peeking at the tidepools or spying on seasonal spawning salmon. There's a bit of airplane noise - the park is on Sea-Tac's flight path - but hey, it's all part of the "urban beach experience!" Get your fancypants on to enjoy a dinner at nearby [Anthony's Homeport](#), or grab some greasy grub from [Dick's Drive-In](#), an iconic Seattle burger joint.



DASH POINT STATE PARK Conveniently located about 25 miles south of our Seattle hub, [Dash Point State Park](#) is a gem "hidden in plain sight". Miles of forested hiking and biking trails are complemented by a wide sandy beach; perfect for sandcastles, splashing in the Sound or skimboarding! (In fact, Dash Point has become a mecca for skimboarding - a cross between surfing and skateboarding. Skimboards are available for rent at the park if you want to give it a try!) Hot showers and flush toilets are at the campground, and restaurants, gas stations and grocery stores are within a 10-minute drive. A great stop if you are en route to Rainier, or Olympia and the south Sound.

VASA PARK RESORT Open for camping from mid-May to mid-September, this privately-owned [park and campground](#) is less than 20 minutes from downtown Seattle, tucked on the western banks of Lake Sammamish in Bellevue. Play pickleball with your new neighbors or rent a kayak or SUP for some water fun (also, nearby [Weowna Park](#) offers great shaded walking trails). There are only a handful of sites, so plan ahead - it's a great spot from which to explore cosmopolitan [Bellevue](#) or venture east to [Issaquah](#) and [Snoqualmie](#)!

Olympic National Park

Park Map: [HERE](#)



Distance from Seattle | **3 hours** Time Needed | **3-5 days** Recommended Loop | **Seattle - Olympic - Rainier - Seattle**

The Olympic Peninsula, home to Olympic National Park, encompasses nearly a million acres of wilderness and incredibly diverse ecosystems. In just one day, you could take in 360-degree ocean and mountain views, kayak on a glacier-carved lake, meander past cascading waterfalls tucked under towering evergreen trees, and take a dip in natural hot springs. With over 3 million visitors a year, you're bound to see lots of friendly faces on the most popular trails!

Camping in Olympic National Park

There are [14 campgrounds](#) within Olympic National Park, with a multitude of privately-owned and county/state park properties dotting the landscape just outside park boundaries. However, only four campgrounds inside the park are reservable; the others are first-come, first-served. Not only is Olympic National Park a popular place for tourists to visit, but Washingtonians are also wild about the outdoors, so campsite reservations are often snapped up minutes after being released (especially during the summer). Want to let us take care of the planning for you? Click [HERE](#) to inquire about our custom itineraries. Click [HERE](#) for steps to book campgrounds on your own.

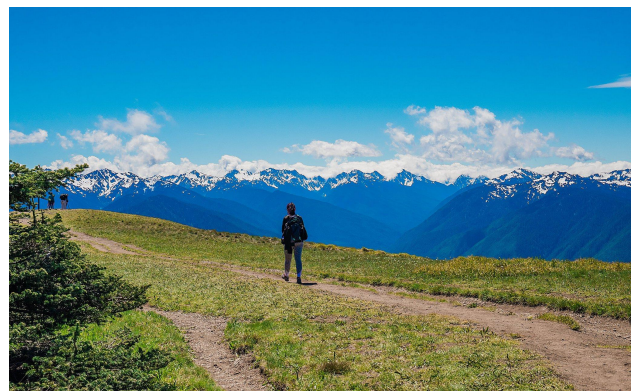
SALT CREEK CAMPGROUND Just outside the national park boundaries, this superb [county park and campground](#) is located about 20 minutes west of Port Angeles on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. You'll find all your fave campground amenities (showers, flush toilets, drinking water, and more) plus bluffs, rocky tide pools, sandy beaches, hiking trails and panoramic views across the Strait to Vancouver Island (nearly 80% of the campsites have a view of the water!) A protected marine sanctuary covers the northwest corner of the park, and you'll often spot gray whales diving in Crescent Bay. Plan ahead - reservations open for the current calendar year on January 1.

KALALOCH CAMPGROUND [Kalaloch](#), meaning "a good place to explore" in the Quinault language, is perched on a bluff in the southwest corner of Olympic National Park, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Campsites are not directly on the beach, but several of the 168 campsites overlook the water and there is beach access. Check out crabs and sea urchins at low tide, watch sea otters flop amongst kelp beds, and spot nesting shorebirds (bald eagles, western gulls and even puffins frequent the area, too). The campground is open year-round; reservations are required from the end of May through September (sites are released in waves starting six months in advance - check out the details here).

DISPERSED OPTIONS "Boondocking" (dispersed camping on public land) is not allowed in Olympic National Park, but there are [several out-of-the-way spots](#) to be found just outside the park boundaries in the [Olympic National Forest](#). If you enjoy rustic camping and can survive without flush toilets, showers and trash cans, dispersed camping may be for you! Be sure to check out [this map](#); boundaries are often vague between National Park and National Forest land.

Hikes in Olympic National Park

HURRICANE HILL | 3.2 miles After winding your way 17 miles up Hurricane Ridge Road, you'll be rewarded with the crème de la crème of short, easily accessible Alpine hikes. The [Hurricane Hill trail](#) is an out-and-back, partially paved path that climbs steadily through mountain meadows, with stunning ridge views the entire way. Keep an eye out for friendly marmots!. At the pinnacle, take in the 360-degree views of the Olympic Mountains and the Strait of Juan de Fuca; on clear days you can see all the way to Canada.



MARYMERE FALLS | 1.8 miles Discover more than a dozen shades of green on this [beloved walk](#) through a dappled, mossy old-growth Northwest forest. Nurse logs and ferns huddle in the shade of tall evergreen trees along the well-maintained trail; it's fairly flat until the end, where you can ascend about 200 feet via a set of stairs to the falls. Both the lower and upper viewpoints are fabulous, and the cooling waterfall mist will refresh you for the return trip.

OZETTE TRIANGLE | 9.4 miles Want to put in some decent mileage but can't decide between the forest and the beach? Head slightly off the beaten path to the northwest corner of the park and set off on the Cape Alava Loop, more commonly known as the [Ozette Triangle](#). A boardwalk leads you under dense evergreens and through meadows before depositing you on the forgotten coast of Cape Alava, the westernmost point of the continental United States. Take in the crashing surf and check out the Makah petroglyphs at Wedding Rocks before heading back into the trees to complete the triangle. A childhood favorite of a Moterra friend who grew up on the peninsula!

HALL OF MOSSES | .8 miles A [great option](#) for all ages! Be sure to wander at a snail's pace as you take in the twenty hues of green and marvel at the lush rainforest and verdant mosses. Enjoy the interpretive signage and be on the lookout for animal life - from towering elk to small squishy banana slugs! If your feet are antsy for more, check out the [Hoh River Trail](#); you can create an out-and-back hike as long or short as you want. The Hoh Visitor Center is a sweet stop, too (with clean restrooms!)

Activities in Olympic National Park

KAYAKING AND CANOEING [Lake Crescent](#), on the north side of the park, is one of the peninsula's best boating areas - shimmering turquoise waters framed by rugged mountain peaks and dark evergreens. Kayaks and canoes are available for \$20/hour (hourly prices goes down if you keep the craft for a half or full day). Lake Crescent Lodge, Fairholme General Store and Log Cabin Resort all have first-come, first-served rentals.



TIDEPOOLING A great number of the park's inhabitants are only visible at low tide, when the sea shrinks back from the shore and saltwater is trapped in the tidal rocks. The most popular [tidepooling](#) areas in Olympic National Park are at Kalaloch's Beach 4 and Mora's Hole in the Wall; at certain times of the year, rangers are available to lead educational programs. Before you head out to spot sea snails, barnacles and anemones, read up on tidepooling etiquette and check [tide charts](#) - you don't want to get stranded during high tide!

Mount Rainier National Park

Park Map: [HERE](#)



Distance from Seattle | **2 hours** Time Needed | **2-3 days** Recommended Loop | **Seattle - Olympic - Rainier - Seattle**

One of the most visited national parks, Mount Rainier is dominated by its namesake mountain – an active volcano that is over a mile taller than the adjacent peaks! Although it's the most glaciated precipice in the contiguous USA, during the summer months you can hike among wildflowers and trek to dramatic waterfalls. Hiking and backpacking is the name of the game, and with hundreds of trails, there are options for literally everyone. Keep an eye out for the sasquatch...

Camping in Mount Rainier National Park

There are only [four campgrounds](#) within Mount Rainier National Park, with a multitude of privately-owned and national forest properties dotting the landscape just outside park boundaries. Rainier is a super popular park; book campsites

early or plan to be driving campground loops at 6 am to stake out a first-come, first-served site. Want to let us take care of the planning for you? Click [HERE](#) to inquire about our custom itineraries. Click [HERE](#) for steps to book campgrounds on your own.

COUGAR ROCK One of the two reservable campgrounds inside the park, [Cougar Rock](#) is also the closest to Paradise. Lush evergreen forests surround the 173 rustic sites and the Nisqually River meanders nearby. Drinking water and flush toilets are available, but no showers or hookups. Walk straight from your site onto the well-known Wonderland Trail, which extends 93 miles around the park (out-and-backs are welcome, too!) The turns in the campground are fairly tight, but you should have no problem navigating them in your 19-foot Moterra Campervan. The campground is open from late May to early October and sites are released on a 6-month rolling basis.



OHANAPECOSH Located in a valley between Paradise and Sunrise, [Ohanapecosh](#) is the most popular campground in the park. The 188 campsites are spread throughout an old-growth forest crossed by the gorgeous Ohanapecosh River. Drinking water and flush toilet facilities are available, but no hookups or showers. Several hiking trails are easily accessible, including Grove of the Patriarchs and Silver Falls. Like Cougar Rock, the campground is open from late May to early October and sites are released on a 6-month rolling basis.

SILVER SPRINGS Just outside of Rainier's North Arch entrance in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, [Silver Springs](#) campground offers beautiful, spacious sites - several on the banks of the White River. It's about an hour and 15 minutes to Paradise (closer to Sunrise), which makes it a great option for your first or last night en route to/from Seattle. Flush/vault toilets and drinking water are available, and there's a friendly camp host who often has firewood for sale. The campground is open for reservations from late May through mid-September, and fills up less quickly than the NPS-operated sites.

FIRST-COME FIRST-SERVE All three van-accessible campgrounds within park boundaries (Cougar Rock, Ohanapecosh, and White River) offer [FCFS campsites](#). They tend to fill very early in the peak summer months, but occasionally luck will strike later in the day! For the best odds, arrive early (around 7:00 am) and begin looking for open sites. Before setting up, please check the signpost to make sure the previous occupant has actually checked out!

Hikes in Mount Rainier National Park

SKYLINE | 5.5 miles If you only have time for one hike in the Rainier area, choose the [Skyline Trail Loop](#). Spectacular meadows are blanketed with colorful wildflowers during the summer and fab views of Rainier and the surrounding peaks will take your breath away. Be prepared for a steady climb with limited shade, and know that snow can linger on the eastern half of the loop well into August. Start early to beat the crowds and hike clockwise for the best mountain views! The Skyline Trail is also the jumping-off point for visiting [Camp Muir](#), the base camp for climbing Mount Rainier (overnight camping at Camp Muir requires a permit, but the hike does not).

PINNACLE SADDLE | 2.5 miles Early morning and evening are great times to hit up this short yet moderately challenging route. The [trail](#) begins by the largest Reflection Lake, which is the best place to catch a reflection of “the mountain” during golden hour! You’ll climb about 1,000 feet in just over a mile, and will be rewarded at the top with a dramatic panoramic view of Mount Rainier to the north and Mount Adams, Mount St. Helens and even Oregon’s Mount Hood to the south. It’s an out-and-back trail; if you don’t feel like going all the way to the saddle, just turn around!

SUNRISE NATURE TRAIL | 1.5 miles If you’ve found your way to Sunrise...at sunrise, there’s no better way to take in the morning glow on the mountain than a stroll on the [Sunrise Nature Trail](#). Family-friendly and easy to navigate, the trail starts near the Sunrise Day Lodge and climbs a bit into beautiful subalpine meadows with views of Mount Rainier and the Cascades. For a longer, slightly more strenuous hike, continue onto the [Sourdough Ridge Trail](#). Note: the road to Sunrise usually opens later and closes earlier in the season than other areas of the park; current Sunrise estimate for the 2023 season is early July.



North Cascades National Park

Area Map: [HERE](#)



Distance from Seattle | **2.5 hours** Time Needed | **2-4 days** Recommended Loop | **Seattle - North Cascades - Rainier - Seattle**

The vast wilderness of North Cascades National Park, speckled with turquoise lakes and home to over 300 glaciers, is one of the least-visited national parks in the United States, attracting fewer than 20,000 visitors in 2021. The North Cascades are a true hiker's paradise – uncrowded trails, pristine lakes, and narrow forested valleys capped by jagged mountain peaks. Drive the North Cascades Scenic Highway, hike a myriad of spectacular trails, take in the views at multiple stunning overlooks and kayak on impossibly blue waters.

Camping in North Cascades National Park

There are only [a few](#) reservable campgrounds within North Cascades National Park, with a handful of privately-owned resorts just beyond the park limits. Since the park is surrounded by National Forest land, boondocking is popular (always double-check to make sure you are actually outside the NPS boundaries!) Camping is very popular in the North Cascades; book early (notice a trend here?) Want to let us take care of the planning for you? Click [HERE](#) to inquire about our custom itineraries. Click [HERE](#) for steps to book campgrounds on your own.

COLONIAL CREEK SOUTH No campground is more centrally-located than [Colonial Creek](#)! Just off Highway 20 on the shores of Diablo Lake, it's the perfect jumping off point for adventures in any direction. Several campsites are walk-in or tent-only, but there are about 50 sites that can accommodate campervans. Toilets and water are available, but no showers; try wading into the chilly (43 degree!) blue waters for an early-morning swim! Colonial Creek is a very popular campground; sites are reservable six months in advance.



GOODELL CREEK Situated in a fantastic native forest along the Skagit River, [Goodell Creek](#) is a lovely place to lay your head in the North Cascades! Western cedar, hemlock and Douglas fir needles carpet the ground of the many hiking trails, and the glacial melt that feeds the river provides habitat for Pacific salmon. The town of Newhalem, including a national park visitor center, is just a short walk away. Water and vault toilets are provided, but no showers. The campground is open from late May to early September, and sites are reservable six months in advance.

DISPERSED OPTIONS Boondocking is not allowed in North Cascades National Park, but there are [several out-of-the-way spots](#) to be found just outside the park boundaries in the surrounding national forest. If you enjoy rustic camping and can survive without flush toilets, showers and trash cans, dispersed camping may be for you!

Hiking in North Cascades National Park

A friendly PSA from the WTA (Washington Trails Association): *Only you can fight chipmunk obesity! The steady stream of visitors [on popular trails] has created a population of corpulent chipmunks. Respect Leave No Trace principles and guard your crumbs jealously to help the chipmunks return to a more natural diet.*

THUNDER KNOB | 3.6 miles Need a relatively quick wiggle break? [Thunder Knob](#), overlooking turquoise Diablo Lake, is a great leg-stretcher. The traditional Northwest forest gives way to lodgepole pines and kinnickinnick as you climb to a

knoll with several terrific viewpoints. The trailhead is located just past milepost 130 on Highway 20, near the entrance to Colonial Creek Campground. Pets are welcome on a leash!

CASCADE PASS | 7.0 miles Native Americans, fur traders, and gold prospectors all walked [this route](#), listening to the roar of waterfalls and ascending through evergreens and mountain meadows. This subalpine hike is one of the most popular day hikes in the Cascades; the WTA orates that “no other trail in the state delivers as much reward for the effort...it is the perfect hike to show new hikers the extraordinary places their feet can take them!” Cascade Pass is also the starting point for many longer adventures, including [Sahale Arm](#) and [Ptarmigan Traverse](#).

HEATHER - MAPLE PASS | 7.2 miles This is [THE HIKE](#) to beat all hikes...alpine wildflowers, pristine lakes, and jagged glaciated peaks in every direction. This loop is challenging but relatively easy to access, so it is super popular; expect to meet a lot of new hiking buddies as you ascend the ridge! We highly recommend getting a *very* early start - the trailhead parking lot fills up quickly after sunrise. You can hike the loop in either direction, but counter-clockwise gives a more gradual ascent and affords the best views of Black Peak. If you'd like a few more miles and a lot more solitude, check out the rigorous offshoot trail to [Wing and Lewis Lakes](#). (NOTE: Heather-Maple Pass is just outside the national park boundaries in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. You'll need a Northwest Forest Pass to park at the trailhead - AND if Fido is on a leash, he's allowed to hike too!)



Activities in North Cascades National Park

BOATING If you've got your own boat, fabulous! You can kayak and canoe on Gorge, Diablo and Ross Lakes. Otherwise, the [Ross Lake Resort](#) is the only place that rents watercraft in North Cascades National Park. Kayaks, canoes and motorboats are available. An early start is advisable; Ross Lake Resort is accessible only by boat shuttle or hiking trail. Plan a day trip to the resort and send in your equipment request (mid-June through October).

ALPINE MOUNTAINEERING North Cascades National Park is known as the "Alps of North America" for a reason - the alpine climbing is some of the best in the country! Most climbs in the park are two or three days, but the [American Alpine Institute](#) also offers guided 1-day climbs (backcountry and basic rock experience required). Be sure and check out the National Park Service [handy tip page](#) if you are planning a climb!

San Juan Islands

Area Map: [HERE](#)



Distance from Seattle | **2.5 hours** Time Needed | **3-5 days** Recommended Loop | **Seattle - San Juans - North Cascades - Seattle**

Between Vancouver Island and the Washington mainland, the San Juan Islands dot the straits dividing the United States and Canada. Although there are over 450 islands, rocks and pinnacles in the archipelago, there are only four islands serviced by the Washington State Ferry system: Orcas, San Juan, Lopez, and Shaw. Each isle has a distinct flavor; slow down to “island time” and take a few days to explore this wonderful corner of the globe brimming with outdoor adventure. (NOTE: [Ferry reservations](#) for the San Juans are a necessity, especially in the busy summer months. Plan ahead!)

Camping in the San Juan Islands

The San Juan Islands are home to [many lovely campsites](#) - state parks, county parks, and privately-owned. Take your pick from forested sites or plots overlooking beautiful bays or inlets. Boondocking is not allowed in San Juan County and campsites fill up quickly (while you're making your campground reservations, be sure to [reserve your ferry spot](#), too!) If you're looking for a little adventure, how about parting with your van for a night and camping on a remote island only accessible by [water taxi](#) or [kayak](#)?

MORAN STATE PARK | Orcas Island Five freshwater lakes and over 30 miles of hiking trails are highlights of [Moran State Park](#), established in 1921 by Robert Moran, shipbuilder and mayor of Seattle. Most of the bridges, roads, trails and park buildings were constructed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps. There are three campgrounds on the shores of Cascade Lake, all with showers and restroom facilities. Camping at Moran is VERY popular; be prepared to reserve the best sites nine months in advance, at 7:00 am Pacific time.

SPENCER SPIT STATE PARK | Lopez Island Traveling with little ones? [Spencer Spit](#) offers many family-friendly activities, including crabbing, clamming, swimming, hiking and a summertime Junior Ranger interpretive program. Restrooms are available but no showers or hookups. The park is also on the Cascadia Marine Trail, and offers several primitive sites to hikers, bikers and boaters. Like any Washington State Park campground, sites are available to reserve nine months out at 7:00 am Pacific time.

SAN JUAN COUNTY PARK | San Juan Island This [gorgeous spot](#) on the west side of San Juan Island, just north of Lime Kiln Point State Park, offers primo views across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Vancouver Island. Water and flush toilets are available, but no showers or hookups. Reservations can be made 90 days out; be sure to check the map carefully as some sites are tent-only, with no campervans allowed.

Hiking in the San Juan Islands



MOUNT CONSTITUTION | 6.7 miles It's a steep climb up the forested slopes of [Mount Constitution](#), but the 360-degree views at the top are well-worth the trek. On a clear day, you can see Vancouver, Mount Baker and even Mount Rainier from the stone watchtower atop the summit (hand-cut by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1936). If you're jonesing for a slightly easier hike, try the stroll around Mountain Lake - and be sure to jump in for a refreshing swim!

LIME KILN POINT | 1-2 miles Also known as Whale Watch Park, [Lime Kiln Point State Park](#) is one of the best places on earth for shore-side whale watching. Whale pods pass the bluff during the summer months (timing is dependent on salmon runs). The park is home to a great interpretive center, historic lighthouse, 19th-century lime kiln AND stellar views. Mix and match the short trails and bring a picnic!

Activities in the San Juan Islands

WHALE WATCHING The SJI are one of the best places in the world to see orca whales, who make their home in the waters of the Haro Strait. Embark on a [whale watching tour](#) from either Orcas or San Juan Island - all whale-watching companies in the islands are Coast Guard-certified and have onboard naturalists. The [Whale Museum](#) in Friday Harbor is also a fun little stop - adopt an orca to support research of orca pods in the Salish Sea!



KAYAKING Take your pick from several reputable [tour outfitters](#), or rent a kayak and explore the islands from the water! Plan ahead if you'd like to take a guided tour; kayaking is very popular, especially in the summer months. Sea lions, otters, porpoises, even octopi and orca whales have been spotted from kayak!

BICYCLING San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez are all great for [cycling](#) - the terrain is extremely varied, so plan ahead to ride a route tailored to your ability level! Lopez is the least hilly (and "friendliest" - you're sure to encounter locals waving as you pedal by!) Orcas' roads are a bit narrow and rather hilly; experienced riders can even tackle Mount Constitution, highest point in the SJI. San Juan Island has terrific views and many points of interest - let your two wheels lead to a vineyard, lavender field and alpaca farm!

THE ARTS Creative and accomplished artists flock to the San Juans; Orcas, especially, is known for its thriving arts scene. Check out [Orcas Island Pottery](#), oldest - and most whimsical! - pottery studio in the Pacific Northwest (currently owned by third-generation potter Syd) or [Howe Art](#), featuring metal and steel sculpture art by internationally-renowned sculptor Anthony Howe. San Juan Island is also home to multiple [art galleries](#) and an outdoor sculpture park featuring Northwest artists.

Weather in Washington State

Weather across the Evergreen State is extremely variable, with a mild climate west of the Cascades and dry, hot summers and bone-chilling winters in the eastern part of the state. The summit of a mountain or oceanside beach will often be 10 degrees colder than your campsite. With this in mind, be ready to layer up or dress down - and always have your rain jacket at the ready!

- 10 Day Forecast: [Seattle](#)
- 10 Day Forecast: [Forks](#)
- 10 Day Forecast: [Mount Rainier](#)
- 10 Day Forecast: [Diablo Lake](#)
- 10 Day Forecast: [Friday Harbor](#)

Summer (July - August) Blue skies, low humidity and epic sunny stretches dominate summer in the Seattle area (shhh...it's our big secret!) Though there can be stretches of 90-degree days, daytime temperatures are usually in the 70s and low 80s, with comfortable evenings. Most mountain roads and passes are open during the summer, though snow can last well into August on some of the less-sunny trails. Naturally, this is also the most popular time to visit Washington...plan ahead!

Fall (September – November) Washington is gorgeous in the autumn, with less crowded trails and larches, maples and aspens turning mountainsides into brilliant canopies of golds, oranges and crimson. If you're visiting the mountains, it's best to time your visit by early October; autumn snows frequently make trails and roads inaccessible and many campgrounds close for the season in late September. The San Juan Islands or perimeter of the Olympic Peninsula are great options for later fall! Expect highs in the 50s and lower 60s.

Winter (December – March) Winters can be long and dreary in western Washington, with weeks of gray skies and drizzle. Late sunrises and early sunsets are a great excuse to bop from coffee shop to coffee shop! Thankfully, the Puget Sound typically buffers the Seattle area from the extreme cold seen east of the Cascades, and average winter temperatures hover in the 40s. There's usually a snowstorm or two in January/February, when the entire region shuts down and kids sled down snow-covered, hilly streets.

Spring (April - June) The rain slowly starts to abate in April, but gray skies can last well into June, with temps in the 50s and 60s. A low marine cloud layer is the reason for this "June Gloom", as cold ocean water and high pressure combine. Spring is a wonderful time to visit the San Juan Islands - just make sure to bring plenty of layers for any water-based activities! Trails and amenities in the national parks usually start to open in late May, but be prepared that you probably will encounter snow on any higher-elevation hikes.

HOW TO BOOK A CAMPGROUND



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Dreaming of cool campsites, smores 'round the fire, and starry night skies? Here are some tips to help make it a reality!

- ➔ Moterra campervans are 19 feet, meaning they can fit in any conventional parking space - you don't need to seek out "RV" specific sites. Be wary of "walk-in" or "tent-only" sites – campervans are not typically welcome in those spots.
- ➔ **Our vans** do not require electrical or water hook-ups - they are equipped with a custom solar system and fresh water tanks, allowing you to be fully off-grid!
- ➔ Intent on getting a site with a great view, lots of privacy, or the perfect trees to string a hammock? **Campsitephotos.com** showcases individual sites at a given campground and even recommends the "best" ones.

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The best place to start your search is with a visit to **recreation.gov**, which is the primary booking platform for campgrounds on federal or state land*. Want to reserve a site in Grand Teton, Glacier or Zion? This is the way to go about it! To up your odds of scoring a sweet site...

- Scope out options and create a free recreation.gov account in advance of making a reservation. You need to be logged into your account in order to book.
- Research when your sites go on sale – most are released at 8 am mountain time, six months in advance of arrival. If you are traveling in August, your sites will typically be released in February. For competitive campgrounds (virtually all NPS sites), you'll need to reserve the site right as the clock strikes 7:59:59 am mtn... it may sound dramatic, but clocking in casually (even a few minutes later) will likely result in disappointment.
- Rather than try for one single site, select multiple in your date range that would suit your needs. This gives you a better shot at securing at least one! If you get lucky and successfully snag more than one, you can then remove the extra site from your cart without any penalty.
- Have a friend, partner, or tech savvy kid? Increase your odds by asking them to queue up a site or two as well. The more the merrier!
- No luck? There's still hope! Check back frequently for cancellations; as your departure date approaches, a site or two is bound to open-up. If you really have your heart set on securing a spot at a particular campground, consider utilizing a subscription service like **Campnab**; their algorithm alerts you immediately when a site in your predetermined date range becomes available.
- *Notable parks that do not release sites through recreation.gov are **California State Parks** and some of **Yellowstone's campgrounds**.

HOW TO BOOK A CAMPGROUND



Eager to get a bit more off the beaten path? In that case, consider boondocking...

Boondocking is a colloquial term for camping with no amenities – if you are comfortable without formal bathroom facilities or a trusty campground attendant, this dispersed-style camping can be a great option. Believe it or not, you can boondock on just about any land controlled by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the National Forest Service – this amounts to some 440 million acres where camping is totally free, no reservations necessary! Check out **Campendium** or **TheDyrt** to easily browse dispersed options; see what's available in a specific locale, read real reviews from past campers, and get GPS coordinates to navigate to the boondock sites.

Don't forget private campgrounds!

- ➔ Private campgrounds can be found just about anywhere you want to go! Typically situated just outside park boundaries, private campgrounds oftentimes book up at a more leisurely pace than park-operated sites, making them a particularly great option if you are a little late to the planning process. Though private campgrounds tend to have a decidedly more "front country" vibe than NPS operated campgrounds, there are definite advantages; private campgrounds almost always have shower facilities, they are more likely to offer wifi or cell service, and some even have amenities like pools, restaurants, or general stores. In short, incorporating a night or two at a private campground can be a nice change of pace! The best way to get a sense of options in your area is simply to give it a Google - use the map feature to get a sense for what's available and book directly through the campground.
- ➔ **Hipcamp** offers a happy hybrid between boondocking and private campgrounds - these sites are "hosted" by private landowners and offer a wide range of experiences, ranging from a flat spot in a grassy pasture right on up to multi-storied treehouses! **Under Canvas** can also be fun to throw into the mix. These glamping-style resorts are conveniently located outside of popular parks and can be a fun option if you are looking to build in a night of unique accommodation!

If this process sounds intimidating or overwhelming, you can always leave the **planning to professionals!** Our team of local experts will not only create a day-by-day itinerary tailored to your individual interests and abilities, but will even take care of booking your campsites! Maximize your time in the parks and minimize your stress - our **itinerary planning service** will help ensure you have the trip of a lifetime!