



# Visitor Update | Fall - Winter 2020-21

Welcome to Mount Rainier National Park! Winter at Mount Rainier is stunningly beautiful and offers many recreational opportunities for the prepared visitor. However, Paradise-winter operations will look different this year. *There is no food service at Paradise, and the Jackson Visitor Center will remain closed due to COVID-19. Are you prepared with winter clothing, equipment, food, and water?* Food and retail may be available at Longmire. We ask that you do your part to protect your health and the health of others during your visit. Enjoy your time on the mountain!

## What You Need to Know

- Due to Covid-19, visitor centers are closed and snowshoe walks are canceled.
- Sledding of any kind is currently not permitted anywhere in the park.
- The Paradise snowplay/sledding area will not open until public health guidelines related to the COVID-19 pandemic are met and there is sufficient snow coverage.
- Follow @MountRainierNPS on Twitter for gate and road information.
- Climbing permit self-registration is available at the Paradise Ranger Station and the White River Entrance.
- Wilderness camping self-registration permits are available at the Carbon River Ranger Station, on the porches of the Longmire Museum or Longmire Administration Building 9:00 - 4:00, and at road closures on the eastside of the park.

Mount Rainier National Park provides outstanding winter recreation activities. Winter on the mountain requires special caution for backcountry skiers, snowshoers, and campers. 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.

Consider the following questions before starting on a hike or climb:

- Have you checked the weather forecast?

- Are you equipped to survive overnight if whiteout conditions prevent travel?
- Are you tuned in to avalanche hazards and the snow traps that can develop over streams?
- Can you depend on your winter skills, and those of the people traveling with you?
- Do you have a hiking partner?

Cell phones don't work in most locations in the park.

Proper planning and preparation can help you survive an unexpected night on the mountain.

## Winter Driving on the Mountain

As road and weather conditions change throughout the day, traction requirements may also change. Tire chain requirement updates are posted on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/MountRainierNPS](http://www.twitter.com/MountRainierNPS). Listen to Radio 1610-AM at Paradise for updates to changing road information and requirements.

Most of Mount Rainier's roads are snowed in and closed to vehicle access during winter. The road from Nisqually Entrance to Longmire is open year-round but may close during extreme weather.

Rangers and snowplow operators evaluate road, weather, avalanche, and staffing conditions each morning before deciding whether it is safe to open the gate to Paradise. The Longmire to Paradise road hours are approximately 9:00 am - 5:00 pm daily, conditions permitting. The road may close early or remain closed the entire day due to avalanche danger, severe weather, or with a shortage of the necessary staffing to maintain safe access.

*Visitors must head downhill from Paradise by 4:30 pm to clear the Longmire gate by its 5:00 pm closure. The uphill gate at Longmire closes at 4:00 pm.*

*All vehicles are required to carry tire chains when driving in the park November 1st until May 1st. Use may be required at any time. Vehicles over 10,000 pounds must carry a second set of chains and chain up whenever traction tires or chains are required. AutoSocks are allowed for passenger vehicles under 10,000 pounds as an alternative traction device.*

When driving on snowy or icy roads be aware of poor visibility and reduced traction, reduce your speed, stay in your lane, allow extra distance between vehicles, and stay well back when following plows.

### Highway Pass Reports

(800) 695-7623 or dial 511  
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes/>

## Winter Recreation Safety

- Plan your route ahead of time and have a backup plan.
- Be prepared for rapidly changing weather.
- Carry the ten essentials even on a short sightseeing hike.
- Always tell someone of your travel plans so they can notify the park if you fail to return.
- If visibility is poor, do not travel at all.
- Determine if the location you are traveling is avalanche prone. When in doubt, ask questions or don't go.
- Never travel alone.
- Avoid tree wells, creek crossings, gullies, and steep, open areas of snow.
- Remember, just because you see evidence of people in an area it does not mean it is safe to travel there.

## Mount Rainier National Park

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Chip Jenkins

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**Website**  
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**Park Headquarters**  
(360) 569-2211

**Lost and Found**  
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**Connect with @MountRainierNPS on**  
Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, YouTube



## Winter on the Mountain: Are You Ready?

*As one of the snowiest places on Earth, Mount Rainier National Park boasts a long season for outstanding winter recreational activities in a true wilderness setting.*

History has shown that snow, wind, and low visibility conditions resulting from winter storms significantly increase mishaps and serious accidents in the backcountry. Conditions change rapidly during the day, and freezing temperatures, wet snow, and high winds can be encountered at any time during your hike. This has left many day and overnight hikers, skiers, and snowboarders exposed and suddenly thrust into life-threatening situations due to weather resulting in injuries and fatalities.

**Be aware that mountain weather changes rapidly**—a pleasant outing can quickly be transformed into a survival ordeal. Make sure you are aware of weather forecasts for the area and heed any cautions or warnings. Navigation in storm conditions can be extremely difficult. If you are ascending and clouds or fog start rolling in, turn around and head back to the trailhead. If that's not possible, stop moving, dig in, and wait for better weather. Prepare for the fact that daylight hours are short in winter; you will have less time to get out to your destination and to return. Always carry a flashlight or head lamp, and extra batteries. Having proper gear (adequate boots, ice axe, the winter ten essentials, etc.) is a must.

**Be prepared for route-finding conditions.** A GPS device with local maps pre-loaded, extra batteries, and knowledge of how to use it is the only way to navigate the Muir Snowfield in poor visibility. Even a great map, compass, and altimeter will not work in poor conditions on the snowfield. Trails may be snow-free at lower elevations but anticipate and prepare for snow at

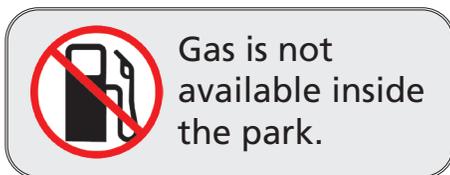
higher elevations. If you plan on retracing your route back to the trailhead note important landmarks and consider using wands on snow-covered trails. Remove your wands on your return to the trailhead. If the trail becomes difficult to follow, stop and determine where you are before continuing. It is extremely important that you know how to use your navigation tool.

If at any point you begin to feel uncomfortable or unprepared, turn around, get out safely, and call it a day. Mount Rainier will be waiting for you on your next trip.

### Cross Streams Safely

In autumn and early winter rivers may be running high and fast. Having the experience and understanding to determine whether to cross the stream 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.
- Look for an area with a smooth bottom 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.
- Use a sturdy stick to maintain two points of contact with the ground at all times.
- 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 outdoor clothing including footwear.



## Enjoy Your Visit, Protect Yourself and Your Park

- **In Case of Emergency** dial 911 from any phone located inside the park.
- Stay on designated trails or hike on thick patches of snow to protect vegetation.
- Do not feed, approach, or disturb wildlife.
- Leashed pets are permitted only in picnic areas, campgrounds, and parking lots and along roads open to public vehicles.
- 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.
- Launching, landing, or operating an unmanned aircraft (drone) within the boundaries of Mount Rainier National Park is prohibited.
- 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.
- Fires are not permitted in the backcountry.
- Bicycle only on roads, not on trails.
- Sleeping in vehicles outside of campgrounds is not permitted.

## 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)

## 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. Obtain daily avalanche forecasts from the Northwest Avalanche Center at <http://www.nwac.us/>. Before your hike,

consult the website, [www.nps.gov/mora](http://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.

**Avalanche Hazard Forecasts**  
<http://www.nwac.us/avalanche-forecast/current/cascade-west-south/>