

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

COASTAL WILDERNESS HIKING

Some of the last wilderness beaches in the conterminous United States are found between Shi Shi Beach and the Hoh River. Their remote wilderness atmosphere, changing views of ocean, cliffs, headlands, islands, and seastacks, coupled with the lure of beachcombing have increasingly attracted hikers in recent years. The rising number of visitors requires greater vigilance to ensure the protection of the environment and safety of the visitors.

Pets, vehicles, and weapons are prohibited on trails. This coastal strip of wilderness is a refuge for elk, black bear, and deer to name a few. The presence of pets or mechanized equipment disturbs wildlife in a natural setting. Rights of visitors who come to observe and enjoy the wildlife must also be respected.

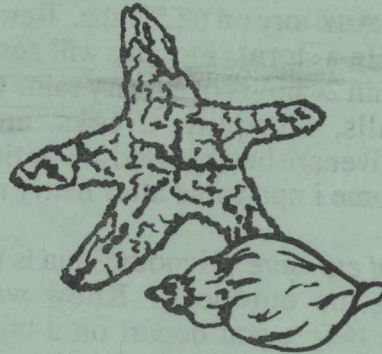
Maximum group size. The presence of people also disturbs wildlife and has an impact on the trails. The larger the groups, the greater the long term effect. Group size is restricted to a maximum of twelve hikers. Break down into manageable units of less than twelve and depart from different trailheads. If logistics prevent this, enter trailhead at intervals of at least one hour and establish independent objectives and campsites at least one half mile apart.

Do not build fires in driftwood pile. Build your fire on the beach where the tide will erase the fire scar or in an existing fire ring. Fire built in driftwood piles may cause beach fires which are time consuming and hazardous to extinguish. Dismantle driftwood structures before you leave.

Pack out all trash. Do not attempt to burn garbage except for paper. Do not dispose of garbage by throwing it down outhouse holes.

Shelters are for emergency use only. Concentrated visitor use in and around established shelters has compacted the soil and threatened watersheds. Also personal safety dictates that you carry a shelter in the event you are cut off from existing shelters by tide or storm.

Prevent pollution of streams. Where outhouses are unavailable, find a private area in the woods above the beach and at least one hundred feet from running water. Dig a shallow trench with the heel of your boot. Dispose of used toilet paper by burying it in the trench. Do not wash dishes in streams. Keep soap away from water sources.



Animal proof your food by storing out of reach. Black bears, raccoons, and other wildlife frequently raid unprotected food. Once an animal finds the way into a food cache it will return again and again.

Protect your valuables. Do not leave valuables unattended in your vehicle. Likewise, unattended camps are susceptible to theft. Bring only what you will use on your trip to a trailhead. The coastal wilderness hosts its share of environmental hazards. Fill out a backcountry permit for overnight camping

but also leave word with a responsible party of your intended route and estimated time of return. If you experience an emergency, notify either Lake Ozette Ranger Station (206-963-2725), Mora Ranger Station (206-374-5460), or the 24-hour parkwide emergency number (206-452-9545).

Hike by the tide. Current tide tables are posted at trailheads. Copies are available at coastal ranger stations. Do not round significant headlands on incoming tides. An average high tide will cover most of the beach, making hiking in some areas impossible. Do not camp below the point of high tide on any given day.

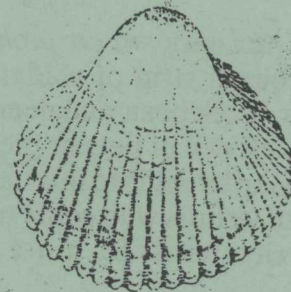
Weather conditions can change your hike. Weather is unpredictable along the coast. Storm fronts are usually identified a few days in advance. Forecasts are available at ranger stations or by monitoring the NOAA Weather Advisory on 62.55mhz. Beware of drift logs in a storm. Streams will generally crest within 24 hours of a heavy rain. Goodman, Falls, Mosquito Creeks, and the Ozette River are best crossed at low tide and may become impassable after heavy rains.

Beware of exposure. Hypothermia is the #1 killer in the outdoors. Know weather forecasts before you depart on a hike, use wool garments, protect the head from heat loss, and make camp early in foul weather. At first sign, treat for exposure by drinking warm liquids and change into dry clothes or get into a sleeping bag.

Watch your footing. Rocks and logs in tidal areas are slippery and unstable. Vibram soles do not give traction on algae-covered rocks. Stay low and keep your hands ready to stop a fall. The rock on headlands is very loose and can crumble beneath your weight. Watch for falling rock from the seastacks. Trails going over major headlands are marked with orange and black targets and are often steep and muddy.

Respect the ocean. Long sandy beaches can develop treacherous riptides. Steep gravel beaches have significant undertow. Be vigilant for large swells or you may take an unexpected swim. The water is too cold for all but the extremely hardy.

Beware of red tide. Seasons are set for the legal taking of hardshell clams and mussels. Coastal ranger stations can provide further information on bag limits, closures, and



where to dig. Closed seasons are for the purpose of protecting the public from red tide contamination and/or reestablishing populations. (Razor clams will require a Washington State license when reopened in the future).

Purify your water. There is an intestinal disease caused by a protozoan called giardia. Giardia are carried by humans and animals and can contaminate water supplies. A reliable treatment for giardia is to boil water for one minute. Additional information relative to beach hiking is available from coastal ranger stations and the visitor centers in the park. Enjoy and protect your wilderness beaches.