

OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

GEYSER VALLEY LOOP HIKE

Hiking the Geyser Valley trail provides opportunities to view the scars of a recent forest fire, visit two historical homesteads, and observe unique geological features. Though the trails are generally flat, there is a 325 foot loss in elevation to the river and a similar climb back to the main Elwha trail. The loop is five miles.

Whiskey Bend: Drive just beyond the Elwha Ranger Station, turn left onto Whiskey Bend road. The horse corral on your left is now used for park pack stock but was once the site of a civilian conservation camp. The C.C.C. built Whiskey Bend road in the 1930's to provide vehicular access to Hurricane Ridge. Scars of their winch cables are visible on several Douglas fir trees as you proceed up the road. You pass the Glines Canyon Dam 1-1/2 miles up the road. The dam was built in 1927, predating the park. It was managed by Crown Zellerbach and produces fourteen megawatts of electricity. Glines Canyon dam and its sister dam at Lake Aldwell produce one third of the total power requirements of Daishowa paper mill in Port Angeles. Park biologists are challenged with attempting reintroduction of anadromous fish to the Elwha which historically provided habitat to the largest and heartiest strain of Chinook salmon in the lower forty eight states. Deer, elk, and (rarely) cougar may be visible along this stretch of road. Two miles above the dam, Cat Peak is visible through the trees on your right. Whiskey Bend is just beyond the Upper Lake Mills trailhead (a 1/2 mile walk to a spectacular waterfall). Tradition says, Whiskey Bend was named when a C.C.C. crew leader promised whiskey to his men upon reaching this point in their road building efforts. The road once continued to Hurricane Ridge Road. The abandoned road is now Wolf Creek trail.

Overlook: Hike to this spur trail, 3/4 mile from the Whiskey Bend trailhead, dropping 75 feet to overlook. The Seattle Press Expedition, which explored the Elwha in the winter of 1889-1890, named the overlook "Eagle's Nest". Roosevelt elk are frequently seen grazing in the meadow across the valley. Black bear may also be observed sharing the pasture. Olympic National Park was created from lands set aside by Teddy Roosevelt in 1909 for a refuge. At that time, elk had been hunted to near extinction on the Peninsula. The fields you see here were originally cleared of maple, alder, and some

fir trees by Billy Anderson, a settler. Captain Charles Barnes, of the Press Expedition, bivouacked here using these rocks for partial shelter, while on a reconnaissance mission. Rather than homestead, he envisioned the areas as an ideal site for a hotel. In reference to this site and its view of "Goblin Gates", Barnes wrote "The spectacle is one which alone would well repay a tourist for the trouble of a trip to see" You can investigate Goblin Gates by a short hike down the Rica Canyon Trail. It is a vertical drop to the river from the Overlook.

Goblin Gates: After regaining the Elwha trail from the overlook, proceed 1/2 mile southeast to Rica Canyon trail. Rica Canyon is the deep and inaccessible gorge between Goblin Gates and Lake Mills. This trail drops 325 feet in 1/2 mile to the river. Upon reaching the river, turn right, and walk north 250 feet to view Goblin Gates. "For several hundred feet as far as can be seen down the canyon," wrote Charles Barnes, "a multitude of faces appear in succession near the water's edge. One could conceive in them tortured expressions, which, with gloomy and mysterious character of the whole, justified us in giving it afterwards the name of "Goblin Gates". The area was owned by Crown Zellerbach, for possible hydroelectric development until 1984, when title was purchased by the Olympic National Park Service. Walk south 1/2 mile along the river trail, here there is easy access to fishermen in pursuit of rainbow, cutthroat, eastern brook, and Dolly Varden trout. Check with a Ranger for fishing regulations.

Krause Bottom: Ernst and Meta Krause, German immigrants, established a log house, barn, garden, and orchard here. They were clearing more land, when a fire they were tending swept out of control. It consumed their outbuildings, forcing them to leave. A few barren fruit trees remain to mark the efforts of this pioneer couple. Notice the mosaic pattern in the tree growth across the river on the ridge. This is a result of fires that were caused by lightning and confined by weather or geographic barriers. Such fires play a valuable role in the natural ecosystems. Lightning caused fires, deep within the park may be allowed to burn to the advantage of both environment and taxpayer. Human caused fires usually occur near trails, structures, roads, or boundaries and are always suppressed. They occur independently of rain and may burn with a greater

ferocity creating catastrophic impact. One can imagine the tears of the Krauses' as their dreams for a life in this beautiful valley were swept away in smoke. If you are tired, turn left here, and walk 0.3 miles up to the Elwha trail. Otherwise, then proceed south another 0.7 miles to Humes Ranch.

Humes Ranch: Martin and Will Humes and their cousin, Ward Sanders arrived here at the turn of the century from New York State enroute to the Klondike in quest of gold. A brother, Grant arrived the following year. It was fall, they hiked up the Elwha and Enchanted, they dug in as settlers. Will returned to New York State in 1914, never returning to live in the Elwha. Grant continued as a farmer, hunter, and a commercial packer until his death in 1934. He packed in the Seattle Mountaineers on the first documented ascent of Mt. Olympus. He built several hunting cabins up the valley, two of which remain standing today. In the early 1940's, Herb Crisler settled into the cabin at Humes Ranch with his bride, Lois, while they filmed wildlife for what became Walt Disney's "Olympic Elk" film. Since acquiring the property from Peninsula Plywood, the National Park Service has restored the cabin, conforming to its original appearance and with much of the original materials. Wood deterioration, however, is occurring, as a result of the moist Olympic environment.

Michael's Cabin: Walk 0.8 up the hill to the north and then northwest to Micheal's cabin on the main Elwha trail. The cabin was built in the 1930's by the U.S. Forest Service. The north side of the meadow was the site of the Geyser House, "Doc" Ludden's home. Ludden arrived at the Elwha circa 1906. A thrifty and creative homesteader, he grew fruit trees, vegetables, wheat, and tobacco. The windows of his home were made from discarded photographic plates. He was best known for his apiary, which produced vast quantities of honey bees wax candles. His home served as a hostel; Doc provided bread, wine, rootbeer, stereoscopic photos, haircuts, and much more. After Ludden's death in 1927, Michael, moved into the Geyser house and resided there between tours of trail work with the Forest Service. He spent much time hunting and packing for other hunters. More than a few cougars had reason to regret Michael's marksmanship. The Geyser house was torn down in 1957 and Michael's name was attached to the cabin nearby.

Rica Canyon Fire: Walk back towards Whiskey Bend on the Elwha trail. In 0.3 miles, you reach the first part of the Rica Canyon fire. In the next 1/2 mile, you will leave and reenter areas burned by the fire. This human-caused blaze occurred in August 1977, during a period of time in which the fire danger was so high that the backcountry of the Olympic National Park was closed to campfires. No rehabilitation was undertaken on the Rica Canyon fire. The 1985 Beaver fire at Staircase, when an illegal campfire was left unattended, created the largest human-caused fire in the history of the park. Limited rehab was done on the firelines at the Beaver fire, but not on the burn area. Such fires, unlike natural fires deep in the backcountry, requires major and expensive rehabilitation efforts. Fireweed, salmon berry, Douglas fir, and other sun-loving plants are becoming reestablished in the fire zone. Dead snags provide habitat for insects, which in turn attract birds. Deer and elk are attracted to the brush. Thus, in a management area where timber harvest does not occur, nature restores life over a period of years. The post-fire effects of these fires are identical whether the fire is human-caused or a natural fire.

