

*Guide to*  
**HURRICANE RIDGE**  
*Olympic National Park*



*Views*

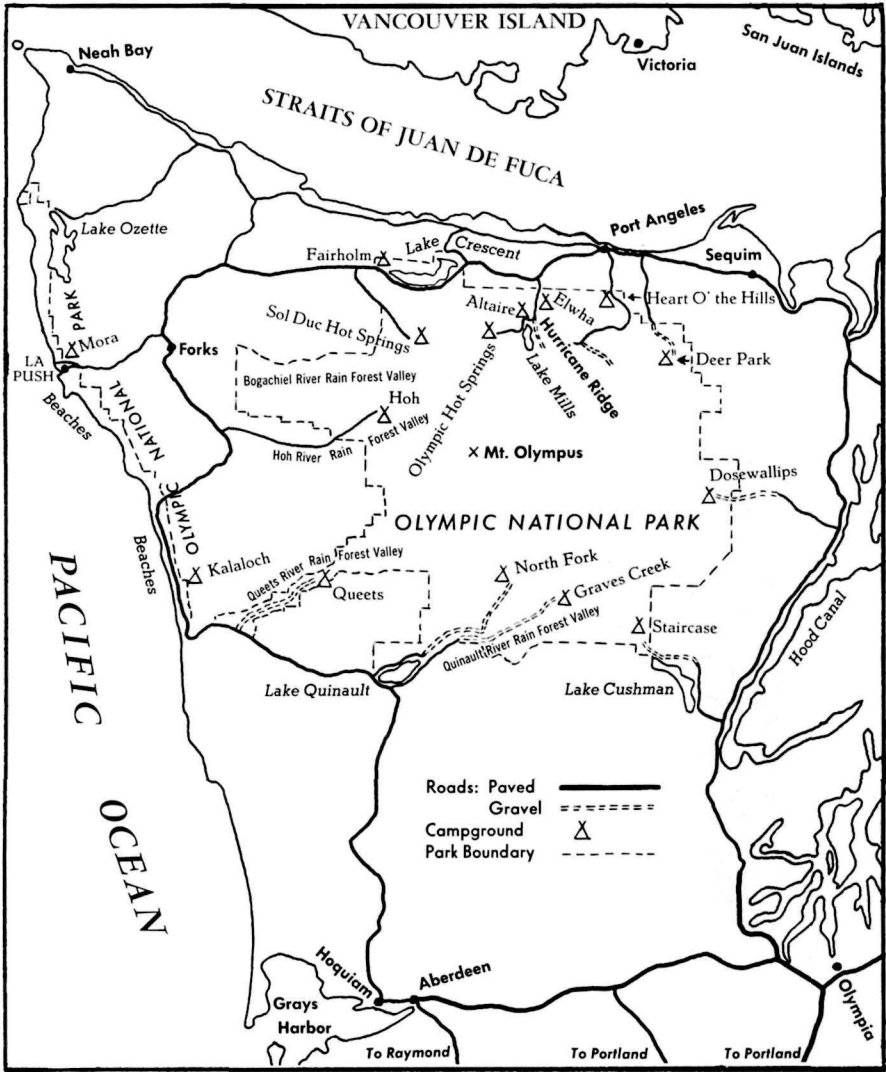
*Plants*

*Roads*

*Animals*

*Trails*

*History*



**DRIVING MILEAGES FROM HURRICANE RIDGE TO:**

Aberdeen .....	186	Neah Bay .....	84
Deer Park .....	43	Olympia .....	142
Dosewallips Campground .....	89	via Forks and Aberdeen .....	235
Elwha Campground .....	31	Olympic Hot Springs Campground .....	40
Fairholm Campground .....	46	Port Angeles .....	18
Forks .....	75	Port Townsend .....	65
Heart O' the Hills Campground .....	12	Queets River Campground .....	132
Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center .....	108	Quinalt (Graves Creek) Campground .....	155
Kalaloch Campground .....	106	Quinalt (North Fork) Campground .....	153
Lake Crescent .....	36	Seattle (via Winslow Ferry) .....	90
Lake Ozette .....	90	Sequim .....	35
Lake Quinalt .....	136	Sol Duc Hot Springs Campground .....	62
La Push .....	87	Staircase Campground .....	116
Mora Campground .....	85	Storm King Visitor Center .....	39

# HURRICANE RIDGE

**HURRICANE RIDGE** is only one of the many unique and scenic areas of Olympic National Park, but it is especially important to all who visit the park because—

- It is readily accessible from Port Angeles by automobile by way of an excellent paved road—a scenic 18-mile drive with several impressive viewpoints enroute.

- It affords the park visitor one of the most sweeping and spectacular views of mountain peaks, ridges, glaciers, and deep valleys to be had from an automobile.

- It is an outstanding example of a subalpine-type of environment with a setting of sloping meadows and groups of high elevation trees clustered together for mutual protection from high winds and winter snow.

- It acquires a mantle of color during the summer months as a great variety of subalpine wildflowers spread across meadows and mountainsides.

- It has a number of walking trails that permits the visitor to enjoy the many scenic viewpoints and solitude that can be had away from the roadway.

- It offers a day-use lodge for the convenience and comfort of visitors, as well as two large picnic areas for those more inclined to the outdoors.

- It is one of the few places, if not the only place, where one can leisurely drive from sea level to a mile above sea level (5,229 feet) in a matter of about 45 minutes.

- It affords views of the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Port Angeles, Vancouver Island and the city of Victoria, as well as many other land features.

- It will, above all, bring one in touch with the grandeur of mountains and deep valleys that have been brought into existence by the forces of nature working over eons of time. To live momentarily with that grandeur at Hurricane Ridge will make your Olympic National Park experience a memorable one.

# A BRIEF HISTORY

**HURRICANE RIDGE** was given its name by some of the first visitors to the Ridge who, at times, were nearly blown off their feet by hurricane-like winds that swept across the Ridge. Strong winds still buffet the Ridge on occasion, their origin, direction, and force probably due to the unusual way in which the Elwha, Lillian, and Little River valleys converge on the Ridge.

Many of the same early visitors recognized the need to protect the scenic grandeur that is Hurricane Ridge. Their efforts and that of others led to Hurricane Ridge becoming a part of Olympic National Park. Briefly the events unfolded in the following way:

- 1909 President Theodore Roosevelt establishes Olympic National Monument by proclamation after attempts to create a national park fail. Administration of the new monument was given to U.S. Forest Service.
- 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs an order transferring all national monuments administered by other Federal agencies to the Department of Interior and the National Park Service. The National Park Service assumes administration of Olympic National Monument.
- 1937 President Roosevelt visits the Olympic peninsula in an attempt to resolve a long-time controversy over changing Olympic from a monument status to that of a national park (national park status would provide greater protection). The President decides in favor of the park.
- 1938 Congress passes and President Roosevelt signs a bill establishing Olympic National Park, encompassing 684,000 acres, with an enabling provision authorizing the President to add land by proclamation to a total of 898,292 acres.
- 1940 President Roosevelt adds 187,411 acres to park, adding sections of the Elwha River watershed, including *Hurricane Ridge* and the west half of Mt. Angeles, Deer Park, and the land between Sol Duc Hot Springs and Lake Crescent.
- 1943 President Roosevelt adds 20,000 more acres, including the balance of Mt. Angeles, Lake Angeles, and the Morse Creek watershed; the latter addition protects the domestic water supply of Port Angeles.
- 1953 President Truman adds 47,753 acres, including the 50-mile ocean strip, and acreage along the Queets and Bogachiel rivers. Park at 896,600 acres.

In the early days, before roads, Hurricane Ridge was accessible only by trail. One trail was constructed from the outskirts of Port Angeles to the Ridge via Morse Creek valley (the narrow valley below the present highway.) The trail permitted settlers and visitors to travel by foot and horseback to Hurricane Ridge and to drive cattle and sheep to and from summer pasture on the ridge. Another trail started in the Elwha valley and climbed the south side of Hurricane Ridge to Hurricane Hill.

The Forest Service, with the aid of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the early 1930's, constructed most of the trails that radiate out from Hurricane Ridge. The Forest Service, at that time, also constructed a narrow dirt road from the Elwha valley to Hurricane Ridge and then to the summit of Hurricane Hill. The purpose of the road was not only to give automobile access to the Ridge but also to permit access to a fire lookout that was established and operated by the Forest Service on the summit of Hurricane Hill. The road was continued eastward and southeastward along the Ridge to Obstruction Point where it ended because of a steep, impassable slope. Those with fortitude to drive the narrow, steep, winding, dirt road from the Elwha to the Ridge enjoyed the expansive primitiveness of the Ridge in those days before asphalt roads and comfortable lodges.

There was little change in Hurricane Ridge until the early 1950's when the present highway was constructed at a cost of about three million dollars. A portion of the old Forest Service road was paved (from the lodge toward Hurricane Hill). At the end of the paved road an asphalt trail was constructed along the center of the remainder of the road to the Hill summit. That portion of the old road from the Ridge (vicinity of the lodge) to Obstruction Point remains as it was, unpaved but improved. The fire lookout is gone from the summit of Hurricane Hill; all that remains is some of its concrete foundation.

Hurricane Ridge Lodge was constructed at about the time highway construction began and was completed and operating before the highway was finished. Access to the lodge during the highway construction period was by way of the narrow, unpaved Elwha valley to Hurricane Ridge road. No longer used as an automobile road, it is now considered a part of the park trail system.

Campgrounds and overnight lodge facilities were not considered in the development of the Ridge for visitor use because of the fragile nature of this high elevation, subalpine type of environment. The impact of prolonged human use of such a restricted area would have an adverse affect upon the environment and could possibly destroy the very thing which has contributed to the making Hurricane Ridge such a joy to visit.

# *Big Meadow Trail Map Information*

The numbers below refer to specific locations on the map on pages 7 and 8, and give a brief description of the significance of the location. Orient yourself on the map by using the Hurricane Ridge Lodge and Parking area as your reference point. The rear of the lodge (downhill side) faces south.

**1. Big Meadow.** A typical subalpine meadow, green with sedge (triangular stems) and grasses (round stems), and colored by wildflowers. The presence of so much moisture-loving sedge is indicative of the moist nature of the meadow, fed by slowly melting snow banks. Subalpine Fir are grouped along the meadow's edge. After the snow retreats, many wildflowers appear from among the grass and sedge such as Glacier Lily, Western Springbeauty, Fanleaf Cinquefoil, American Bistort. (See page 14)

**2. Hurricane Ridge Lodge.** The lodge was constructed between 1951 and 1953 for the convenience of Ridge visitors. From the lodge terrace one gets a magnificent 180-degree view of the rugged interior mountains of the park. As you look directly out from the terrace you are looking almost due south. Large metal plaques along the terrace wall will provide you with information on just what you are looking at from this vantage point. Park ranger-naturalists conduct naturalist-interpretive activities at the lodge and use the lodge as a departure point for guided walks and hikes. Schedules of these activities are posted at the lodge.

**3. Picnic Areas.** About one mile west of the lodge are two picnic areas, Unit A and Unit B, each with 30 picnic sites with paved walks and tables. Unit A is the first area and is more open (fewer trees) with excellent views; Unit B is beyond Unit A a few hundred yards and has most of its picnic sites among Subalpine Fir. Both areas have restroom facilities and drinking faucets as well as faucets for filling jugs and other water containers. Due to fire danger **NO OPEN FIRES ARE PERMITTED** in picnic areas.

**4. Hurricane Hill Trail.** Trail begins at the end of the paved road, 1½ miles west of the lodge. A scenic walk along the paved 1½-mile trail will take you to the top of Hurricane Hill, elevation 5,757 feet. For more information see pages 9 and 10.

**5. Obstruction Point Road.** A dirt-gravel road that follows along the southeasterly extension of Hurricane Ridge for a distance of 8 miles to Obstruction Point. A scenic drive, but it can be dusty in dry weather and unsuitable for those unaccustomed to narrow mountain roads without restraining fences or rails where the roadside drops off steeply. Should you attempt it, drive with caution. The road was constructed in the early 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps under the direction of the Forest Service. Construction stopped 8 miles out when those early-day roadbuilders came to a steep, unstable talus slope which defied the building of any sort of road. The slope was an "obstruction" and remains so today.

**6. Hurricane Ridge—Port Angeles Highway.** The highway brings the visitor from Port Angeles, 18 miles away, via Heart O' the Hills (large campground here) and Lookout Rock at the tunnels.

**7. Marmot Colonies.** The Olympic Marmot is common to Hurricane Ridge as he is to many subalpine meadows and ridgesides in the park. This large rodent lives in burrows on the hillside. His large size astonishes most observers. More marmot information on page 11.

**8. View East.** From this point one looks along Klahanee Ridge (to your left) along which the Hurricane Ridge highway has been carved. Mt. Angeles is the high peak at the near end of Klahanee Ridge. The valley below the highway is Morse Creek drainage. The Cascade mountain range and Glacier Peak can be seen from here on a clear day.

**9. Summit of Alpine Hill.** Excellent view of Big Meadow and Hurricane Ridge Lodge below you with the backdrop of the Bailey Range and Mt. Olympus. Wind-stunted Subalpine Fir nearby; rocks are sedimentary sandstone and shale.

**10. Klahanee Ridge Trail.** Trail follows along the summit of a ridge for a distance of about 2 miles where it connects to the Klahanee Ridge short trail climbing up the side of Klahanee Ridge from the highway. Pleasant walk out along the trail and return.

**11. View North from Sunrise Point.** Fine views of Port Angeles, Straits of Juan de Fuca, Vancouver Island, Mt. Angeles (to the northeast), Hurricane Hill (to the west), and below into the Little River cirque.

**12. Viewpoint.** The most popular viewpoint because it is easily accessible—only about 130 yards from the parking area. Port Angeles (west portion), Vancouver Island, the Straits of Juan de Fuca, and the city of Victoria on Vancouver Island can be seen if reasonably clear. Subalpine Fir nearby and a few Mountain Hemlock below you on the ridgeside.

**13. Viewpoint.** You are looking across a portion of the Little River cirque toward Sunrise Ridge. A cirque is a bowl carved by glacier action; in this instance, the bowl bounded by Sunrise Ridge, the northern slope of Hurricane Ridge, and Hurricane Hill was created by a glacier that existed here thousands of years ago.

**14. Viewpoint.** A small parking area where one can stop his car and look to the north toward the Straits of Juan de Fuca and Vancouver Island.

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*For a map of the balance of the Hurricane Hill road, location of picnic areas,  
and the Hurricane Hill Trail, see page 10.*

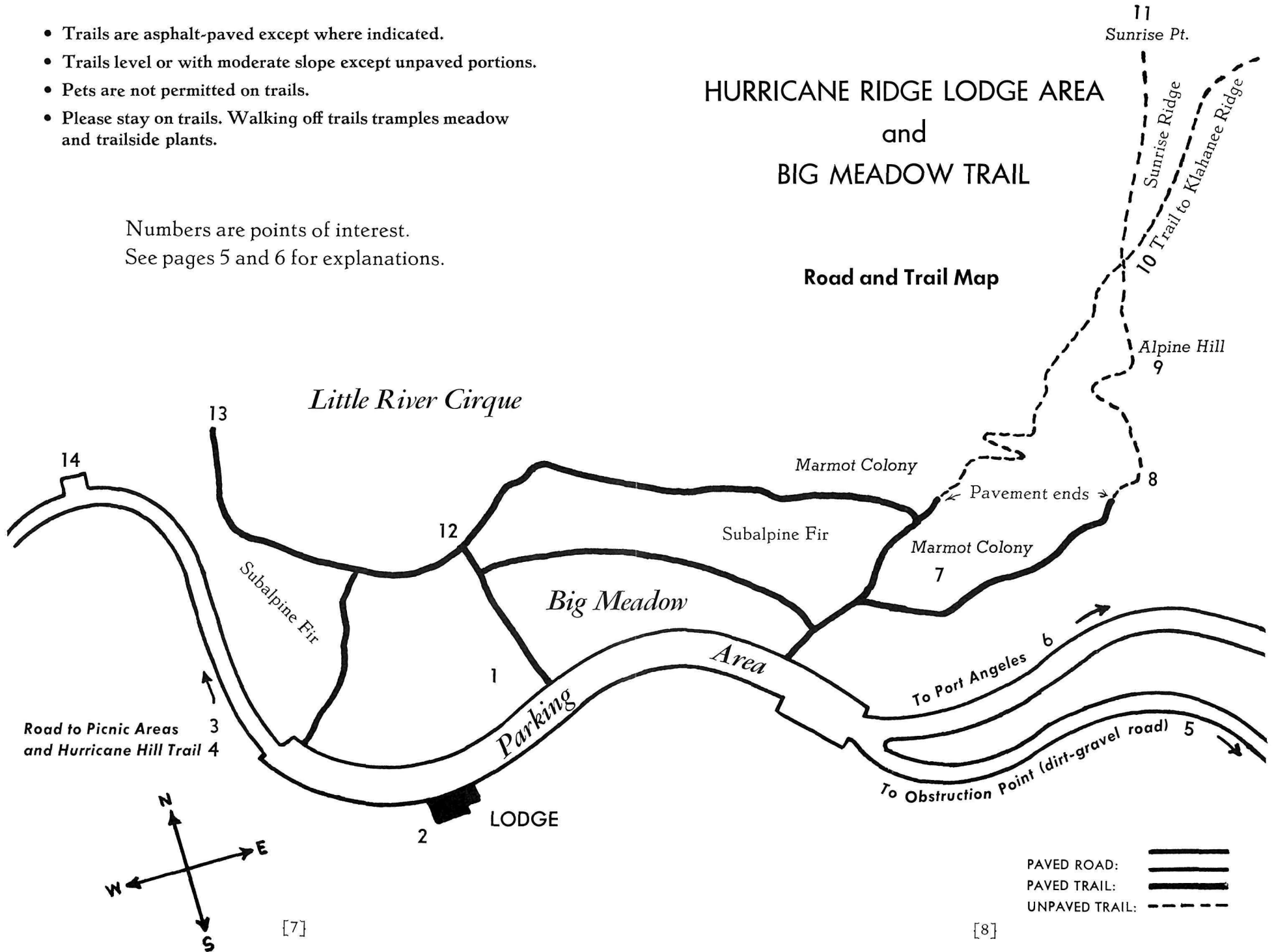
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- Trails are asphalt-paved except where indicated.
- Trails level or with moderate slope except unpaved portions.
- Pets are not permitted on trails.
- Please stay on trails. Walking off trails tramples meadow and trailside plants.

Numbers are points of interest.  
See pages 5 and 6 for explanations.

## HURRICANE RIDGE LODGE AREA and BIG MEADOW TRAIL

### Road and Trail Map








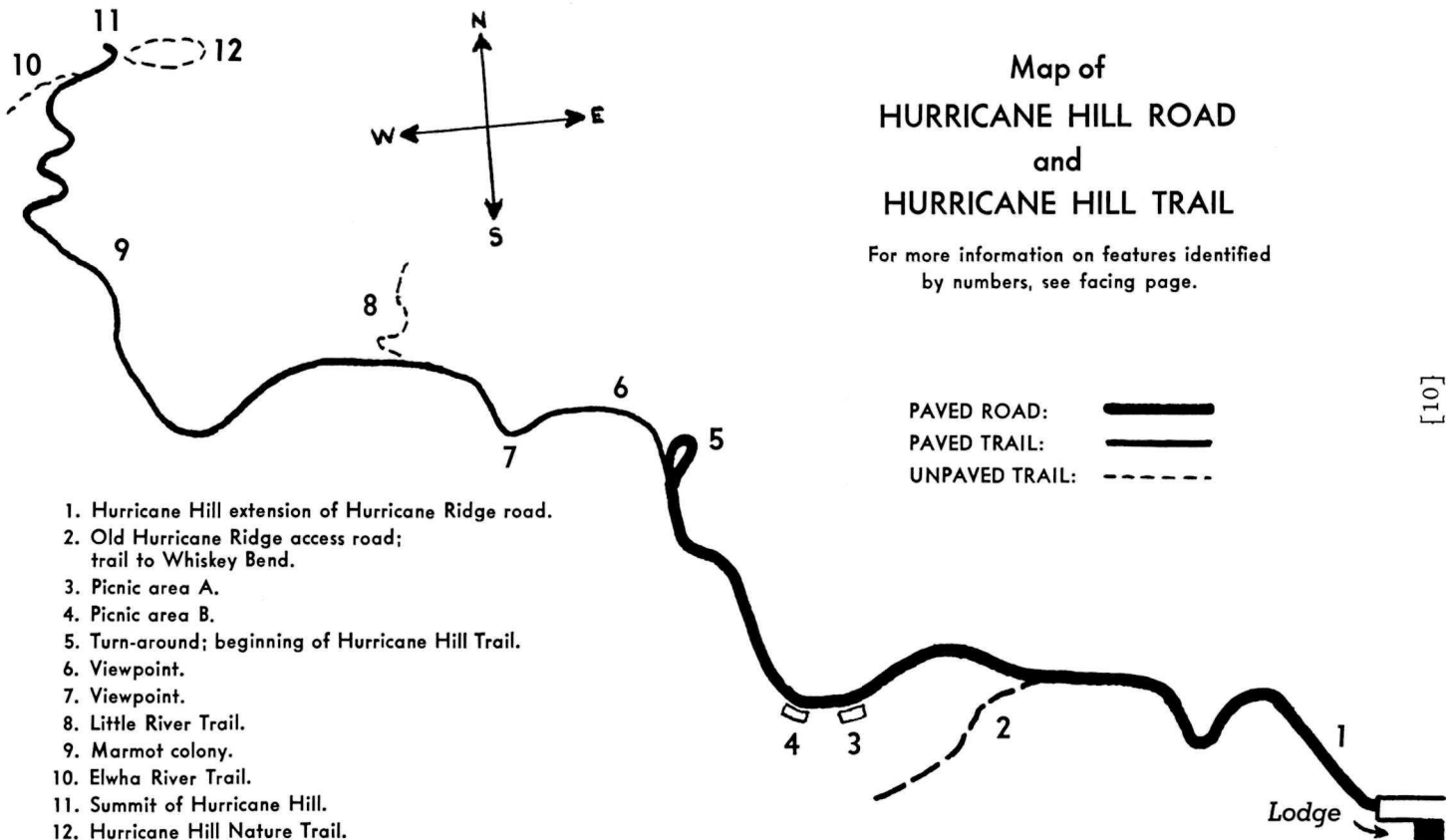
1. Paved extension of Hurricane Ridge highway that follows the original Forest Service road (see page 4) along the ridge-top for about 1.3 miles to the beginning of the Hurricane Hill Trail.
2. Original access road to Hurricane Ridge from the Elwha Valley. Now a trail (vehicles prohibited), it is about 7 miles to Whiskey Bend, at which point it meets the end of the 5-mile gravel road from the Elwha Ranger Station.
3. Picnic area A. (see page 5)
4. Picnic area B.
5. Turn-around and parking area for end of Hurricane Ridge road; beginning of Hurricane Hill Trail. Trail is the former Forest Service access road to a fire lookout on the summit of Hurricane Hill, now gone (see page 4). A delightful walk, the first 1/2-mile is more or less level; then the trail climbs steadily for about 1 mile to the summit. Trail is paved the entire distance, but watch for rocks on the asphalt. The wildflower display along the trailside is usually excellent and the flowers are identified with name stakes to the point at which the trail begins to climb. Please stay on the trail and not wander off for the plants are easily trampled. Metal signs along the trail give information on natural features.
6. Good views of Mt. Angeles to the east and down into the Little River cirque.
7. Views of Elwha Valley below you and snow- and glacier-capped Bailey Range which rises above the valley. From this point on watch the ridgeside below you for black bears—they frequently search for food here. You may have to use binoculars. (see page 11)
8. End of level portion of trail; here you begin climb to summit. End of the wildflower identification portion of the trail. Little River Trail begins here—drops down 8 miles to Little River road and out of the park; difficult to follow in some places in first two miles. A short walk down the trail and return may reward you with a good wildflower display. The hillside seen across the west end of the cirque with the beautiful, skirted Subalpine Firs forming small groups is Hurricane Hill. Bears and deer occasionally seen on hillside.
9. Marmot colony. They have burrows scattered over ridgesides and in meadows on both sides of the trail. Notice their burrow openings—marked by fresh earth piled in front. For marmot information see page 11.
10. Beginning of Elwha Trail. This trail was used before there were any roads to Hurricane Ridge. Climbs 6 miles from near the Elwha Ranger Station to this point. Blue Grouse often in the meadow.
11. Summit of Hurricane Hill—5,757 feet. Magnificent view in all directions: The Bailey Range to the south and southeast with Mt. Olympus behind it; Port Angeles spreads out below you about 10 miles distant; the Straits of Juan de Fuca across which is Vancouver Island and the city of Victoria. When visibility permits you may see Mt. Baker, 10,750 feet, near the Canadian border, over 90 airline miles away. Watch for marmots, and you may also be lucky and see a mountain goat.
12. A short loop trail that goes east through the open meadow on the south side of the ridge summit and returns through the Subalpine-Fir along the north rim of the ridge. Excellent for wildflowers in July and early August.

# Map of HURRICANE HILL ROAD and HURRICANE HILL TRAIL

For more information on features identified  
by numbers, see facing page.

PAVED ROAD:   
 PAVED TRAIL:   
 UNPAVED TRAIL: 

[10]



1. Hurricane Hill extension of Hurricane Ridge road.
2. Old Hurricane Ridge access road;  
trail to Whiskey Bend.
3. Picnic area A.
4. Picnic area B.
5. Turn-around; beginning of Hurricane Hill Trail.
6. Viewpoint.
7. Viewpoint.
8. Little River Trail.
9. Marmot colony.
10. Elwha River Trail.
11. Summit of Hurricane Hill.
12. Hurricane Hill Nature Trail.

# *Animals of Hurricane Ridge*

**Mammals.** Although the Hurricane Ridge mammals range from large to small, the large are, naturally, the most conspicuous. But there are many small, secretive forms that few people see. Of the larger mammals the following are most often seen.

**Blacktail Deer.** Showing little fear of humans the deer seem tame and permit people to approach them. They are, despite their seeming tameness, wild animals and are unpredictable. It is best not to approach them too closely. Most of the deer observed are either females (no antlers) or young males (with small or stubby antlers). All deer are vegetarians. The Hurricane Ridge deer are most often observed feeding in the meadows and grazing along ridgetops in the early morning and evening hours. As vegetarians they possess a complicated digestive system that permits efficient utilization of the plant material they eat. Their digestive system cannot cope satisfactorily with human food such as cookies, crackers, candy, and such food does the deer more harm than good. Therefore, *please do not feed the deer.*

**Black Bear.** Occasionally seen at a distance by those who walk the Ridge trails. Watch for them on the sides of the ridges as they lumber along in search of food. Our bears retain that inborn fear of humans and will not approach you as bears are known to do in other parks. There are few problems with bears entering campgrounds in the park. There are no grizzly bears.

**Mountain Goat.** Introduced into the Olympic mountains in the mid and late 1920's. Brought from Alaska and British Columbia, the Mountain Goat has become well established in the Hurricane Ridge area. Mountain Goats can be seen, occasionally, from the roadside above the tunnels, on rocky outcroppings above the highway on the side of Klahanee Ridge. Also seen at times, along Sunrise Ridge and at the summit of Hurricane Hill. Also look for them with binoculars on Mt. Angeles.

**Olympic Elk.** Although plentiful on Hurricane Ridge at one time, the elk have disappeared because of hunting (before the Ridge was a part of the park) and an ever-increasing use of the Ridge by people for other recreational purposes. The elk are rarely seen now, although common in most parts of the park. All that remains as mute evidence of the former presence of the elk are trails etched into ridgetops by the hooves of untold numbers that once used to find food and solitude on Hurricane Ridge.

**Olympic Marmot.** Closely related to the woodchuck of the eastern states and to the marmots of the Rocky Mountains, Sierra-Nevada and Cascade Mountains. The Olympic marmot is restricted to the Olympic mountains and to the high elevation meadows and grassy ridgetops. A large rodent that is heavily furred with a light to dark brown coat (young marmots often have a blackishness to all or part of their fur) and lives year-round in burrows in the ground, coming forth in the day to feed upon the vegetation that is in the vicinity of the burrow entrance. Body fat accumulated during the summer and fall months permit the

marmot to hibernate deep in his burrow through the long winter. Sometimes the high-pitched whistle of the marmot is heard before the animal is seen.

**Snowshoe Hare.** The only rabbit on the Olympic peninsula, it is common on the Ridge. A year-round resident, it is equally at home on winter's snow as in summer's meadow. Actually not a rabbit but a true hare: rabbits have altricial young (helpless after birth); hares have precocial young (care for themselves after birth).

**Olympic Chipmunk.** No park in the west would be complete without this little animal that everyone recognizes. Sporting his black and white stripes against a bright brownish body color, the chipmunk is active the summer long not only obtaining food for immediate use but to store in burrows for possible winter use.

**Birds.** Hurricane Ridge, because of its high elevation and relatively small area, does not have a large or varied bird population. But those birds that do spend the summer along the Ridge are conspicuous and easily observed. The following are those most commonly seen.

**Raven.** A large, black, crow-like bird often seen sailing with alternating flapping and soaring over the meadows and trees. Sometimes they walk around the parking lot near the Lodge. A summer visitor to the Ridge, the Raven is larger than the crow and has a deep-throated croak instead of the crow's caw.

**Blue Grouse (Sooty Grouse).** A large, brownish, chicken-like bird of the ground. The Blue Grouse is most often seen along Ridge roadsides and in the meadows, particularly in August when many of the plants form seed. Moves about slowly and deliberately as it feeds on insects, seeds, and plant parts. Gives a soft clucking sound which is often heard before the bird is seen.

**Grey Jay.** A friendly bird that is almost a permanent resident of the picnic areas where it manages to keep itself well-fed with handouts or by cleaning up the crumbs after picnickers have departed. A large bird with very light gray (to whitish) underparts, darker slate gray on the back, with white and black on the head. Immature gray jays are overall dark slate gray.

**Oregon Junco.** A common, sparrow-size bird with a black hood over its head and a gray body. Most conspicuous color pattern is the flash of white outer tail feathers when it flies. Usually on the ground or lower branches of firs.

**Black-capped Chickadee.** A tiny bird with gray body and black and white on the head. Travels in groups and most often is seen, often upside down, working very busily amongst the upper branches of the firs searching for insects.

**Horned Lark.** Of the open meadows; brownish with yellow throat and black markings below throat and on head. Will often serenade the earth below from high in the air with a tinkling, high-pitched song.

**Sparrow Hawk.** A small hawk with reddish-brown tail; often seen hovering with rapid wing beats over one spot in the meadows as it carefully searches below for food. Especially active in August when grasshoppers are plentiful.

**Redtailed Hawk.** Large hawk with broad, rounded wings for soaring high overhead in graceful circles, taking advantage of every rising air current.

## *Trees of Hurricane Ridge*

There are three cone-bearing trees characteristic of the high subalpine area of Hurricane Ridge. All are well adapted for the climate typical of high mountains: short for forest trees, and compact of form to withstand high winds, with supple limbs to shed the heavy snow without breaking.

**Subalpine Fir.** Most common tree on Hurricane Ridge; rims the Big Meadow, many just east of the Lodge, and common in the picnic areas. Also called Alpine Fir and Balsam Fir.

**Mountain Hemlock.** Less common but often with Subalpine Fir. Grows best where it is cool and moist, therefore more common on north slope of Ridge. The leader (very tip of the tree) always has a slight droop. Grows to stately 75' to 100' tall in protected places, but becomes a sprawling shrub when exposed on wind-swept ridges.

**Alaska Yellow Cedar.** A tree whose limbs droop down giving the impression of being wilted. Known also as Alaska or Nootka Cedar or Cypress, Yellow Cypress, and Sitka Cypress.

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Two other cone-bearing trees are occasionally seen on Hurricane Ridge although not adapted to such high elevations. Most often they are stunted.

**Douglas Fir.** Common to sea level and lower elevations, it is uncommon on the Ridge.

**Western White Pine.** A five-needle pine that is common at lower elevations but strays to Hurricane Ridge and finds the growing conditions not at all suitable.

## *Wildflowers of Hurricane Ridge*

Hurricane Ridge is noted for its spectacular wildflower display during the summer months. Generally, the best time for enjoying the flowers at the peak of their blossoming is during the first two weeks of July, although this can be modified by an early or late start to the summer. One of the better places to see the wildflowers close at hand is the Hurricane Hill Trail. Look, photograph, and enjoy, but do not pick or disturb the plants for others will follow you that will want the same opportunity to experience the joy and pleasure of the colorful Hurricane Ridge wildflowers.

The flowers that can be observed from June to September gracing the meadows and trailsides are too many to list in this small guide. Here are the

names and flower color of some of the most common listed according to the month in which they are the most abundant.

## June (most will blossom into early July)

*Avalanche Lily*: white, yellow center.

*Glacier Lily*: nodding, all yellow.

*Western Springbeauty*: white, pink veins.

*Smooth Douglasia*: low, spreading; deep pink flowers.

*Spreading Phlox*: low, spreading; white, pink or lavender.

*Pioneer Violet*: yellow, purple veins.

## July (many will blossom into early August)

*Broadleaf Arnica*: yellow, "daisy-like."

*Fanleaf Cinquefoil*: deep yellow, (buttercup-like)

*Columbia Lily*: nodding, orange with brownish spots.

*Sitka Columbine*: nodding, red with yellow spurs.

*Fescue Sandwort*: white; grasslike leaves.

*Little Larkspur*: deep purple.

*Martindale's Lomatium*: tiny, yellow, in umbrella-like mass.

*Subalpine Lupine*: shrubby; blue and sweetpea-like.

*Alpine Yellow Monkeyflower*: tubular, bright yellow.

*American Bistort*: tiny, white, in conical mass.

*Necklace Erysimum*: yellow.

*Olympic Onion*: short; white to pinkish and clustered.

*Magenta Paintedcup*: lavender to magenta.

*Silky Phacelia*: tiny, light purple, clustered.

*Pink Plume*: nodding, deep pink (unusual form to flower).

*Skunkleaf Polemonium*: light blue, pinkish center.

*Partridgefoot*: short; tiny, yellowish-white, clustered.

*Common Yarrow*: small, white, yellow center, clustered umbrella-like.

*Aster Fleabane*: daisy-like, pinkish-lavender with yellow center.

## August

*Olympic Aster*: daisy-like, white with yellow center.

*Catchfly*: white to pinkish-white, sticky.

*American Harebell*: bell-shaped, blue.

*Owlclover*: short, pink to lavender.

*Common Pearly Everlasting*: bushy; white with yellow centers, clustered.

*Sand Spurry*: trailsides; ground-hugging; tiny, pink.

*Indian Thistle*: rose-purple (only thistle on Ridge).

*Wooly Eriophyllum*: bushy; bright yellow, daisy-like.

# ***For More Information***

**Available at Visitor's Centers in the Park**

**Wildflowers of the Olympics**

BY CHARLES STEWART

**Geologic Guide to the Hurricane Ridge Area**

BY ROWLAND TABOR

**Geologic Guide to the Deer Park Area**

BY ROWLAND TABOR

**Geology of Olympic National Park**

BY W. R. DANNER

**Olympic National Park: Natural History Handbook**

BY GUNNAR FAGERLUND

**Roads and Trails of Olympic National Park**

BY FREDERICK LEISSLER

**Exploring the Olympic Peninsula**

BY RUTH KIRK

**The Olympic Rain Forest**

BY RUTH KIRK

**The Olympic Seashore**

BY RUTH KIRK

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Supervising Seasonal Park Ranger (Naturalist)  
Olympic National Park*

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