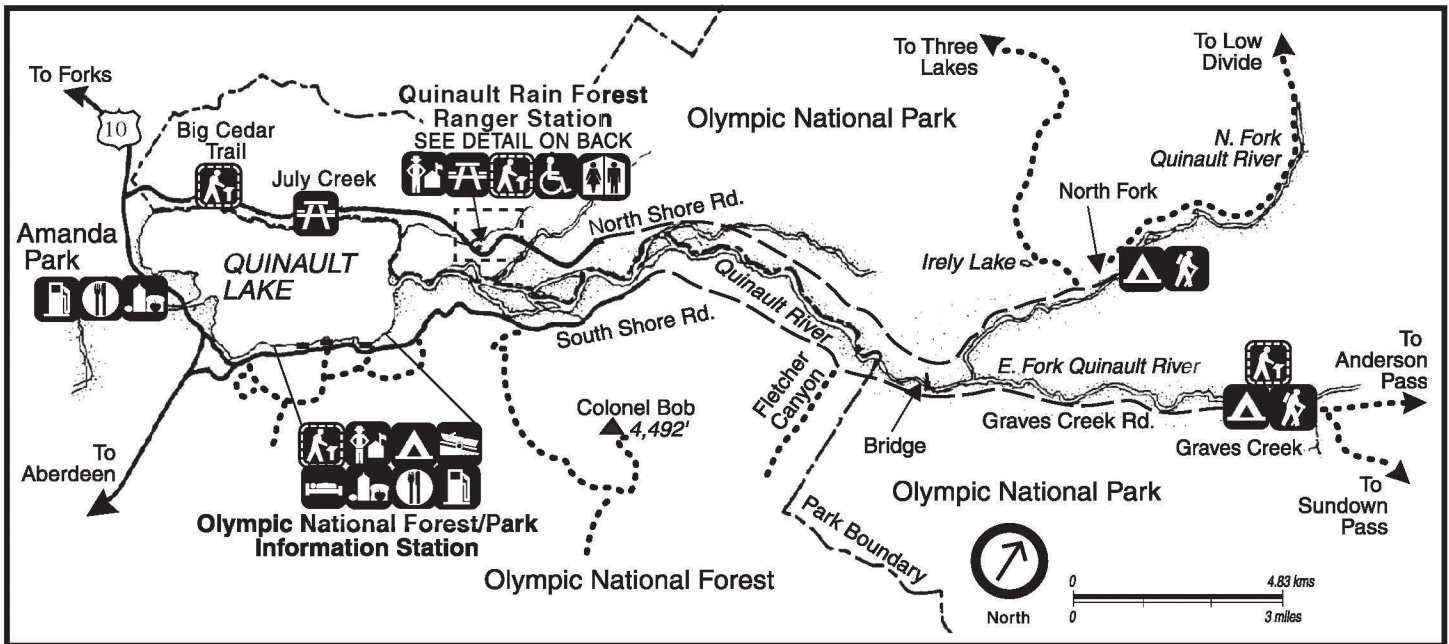


Lake Quinault Area



Wilderness Portal

Inspired by stories of the untamed Olympic Mountains, the Seattle Press sponsored an expedition to explore the wild core of the Olympic Peninsula. Area tribes routinely used the area for hunting, gathering and travel. In fact, Klallam elders recall how a grandmother took her children across the mountains to visit relatives near Quinault. But to Euro-Americans the interior was a mystery.

The Press Expedition left Port Angeles in December 1889. After many mishaps and nearly starving, they emerged at Lake Quinault six months later. Today, people complete the hike in four or five days.

The Quinault Valley is a wilderness gateway to alpine meadows, jeweled lakes and ice-carved peaks. For shorter visits, the valley has a scenic loop drive and short trails through temperate rain forest in both Olympic National Park and Olympic National Forest.

Facilities:

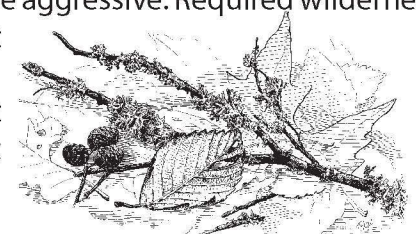
Quinault Rain Forest Ranger Station: accessible restrooms, picnic tables, self-guided nature trails, wilderness permits. Open intermittently in summer with information, exhibits, book and map sales. Olympic National Forest and Park Information Station: open daily Memorial Day through Labor Day, weekdays only the rest of the year. Information, wilderness permits and bear canisters. July Creek Picnic Area: tables and accessible vault toilet.

Camping:

North Fork Campground: 9 sites, pit toilets, picnic tables, fire rings, no water. Graves Creek Campground: 30 sites, picnic tables, fire rings, restrooms, potable water late May to fall. The rest of the year it has an accessible vault toilet and no water. North Shore and Graves Creek Roads are narrow and not suitable for trailers or large RVs. There are also three Olympic National Forest campgrounds on the south side of the lake.

Regulations:

No pets on trails. Pets must be on a leash at all times. Do not approach elk; they can be aggressive. Required wilderness permits for all overnight backpacking are available at the two Quinault ranger stations, or in Port Angeles and Forks.



Alder and maple leaves, ©1977 from Northwest Trees, Ramona Hammerly. Reprinted with permission of publisher, The Mountaineers Books, Seattle.

Trails at Quinault

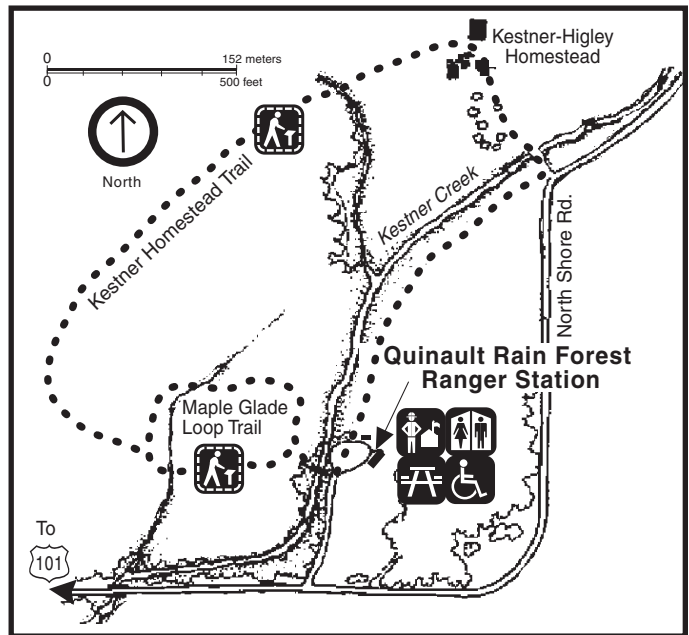
Maple Glade: Flat 0.5 mile loop through a mossy bigleaf maple grove. Begins across the bridge from the Quinault River Ranger Station.

Cascading Terraces: Flat 1-mile loop through forest along East Fork Quinault River at Graves Creek.

Irely Lake: Trail climbs about 100 feet in 1.1 miles to shallow Irely Lake. It begins .25 mile before the North Fork Campground.

Quinault Big Cedar: 0.2 mile trail that gains 80 ft. elevation to a huge cedar tree. Trailhead is 2.0 miles up the North Shore Road from Highway 101.

Kestner Homestead: Learn about homestead life on this self-guided 1.3-mile loop starting from the Quinault River Ranger Station.



Trails from the North Fork and Graves Creeks trailheads offer longer hikes. There are also short loop trails and longer more strenuous trails on the south side of Lake Quinault in Olympic National Forest.



Rain Forest Elk

In the rainforest valleys of Olympic National Park, you may glimpse the largest land mammal in the park—Roosevelt elk. Darker and larger than Rocky Mountain elk, a bull can weigh 1,000 pounds. Only males grow antlers, shedding them each spring before growing new ones in summer.

Throughout the year, look for groups of cows, calves and young bulls grazing in old homestead fields. During the fall rut, bulls attempt to gather harems of up to 30 cows with which to breed. High, squealing bugles echo through the valley as bulls challenge one another for dominance.

Elk browse understory vegetation, creating the open, park-like character of the forest. The broad west side valley bottoms are ideal habitat, and elk populations here are larger and less migratory than those on the east side.

These elk have survived many changes. By the end of the 19th century, elk had nearly disappeared from this last frontier. President Theodore Roosevelt, after whom they are named, established Mount Olympus National Monument in 1909 to protect elk from overhunting. By the time the park was established in 1938, elk populations had rebounded.

Today about 5,000 elk are protected in Olympic National Park. Herds that move outside the park face hunting and habitat loss or degradation. But here in the park's rainforest valleys, the prospects look good for elk. They will continue to shape their forest homes and thrill visitors.

These noble animals are being ruthlessly slaughtered...sometimes merely for the teeth, and the carcass is left laying on the ground to rot.

1904 Proposal for Elk National Park