

Olympic National Park Bugler

Activities and Facilities

Winter/Spring 1999-2000



Plowing record-breaking snowfall of winter 1998-99 about a mile below Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Inset: clearing avalanche debris.

A Never-ending Job!

What takes over 12,000 gallons of diesel, nearly 4,000 thousand hours and months of digging, blowing and pushing? Opening the Hurricane Ridge Road! At least it did in record-breaking winter 1998-99. But it is a never-ending task any winter. The Olympic Mountains ensure that by raking an average of 30-35 feet of swirling snowflakes from moisture-laden clouds. The generous snow draws snowshoers, skiers, and other winter enthusiasts to the mountains. It keeps visitor center staff busy answering the big question of every winter morning, "Is the road open?"

For Olympic National Park road crew, who fight the ever-accumulating, sliding, and drifting snow, Hurricane Ridge is a world of contrasts. "On a spring day, when the sun is hitting the slope, and it's cold and crystal white, it's beautiful," Dennis Murray, an 18-year veteran of plowing for the park, said. But windy and nasty days with zero visibility make up for it, he added. Plowing is an art requiring experience and familiarity with the road. After new snow, when the road is a white tunnel, it can be difficult to know where the pavement is. "Sometimes it is even hard to know if you're going forward or back," he half-joked. That familiar beeping of heavy equipment backing up doesn't just warn onlookers of incoming machinery, it helps operators as well.

There are times when 25-ton plows, chains on all wheels, still slither and slip as they struggle to bite the snow. "I feel a lot better when there's a bank built up," Murray smiled. Handling all that heavy snow takes a toll on the park's 20-plus-year-old fleet of plows. Fatigued metal gets brittle in the cold and pieces break,

including an axle last winter. Add unpredictable weather, hurricane-force winds, and avalanches poised to bury the road, and you have a lot of challenges. Some days safety forces the crew to wait and work in the lowlands until the Ridge gets more hospitable.

Not every winter brings over 60 feet of snow, tumbles 18 avalanches across the road, or sculpts 40-foot drifts. But every winter brings humbling weather. Locals all recall days when wind blasted their faces with stinging ice, or drifted snow forced evacuation of the Ridge. Even if it temporarily blocks the road, that white blanket is essential. It is an insulating haven for plants and wildlife, a frosty bank deposit for farms and towns to draw from in the thirstier days of summer. It shapes all of our lives, even if most of us, thankfully, don't have to climb into a plow and again clear the same miles of road that were so nicely cleared before the last storm!

Winter Hiking and Camping

Olympic is a park for all seasons. In fact, hikers can experience several seasons in one outing. A trail beginning on a spring day in a forest may lead to a blizzard in the mountains. Hikers and backpackers ready for changing and often unpredictable weather can experience the solitude of winter.

You should be prepared for wet conditions. The melting snow and heavy rain that nourish rain forests can swell streams overnight, making crossings treacherous. Camp well above the flood plain. Be cautious on bridges or boardwalks; they are extremely slippery when wet or icy. Along the coast, storm surges and winds push tides higher, creating huge waves that easily move dangerous beach logs or trap hikers on rocks. Trails may be blocked by fallen trees. Be prepared, always carry the 10 essentials, even for short hikes. They are: **extra clothing, area map, extra food and water, compass, flashlight, knife, matches, sunglasses, fire starter/candle, first aid kit.**

But don't let winter chase you inside! If you're prepared, you can experience another side of Olympic. The areas below usually offer snow-free hiking. Stop at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles for maps, tide tables and trail conditions. If you plan to camp overnight in the backcountry, you can get the required permit and information on the park's wilderness fee program at the Wilderness Information Center (WIC), just behind the Visitor Center. Quotas are in effect for some popular spots, including coastal areas of Ozette. If you're planning trips to those areas from May through September, call the WIC for reservations.

Low-Elevation Hiking

Elwha Valley: Geyser Valley Loop, West Elwha, West Lake Mills, Griff Creek, and Cascade Rock trails, and the lower parts of the Elwha River trail.

Lake Crescent: Marymere Falls and Spruce Railroad trails.

Ozette: Cape Alava or Sand Point trails; to make a 9.3-mile loop, hike the beach between these two trails.

Mora and La Push: James Pond, Third Beach and Second Beach trails and beach access at Rialto Beach.

Hoh: Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature trails, or the Hoh River trail before it climbs to snowline.

Kalaloch: Short access trails to beaches and nature trail in forest.

Quinault: Maple Glades and Irely Lake trails, and the lower stretches of the North Fork and East Fork Quinault trails if passable.

Queets: Sams River Loop; check road status before going into this area.

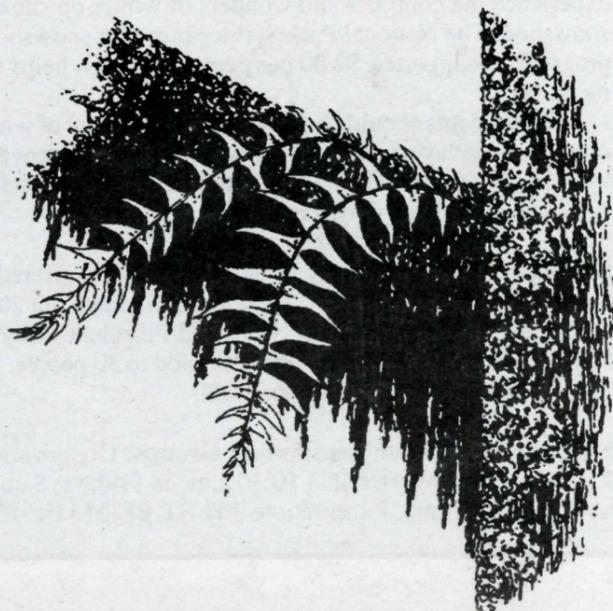
Staircase: Staircase Rapids area, Shady Lane trail, and lower parts of North Fork Skokomish trail if passable.

High Country Trips

For the truly adventurous, a trip into the mountains offers a unique wilderness experience. Winds off the Pacific Ocean funnel moisture and storms into the mountains, creating deep snow blankets. Snow camping requires a lot of preparation and many safety precautions, but it can offer an intimate glimpse into a season that few truly experience. Weather can change quickly. Places like Hurricane Ridge and Blizzard Pass earn their names, and whiteout conditions can occur anytime.

Hurricane Ridge and Deer Park offer the easiest access to winter high country. Because of the risk of sudden snow storms, overnight parking is not allowed at Hurricane Ridge in winter. You must park three miles below the ridge at Third Peak. When planning your trip, remember that the Hurricane Ridge Road is scheduled to open only Fridays through Sundays. Anyone heading out overnight in the Hurricane Ridge area must check with a ranger at Hurricane Ridge before parking at Third Peak.

All overnight users must obtain a wilderness permit. Register at Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for trips in the Hurricane Ridge area. For other areas, register at the Wilderness Information Center behind the park Visitor Center in Port Angeles or the area ranger station. Camping is not allowed within .25 mile of roads or trail heads. Pets are not allowed on trails. High elevation areas are closed to fires. For more information, check with the Wilderness Information Center or Olympic National Park Visitor Center.





Services and Facilities

A winter visit to Olympic National Park can be a rewarding experience. Few crowds and magical scenes of snowy mountains above lush forests await. It takes more planning for a winter trip as fewer services and facilities are available in the park. Even roads and facilities normally open during the winter may close temporarily due to snow, high water, downed trees, other adverse weather conditions, or even budget constraints. Call the Olympic National Park Visitor Center at (360) 452-0330 for updates.

Port Angeles Area

Olympic National Park Visitor Center: open daily 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., has exhibits and staff to help you plan your visit. Since most ranger stations do not have regular hours fall through spring, please call the main Visitor Center with questions (360) 452-0330.

Hurricane Ridge Area

Hurricane Ridge Road: Open Friday through Sunday weather permitting, other days if weather and staffing permit. Call (360) 452-0329 for 24-hour recording, or tune to 530 AM in the Port Angeles area for current information. (See information on back page.)

Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center: The building is being renovated; downstairs access is limited to the restrooms. The upstairs restroom and warming area will be open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. when the road is open. Beginning December 17, 1999, an information desk is staffed 10-4 Fridays through Sundays, and holiday Mondays through March 26, 2000, as well as December 27 to 30, 1999. **There will be no food service.** Construction permitting, hot beverages and equipment rentals should be available upstairs 10-4 on weekends and Monday holidays December 18, 1999 through March 26, 2000, and December 24, 27, and 31, 1999.

Hurricane Ridge Downhill Ski Area: When in full operation there are two rope tows and a Poma lift, for beginner to advanced skiers. Total vertical rise for the area is 665 feet. Weather permitting tows operate 10-4 weekends and holiday Mondays from Saturday, January 1, 2000 through March 26, 2000, as well as December 19, 24, 26, 27, and 31, 1999. A full day pass for all tows is \$16.00, half-day \$12.00. For rope tows only, full day and half day rates are \$12.00 and \$10.00. The area is operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club, whose members receive lift ticket discounts. For more information call (360) 417-0259 or see the web site at: <http://www.olympus.net/skiteam>.

Equipment Rentals: Ski rental packages include skis, boots, and poles. The Hurricane Ridge Ski Shop requires a driver's license to rent equipment; hours are listed above under Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Olympic Mountaineering requires a deposit for all rentals.

Location	Cross-Country	Downhill	Snowshoes
Hurricane Ridge (no telephone)	\$16.50 a day	\$21.00 a day	\$12.00 a day
Olympic Mountaineering (360) 452-0240	\$16.00 a day \$28.00 for 2-3 days	not available	\$12.00 a day \$24.00 for 2-3 days
	Snowboards & boots available for \$20 a day \$35 for 2-3 days		

Cross-Country and Telemark Ski Lessons: Olympic Mountaineering, (360) 452-0240, offers both group and private lessons.

Downhill Ski Lessons: Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club, (360) 417-0259, offers lessons for ages four and up starting the second week in January. Private lessons are available with 24 hours notice. Or see their website at: <http://www.olympus.net/skiteam>. A winter sports bus leaves Port Angeles at 9:30 a.m. and Hurricane Ridge at 4:00 p.m. for ski school. Round-trip is \$5.00. Call (360) 417-4555 for reservations.

National Park Campgrounds

Many park campgrounds close in winter. Even those usually open are sometimes closed by snow, flooding or downed trees. Some have only primitive camping in winter, with pit toilets, no running water, and no fees. Most campgrounds fully open in May. The fee at most campgrounds with facilities is \$10 a night, and \$12 at Kalaloch. Check at the Visitor Center for current status. The following campgrounds are usually open year-round. All other park campgrounds are closed in winter.

Quinault area: All primitive in winter: July Creek (walk-in only), Graves Creek, and North Fork campgrounds

Queets: Queets campground, primitive facilities year-round

Kalaloch: Kalaloch campground

Hoh: Hoh campground

Mora: Mora campground

Ozette: Ozette campground

Elwha area: Elwha campground (primitive facilities in winter)

Hurricane area: Heart O' the Hills campground, walk-in if it snows

Staircase: Staircase campground (primitive facilities in winter)

Roads

Some park roads regularly close in winter and others may be closed by weather conditions. **Deer Park** road is closed 2.6 miles below the campground and is not maintained below the closure. Obstruction Point road is closed from early October until snow melt (often into July). **Dosewallips** road is closed at the park boundary until April/May. Sol Duc road may close if it snows. The **Queets** Road and roads in the **Quinault** area are kept open if weather and conditions permit. See page four for Hurricane Ridge.

Lodging and Other Facilities in the Park

Lake Crescent Lodge: Roosevelt Cabins available weekends only through April 23, 2000. No food service available. Lodge will fully reopen with food service April 29, 2000, (360) 928-3211.

Log Cabin Resort: Closed until April 1, 2000, then open with lodging only. Food service and store open May 1, 2000, (360) 928-3325.

Fairholm Store: closed until April 29, 2000.

Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort: Closed until March 30, 2000 when hot pools only open Thursday-Sundays. Resort will fully open May 19, 2000.

Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center: open 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. daily, staffed weekends and other days if possible; daily beginning spring 2000.

Kalaloch Lodge: Lodging and food service open all year, (360) 962-2271.

Lodging and Food Service Outside the Park

Local communities provide lodging and food service all year. Contact local Chambers of Commerce or the North Olympic Peninsula Visitor and Convention Bureau 1-800-942-4042.

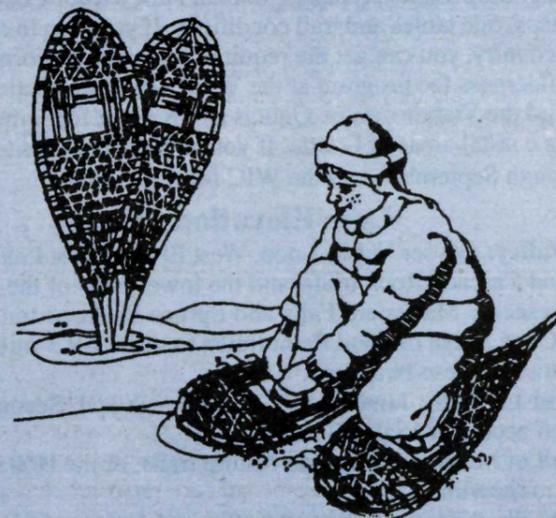
Snowshoe with a Ranger

Winter means many things to Olympic National Park visitors and resident plants and animals. It may be struggle and hardship, or rest and beauty. Join a Park Ranger at Hurricane Ridge to experience the contrasts and wonders of winter on snowshoes. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! The National Park Service provides snowshoes and instructions on this ranger-led program. A suggested \$2.00 per person donation helps cover snowshoe repairs and replacement.

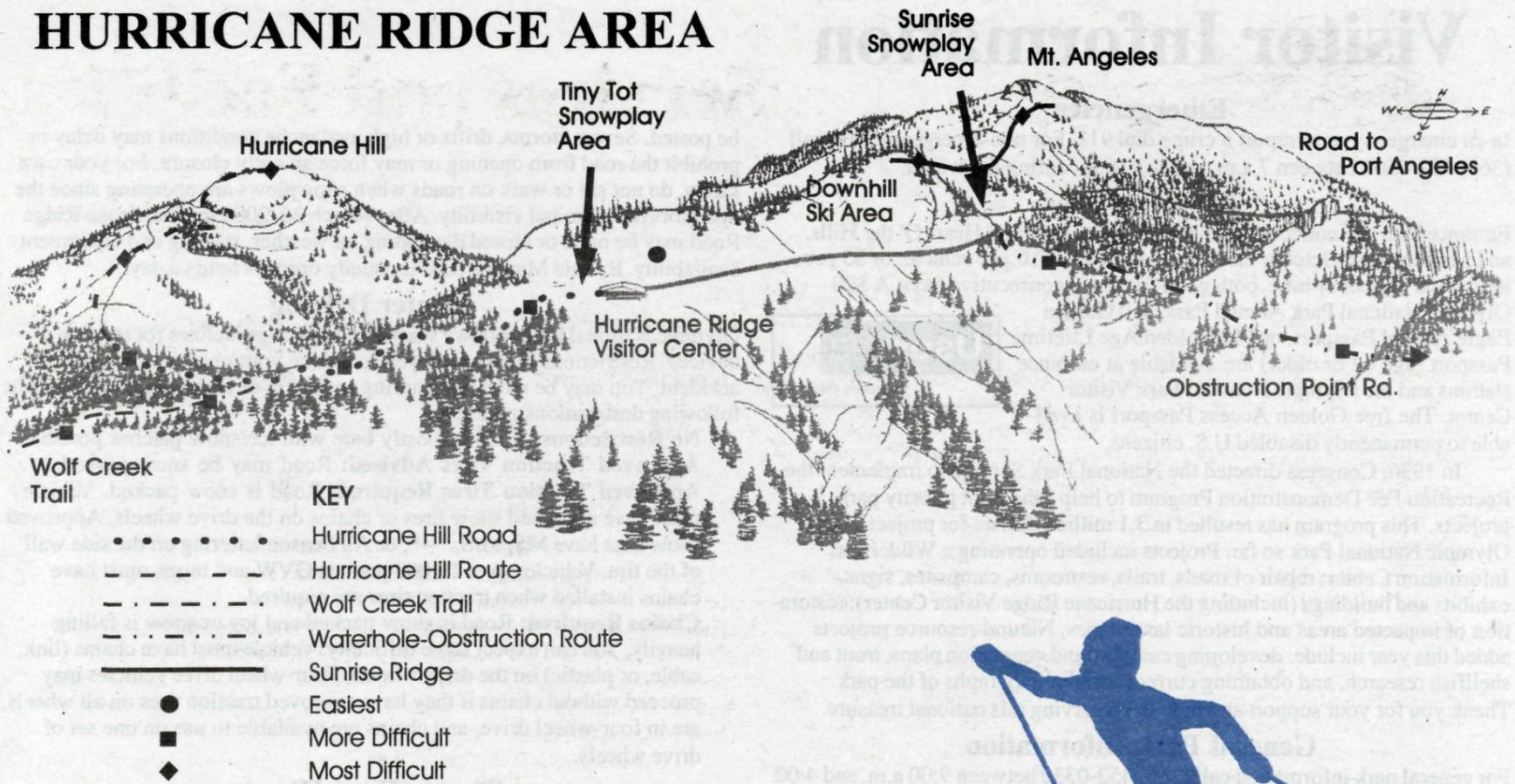
Participants should be prepared for the rigors of winter, including cold, snow, wind or even rain. Dress in layers so clothes can be added or removed as weather dictates. Wear warm, waterproof boots and bring hats, mittens, sunscreen and sunglasses. If the Hurricane Ridge Road is closed, all walks will be cancelled.

Snowshoe Walk: This easy to moderate walk is offered at 2:00 on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from December 17, 1999 through March 26, 2000. Walks will also be offered on Martin Luther King Jr. Day (January 17th) and President's Day (February 21st). The walk lasts 1.5 hours and covers one mile. Group size is limited to 30 people. Please sign up at the Hurricane Ridge information desk one hour before the walk.

Snowshoe Walks for Community Groups: Organizations like youth groups or schools can schedule a reserved snowshoe walk. Walks for groups of 7 to 30 people are offered at 10:30 a.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from December 17, 1999 through March 26, 2000. Walks last 1.5 hours and cover one mile. Reservations **MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE**. Call (360) 452-4501 ext. 236 for information or reservations.



HURRICANE RIDGE AREA



Cross-Country Skiing

With its easy access and over 20 miles of trails and routes, Hurricane Ridge is the focus of cross-country skiing in Olympic National Park. Skiers of all abilities can find something, although in this mountainous area, flat, easy beginner terrain is limited to above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Slopes and bowls in the area allow telemarkers to explore as well. None of the trails are groomed or marked; however, several follow unplowed roads or trails and can usually be distinguished. Before heading out on any trip remember to register at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center and check the current avalanche conditions. Below are descriptions of routes in the Hurricane Ridge area.

Easiest

The Meadows

The meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center offer gentle, easy terrain for anyone and excellent views in fair weather.

More Difficult

Hurricane Hill Road 1.5 miles one way
Beginning just west of the visitor center, this trail descends at first then follows the rolling, moderate ridgeline along the snow-covered Hurricane Hill Road. Experienced skiers can use this trail to reach the Hurricane Hill Route (see Most Difficult), as well as several bowls good for telemark skiing. In clear weather, there are good views to the north and south, especially at the trail's terminus at the Hurricane Hill trailhead. Much of this trail is sheltered by a subalpine forest, making it good in inclement weather.

Wolf Creek Trail 8 miles one way to Whiskey Bend
This route begins .5 miles west of the visitor center along the Hurricane Hill Road and follows an old roadbed through meadows and forests into the Elwha valley. There are several south-facing slopes near the beginning of the trail which are good for telemark skiing. The Wolf Creek Trail is seldom snow covered at lower elevations and skiers must often walk the last several miles. Check at the information desk for current conditions.

Waterhole 3.5 miles one way
Obstruction Point Road is 7.8 miles one way

A pullout along the Hurricane Ridge Road .5 miles below the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center marks the beginning of this route. After dropping down a steep but short hill, the trail follows the snow-covered Obstruction Point Road. The first 1.5 miles of the trail are relatively easy and sheltered by forest. Near Steeple Rock the trail crosses steep, exposed sidehills which may be icy and difficult to traverse. After passing Steeple Rock the trail flattens and meanders through subalpine forest.



Most Difficult

Hurricane Hill Route 1.5 miles one way
This route starts at the end of the Hurricane Hill Road and climbs 700 feet to the summit of Hurricane Hill. There are several very steep sidehills, so use extreme caution under icy or avalanche conditions. As an alternative, skiers can follow the ridge line. Be careful to stay off cornices. Under good conditions, advanced skiers will find this a rewarding trip with good views and some nice bowls on the north side of the ridge. Check with the information desk before venturing out.

Obstruction Point Road - Waterhole to the end 4.3 miles one way
This route begins at the midway point on the Obstruction Point Road. In the first .5 mile the route climbs steadily 900 feet to above timberline. In clear weather, views can be spectacular but steep sidehills and exposure to storms make this a difficult route. It is recommended only under good conditions for experienced skiers. Travel beyond Obstruction Point means entering areas with high avalanche potential.

Sunrise Ridge 3 miles one way
Beginning at the top of the intermediate rope tow on Alpine Hill, this route follows a narrow ridge to slopes on the south side of Mount Angeles. The path crosses avalanche prone areas at several points and is not recommended under unstable conditions. Be especially careful to stay off cornices along the ridge. Several nice telemarking slopes are found off the east side of the ridge and lead to the Hurricane Ridge Road.

Other Areas

The Deer Park area is another alternative for exploring the high country of Olympic National Park in winter. Four-wheel drive vehicles are recommended for winter travel on this primitive road. The road is not maintained in the winter and is closed to all motorized vehicles 2.6 miles below the Deer Park Campground. The snow-covered road is a good ski for advanced skiers. Depending on snow conditions, skiers may have to hike to reach snow.

For information on other ski tours on the Olympic Peninsula, refer to *Cross-Country Ski Tours: Washington's South Cascades and Olympics*, Second Edition, by Tom Kirkendall and Vicky Spring.

Visitor Information

Emergencies

In an emergency or to report a crime dial 911. For non-emergency help call (360) 452-4501 between 7 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. during the winter.

Entrance Fees

Entrance fees are collected year-round at the Hoh and Heart O' the Hills, and May through October elsewhere. Fees are: \$10 per vehicle, or \$5 per individual on foot or bike, both good for seven consecutive days. A \$20 Olympic National Park Annual Pass, \$50 Golden Eagle Annual Passport, or \$10 Golden Age Lifetime Passport (age 62 or older) are available at entrance stations and the Olympic National Park Visitor Center. The free Golden Access Passport is available to permanently disabled U.S. citizens.



In 1996, Congress directed the National Park Service to implement the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program to help fund high priority park projects. This program has resulted in 3.1 million dollars for projects at Olympic National Park so far. Projects included operating a Wilderness Information Center; repair of roads, trails, restrooms, campsites, signs, exhibits and buildings (including the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center); restoration of impacted areas and historic landscapes. Natural resource projects added this year include: developing campground vegetation plans, trout and shellfish research, and obtaining current aerial photographs of the park. Thank you for your support and help in preserving this national treasure.

General Park Information

For general park information call (360) 452-0330 between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or in the Port Angeles area tune your radio to 530 AM; Lake Crescent or Quinault areas tune to 1610 AM. The park's Wilderness Information Center (360) 452-0300, with intermittent hours in winter, has wilderness permit and fee information for backcountry users. Another source of information is the park's website: <http://www.nps.gov/olym>.

Pets are not allowed on trails, unplowed roads or in public buildings. They must be on a leash in parking areas or campgrounds. Please do not feed any park wildlife. It is illegal, harmful to the animal and hazardous to you. Violators are subject to a \$100 fine.

Hurricane Ridge Road Opening

Beginning December 17, 1999 the Hurricane Ridge Road should be open Fridays through Sundays and Monday holidays, as well as daily from December 17 through January 2, 1999, weather permitting. It may be open other days as well, if staffing and conditions allow. The road usually opens at 9:00 a.m., but times vary depending on conditions. At 4:00 p.m. it is closed to uphill traffic at Heart O' the Hills, five miles above Port Angeles. It is locked to all traffic by 6:00 p.m. As days lengthen in spring, a later closing time will

be posted. Severe storms, drifts or high avalanche conditions may delay or prohibit the road from opening or may force an early closure. For your own safety, do not ski or walk on roads when snowplows are operating since the operators have limited visibility. After March 26, 2000 the Hurricane Ridge Road may be open or closed depending on weather, staffing and equipment availability. By mid May the road is usually open 24 hours a day.

Winter Driving

Olympic National Park follows Washington State guidelines for traction devices. Restrictions must be obeyed to reduce your chance of having an accident. You may be cited for ignoring snow tire or chain requirements. The following designations are used:

- No Restrictions:** Road is mostly bare with ice/snow patches possible.
- Approved Traction Tires Advised:** Road may be snow-packed.
- Approved Traction Tires Required:** Road is snow-packed. Vehicle must have approved snow tires or chains on the drive wheels. Approved snow tires have MS, M/S, *--*, or All Season lettering on the side wall of the tire. Vehicles over 10,000 pounds GVW and buses must have chains installed when traction tires are required.
- Chains Required:** Road is snow-packed and icy or snow is falling heavily. You can expect some difficulty. Vehicle must have chains (link, cable, or plastic) on the drive wheels. Four-wheel drive vehicles may proceed without chains if they have approved traction tires on all wheels, are in four-wheel drive, and chains are available to use on one set of drive wheels.

Tips to Keep Warm

The wet snow, wind and cold of the Olympic Mountains can easily rob a body's warmth. Excessive loss of body heat, called "hypothermia," often helps cause outdoor accidents. Hypothermia can progress from uncontrolled shivering to loss of consciousness and death. It is more easily prevented than treated. For your safety here are tips to help you avoid hypothermia and another winter hazard, frostbite:

- ❖ Wear wool or synthetics like pile or polypropylene. They insulate even when wet. Avoid cotton clothing.
- ❖ Avoid wind. Wind robs your body of more heat at any temperature.
- ❖ Wear a hat! Over half of your body's heat is lost through your head.
- ❖ Take breaks and snack frequently to maintain warmth and energy.
- ❖ Dress warmly and in layers to shed or add more as needed.
- ❖ Stay dry. Moisture robs your body of heat.

Snow Play

Snow sliding is a favorite pastime for some, but it is also one of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. **Serious injuries, even permanent disability or fatalities, have occurred when people collided with trees or other sliders.** For your safety, sliding is permitted only in designated areas. The Sunrise Family Snow Play Area, one mile below the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center, will be managed as a children's and family sliding area. The Tiny Tot Snow Play Area, west of the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center beyond the parking lot, will be managed for very young children only.

If conditions become too dangerous or there is inadequate staff to safely manage the sliding areas, they will be closed. The snow play areas at Hurricane Ridge are being evaluated. The future of this program will depend on a number of factors including safety and funding. The Sunrise area is supervised only on weekends and holidays from late December to mid March. For the safety of participants, hard runner sleds or wooden toboggans are not permitted. Compressed air for inflating inner tubes is not available. To be as safe as possible, please observe the following rules:

- ❖ Slide only in the designated Sunrise or Tiny Tots Snow Play areas. Sliding is not allowed anywhere else along the Hurricane Ridge road.
- ❖ For your safety, be sure the run is clear before starting your slide. Collisions can result in serious injury.
- ❖ Only go one tube at a time and don't put more than one person on a tube.
- ❖ At the Sunrise Family Snow Play Area park only on the uphill side of the road. Be careful getting out of your car as the road may be icy and cars may not be able to stop.
- ❖ Follow directions of snow play area staff, and pay attention to all area signs. If you don't, you can be ejected from the snow play area.
- ❖ Pets, snowboards and skis are not allowed in the snow play areas.



Avalanche!

The Olympic Mountains' steep slopes, heavy snowfall and high winds create ideal conditions for avalanches. Before heading out, check with the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center or call (206) 526-6677 for current conditions. The four hazard levels are low, moderate, high and extreme. Even under low hazard conditions avalanches can occur on some slopes. With extreme conditions backcountry travel should be avoided. The survival rate for avalanche victims is extremely slim. Only 50 percent survive after 30 minutes of burial. If you or a group member are caught in an avalanche, take these steps in your rescue attempt:

- Ensure the safety of survivors.
- Mark where victims were caught and last seen.
- Quickly search downslope from the last seen points for clues.
- Search the avalanche debris below the last seen points by probing in a grid pattern with probes, ski tails or poles.
- Keep searching! The victim could be inches away from your boots.
- Send any extra person for help.
- If you are caught, make swimming motions and try to keep yourself on top of the snow. As the snow begins to slow down, push the snow away from your face to create an air pocket.

