

## A Winter Challenge

**F**erocious storms, white-out conditions, towering snow drifts and avalanche risk aren't common in most of our lives. But for Olympic National Park's road crew, it's all part of the job. Every winter morning, plow and sand truck operators get up before dawn and head up the Hurricane Ridge Road to confront whatever the overnight weather delivered. When you drive the cleared, sanded road hours later, it can be hard to imagine their task.

### Jekyll and Hyde Mornings

Checking satellite images and avalanche forecasts helps the crew know what to expect and if it's safe to plow that day. If Port Angeles is snowy, it means a lot of plowing just to get to the lower slopes. But a calm, starry night might brighten to a clear, sparkling morning.

"When you're up there by yourself in the still and quiet with fresh snow, it's beautiful," said Les Peterson, a park heavy equipment operator who has been plowing here for 12 years.

On the other hand, "When it's pitch black out and snowing heavily, it can be hypnotizing," he added. Blizzards create white-out conditions, adding stress as crews concentrate to stay on the road. Peterson recalled a sudden storm with visibility so bad a ranger walked in front of his plow to guide it down to safety.

Other days, plowing off the fresh snow reveals a sheet of ice. "It's like you're on a skating rink," Peterson explained. Even a 40,000 pound plow with chains can slide.

With moderate snow and little wind, the 3-person crew with two huge rotary blowers, a grader and a sand truck can clear the upper road in three to four hours. If Hurricane Ridge lives up to its name, creating 20-foot drifts overnight, it can take four to five hours to plow a half mile (see March 2011 photo above).



### Wear and Tear

Grinding through huge drifts burns fuel—up to 500 gallons on a challenging day—and takes a toll on equipment. Shear pins anchoring rotating plow blades break, hydraulic hoses fail, sluggish diesel engines fail to start, and the sand truck's spreader freezes.

But if all goes well, the crew can feel a sense of accomplishment in clearing the snow, laying down the sand and preparing the road for the snowshoers, skiers and boarders anxious to safely start their day high up in the Olympic Mountains.



## Underwater Drama at the Hoh

**S**pring-fed Taft Creek braids around the Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center. For centuries migrating salmon have left the sea and returned to the Hoh River and tributaries like Taft Creek to mate, lay eggs, then die. Myriad creatures—from mice to bears—feed on the carcasses. The salmon deliver life-critical nutrients from the ocean to nourish wildlife, and even the forest.

Road construction affected this ageless journey, but a more fish-friendly culvert installed in the early 1990s helped Taft Creek. Some years, over 2,000 coho complete their life cycle in this small creek. Tracking 2010 returns, Hoh tribal fisheries biologist Mario Reyes said, "There are so many fish, at this point I can't keep count anymore, and I think that's good news for everybody."

If you visit the Hoh Rain Forest from mid-December into January, quietly peer into Taft Creek. You could be rewarded with more than a reflection of the rare temperate rain forest, its towering trees dripping with mosses. You might spot red-flanked coho jostling in the stream or river otters struggling to snag large salmon. Splashing from these aquatic battles can guide you to their location. Perhaps you'll witness who wins. But for all of your winter experiences in the Hoh, be sure to bring a raincoat!



A winter visit to Olympic National Park's mountains, coast and forest can be magical, but it takes planning as fewer services and facilities are available. Roads and facilities normally open may close due to snow, high water, downed trees or reduced staffing. Call (360) 565-3131 for road and weather updates or see road status at [www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/current-conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/current-conditions.htm).

### Emergencies

Dial 911 in an emergency or to report a crime. For non-emergency help call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 between 7 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. or (360) 417-2459 after hours.

### Entrance and other Recreation Fees

Entrance fees apply year-round in main spur road areas (Elwha, Heart O' the Hills, Hoh, Ozette, Sol Duc, Staircase). A single visit receipt (1-7 days) is \$15 per private vehicle or \$5 per person (age 16+) entering by bus, bike or foot. The Olympic National Park Annual Pass is \$30.

The America the Beautiful - National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Annual Pass is \$80. This pass is honored for entrance or standard amenity fees in national park, national forest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Land Management lands. A \$10 lifetime pass for U.S. seniors (age 62+) and a free lifetime access pass for those with permanent disabilities are also available. Additional recreation fees apply for overnight camping permits. The Senior and Access passes provide a 50% discount on these fees.

Park fees provide critical funding for many projects such as repair of roads, trails, and buildings; printing brochures like the park map and fishing regulations; and providing staff at entrance station and wilderness permit locations. This year fees will be used to replace the bridge on the Staircase Rapids Loop Trail. Your support of the fee program is very important. Thank you!

### General Park Information

For park information see the park website: [www.nps.gov/olymp](http://www.nps.gov/olymp) or call (360) 565-3130. Park information, maps, wilderness permits, bear canisters and information on wilderness fees are available year-round at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center/Wilderness Information Center. The park is developing an OnCell audio information system this winter. To access it call (360) 406-5056 and look for signs indicating additional stops as they become available.

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

### Port Angeles Area

**Olympic National Park Visitor Center & Wilderness Information Center:** Open 9-4 daily (except Thanksgiving and Christmas) with exhibits, movie, map and book sales and staff to help you plan a visit. Wilderness camping, hiking and permit information, as well as bear canisters, are also available. Most ranger stations do not have regular winter hours; please call (360) 565-3130 for general park information, (360) 565-3100 for wilderness trip planning.

### Hurricane Ridge Road

Call (360) 565-3131 for a 24-hour recording. For the winter season, current conditions are also updated daily at [www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/hurricane-ridge-current-conditions.htm](http://www.nps.gov/olymp/planyourvisit/hurricane-ridge-current-conditions.htm). Follow us on twitter at: [twitter.com/HRWinterAccess](https://twitter.com/HRWinterAccess).

**Shuttle Service:** All Points Charters and Tours will offer two round trips to Hurricane Ridge Wednesday through Sunday plus holiday Mondays (January 2, 16, and February 20), beginning November 26, 2011 through April 1, 2012. Round trip fare is \$20 (park entrance fees are not included). Vans will depart the Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, 121 E.

# Services and Facilities

Railroad Ave. at 9:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. (with a pickup at the Vern Burton Center, 308 E. Fourth) and return at 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Reservations are strongly recommended at (360) 460-7131 or [tours@goallpoints.com](mailto:tours@goallpoints.com).

**To improve public safety, all vehicles (including 4WD) traveling above Heart O' the Hills on the Hurricane Ridge Road between November 15 and April 1 must carry tire chains.** The road is scheduled to be open daily, weather permitting, from November 25, 2011 through April 1, 2012 (except Christmas). The road usually opens at 9:00 a.m., but times vary depending on conditions. At 4:00 p.m. the road is closed to uphill traffic at Heart O' the Hills, five miles above Port Angeles. As days lengthen in spring, the road closes later. The Ridge parking lot closes at sunset and vehicles must be below Heart O' the Hills by dusk (1/2 hour after sunset).

**Storms, high winds, drifts or high avalanche conditions may delay or prevent road opening, or force an early closure.** To minimize closures due to a full parking lot, please carpool and park closely to other vehicles at Hurricane Ridge. For safety, do not ski or walk on roads if plows are working since the operators have limited visibility. Also for safety, vehicle passengers must be inside vehicles or fully inside a pick-up truck bed. After April 1 the Hurricane Ridge Road may open as weather, staffing and road conditions allow. By early May the road is usually open 24 hours a day.

### Hurricane Ridge Area

**Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center:** Usually open 9:30-5 when the road is open, with restrooms, exhibits, movie and warming area. A foyer warming area and restroom are open 24 hours a day. An information desk is staffed daily December 1, 2011 through April 1, 2012 (except Christmas).

**Hurricane Ridge Snack Bar & Rental Shop:** December 17, 2011 to March 25, 2012, food and ski/snowshoe rentals will be available 10-4 weekends, holiday Mondays, and December 26 to January 2. Closed Christmas.

**Hurricane Ridge Downhill Ski Area:** When fully operating there are two rope tows and a Poma lift for beginner to advanced skiers. Weather and snow permitting, tows operate 10-4 weekends from December 3, 2011 through April 1, 2012, as well as December 30, January 2 and 16, and February 20. Closed December 24 and 25. There may be additional Christmas holiday dates depending on staff availability. A full day pass for all tows is \$32.00, half day \$30.00. For rope tows only, full day and half day rates are \$24.00 and \$22.00. The lifts are operated by the Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club. For more information see [www.hurricaneridge.com](http://www.hurricaneridge.com) or call (360) 457-2879 (messages only). Cross country skiers using the ski area must use ski leashes.



**Equipment Rentals:** Packages include skis, boots and poles. Hurricane Ridge Ski Shop requires a driver's license to rent equipment.

Location	Cross-Country	Downhill	Snowshoes
Hurricane Ridge (no phone)	\$32/day	\$37/day \$42/day w/ helmet	\$17/day \$22 w/poles
<b>In Port Angeles:</b> Brown's Outdoor (360) 457-4150	none	none	\$15/day (\$7/extra day) \$5/day for poles
North by Northwest Surf Co. (360) 452-5144	Snowboards & boots \$30/day \$25/additional day		

**Downhill Skiing/Snowboard Lessons:** Hurricane Ridge Winter Sports Club offers lessons for ages four and up starting January 14, 2012. Private lessons are available with 24 hours notice. For more ski school information call (360) 457-2879 (messages only) or see [www.hurricaneridge.com](http://www.hurricaneridge.com).

### National Park Campgrounds

The following park campgrounds are closed this winter: Altair, Deer Park, Fairholme and South Beach. Others may be closed by snow, storms, high winds, flooding or downed trees. Several have primitive winter camping with pit toilets, no running water and no fees. Most campgrounds fully open in April (see [www.nps.gov/olymp](http://www.nps.gov/olymp) for specific dates). Fees at most campgrounds with facilities are \$12 a night, but range from \$10 to 18 depending on facilities and season. Check at the Visitor Center or call (360) 565-3131 for current status. The following campgrounds usually have some loops open year-round.

- Quinault:** North Fork (primitive year-round); Graves Creek (primitive in winter)
- Kalaloch:** Kalaloch Campground. Reservations can be made for Kalaloch campsites for June 20 through Labor Day by calling (877) 444-6777 or [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) no more than 6 months ahead.
- Hoh:** Hoh Campground
- Mora:** Mora Campground
- Ozette:** Ozette Campground (primitive in winter)
- Elwha area:** Elwha Campground only (primitive in winter)
- Hurricane area:** Heart O' the Hills Campground (walk-in if it snows)
- Staircase:** Staircase Campground (primitive in winter)



### Roads

Some park roads regularly close in winter and others may be closed temporarily by weather. Call (360) 565-3131 for current conditions. *Deer Park Road* is closed at the park boundary (9 miles from Highway 101, 2,000 feet elevation) from mid October until late May, depending on snow. *Obstruction Point Road* is closed mid October until late June, depending on snow. *Dosewallips Road* is

washed out 4 miles from the park boundary. *Sol Duc Road* is closed for major repairs until late March 2012. Roads in the *Staircase, Hoh, Mora, Ozette, Queets* and *Quinault* areas are open year-round weather permitting. In the *Elwha* valley, the *Olympic Hot Springs Road* is closed beyond Altair Campground for Glines Canyon Dam removal.

### Other Park Facilities

**Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center:** Open 10-4 Friday through Sunday through April 30, 2012 (except Christmas); daily starting May 1, 2012. Also open Monday and Tuesday December 19, 20, 26, 27, 2011. Exhibits, information, wilderness permits, bear cans and book sales, (360) 374-6925.

**Olympic National Park/Forest Recreation Information Center in Forks:** Open 10-4 (except lunch) Friday through Sunday through December 24, and March 16 to June 24, 2012 (closed between). Open daily starting June 25, 2012. Information, wilderness permits, bear cans and books, (360) 374-7566.

### Lodging in the Park

**Lake Crescent Lodge:** Roosevelt Cabins open weekends in winter (no food service). Lodge fully open May 3 to October 31, 2012 with lodging and food service, (360) 928-3211, [www.olympicnationalparks.com](http://www.olympicnationalparks.com).

**Log Cabin Resort:** Closed in winter. Summer season to be determined.

**Fairholme Store:** Closed in winter. Open May 25 to September 3, 2012.

**Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort:** Closed in winter. Pools, cabins, restaurant and RV park open March 29 to October 14, 2012, (360) 327-3583, [www.olympicnationalparks.com](http://www.olympicnationalparks.com).

**Kalaloch Lodge:** Lodging and food service open all year, (360) 962-2271, [www.olympicnationalparks.com](http://www.olympicnationalparks.com).

### Lodging and Food Service Outside the Park

Local communities provide lodging and food service all year. Contact local Chambers of Commerce or the Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau at 1-800-942-4042, [www.olympicpeninsula.org](http://www.olympicpeninsula.org).

# Snowshoe with a Ranger

Join a park ranger at Hurricane Ridge to experience the 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 \$5.00 donation per participant helps the park provide these snowshoe walks and funds snowshoe repair and replacement.

Participants should be prepared for winter weather including cold, snow, wind or even rain. Dress in layers, wear warm, waterproof boots and bring hats, mittens, sunscreen and sunglasses. If the road is closed, walks are cancelled.

**Snowshoe Walk:** Snow permitting, this easy to moderate walk is offered at 2:00 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Monday holidays (January 2 and 16, and February 20, 2012) from December 10, 2011 through April 1, 2012. The walk lasts 1.5 hours and covers less than a mile. Group size is limited to 30 people. Sign up starts at the Hurricane Ridge information desk 30 minutes before the walk.

**Snowshoe Walks for Community Groups:** Clubs, 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, Sundays and holiday Mondays (January 2 and 16, and February 20) from December 17, 2011 through April 1, 2012. Walks last 1.5 hours and cover less than a mile. Reservations **MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE** by calling (360) 565-3136.



### Perspectives

Learn more about your park at this free winter program series, sponsored by Olympic National Park, Friends of Olympic National Park and Discover Your Northwest. Programs are 7 p.m. the second Tuesday of the month at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center, 3002 Mt. Angeles Road, Port Angeles.

**December 13 – Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for our Time:** Olympic National Forest is cosponsoring this film about legendary environmentalist Aldo Leopold, tracing how he shaped and influenced the modern environmental movement and his continuing relevance today.

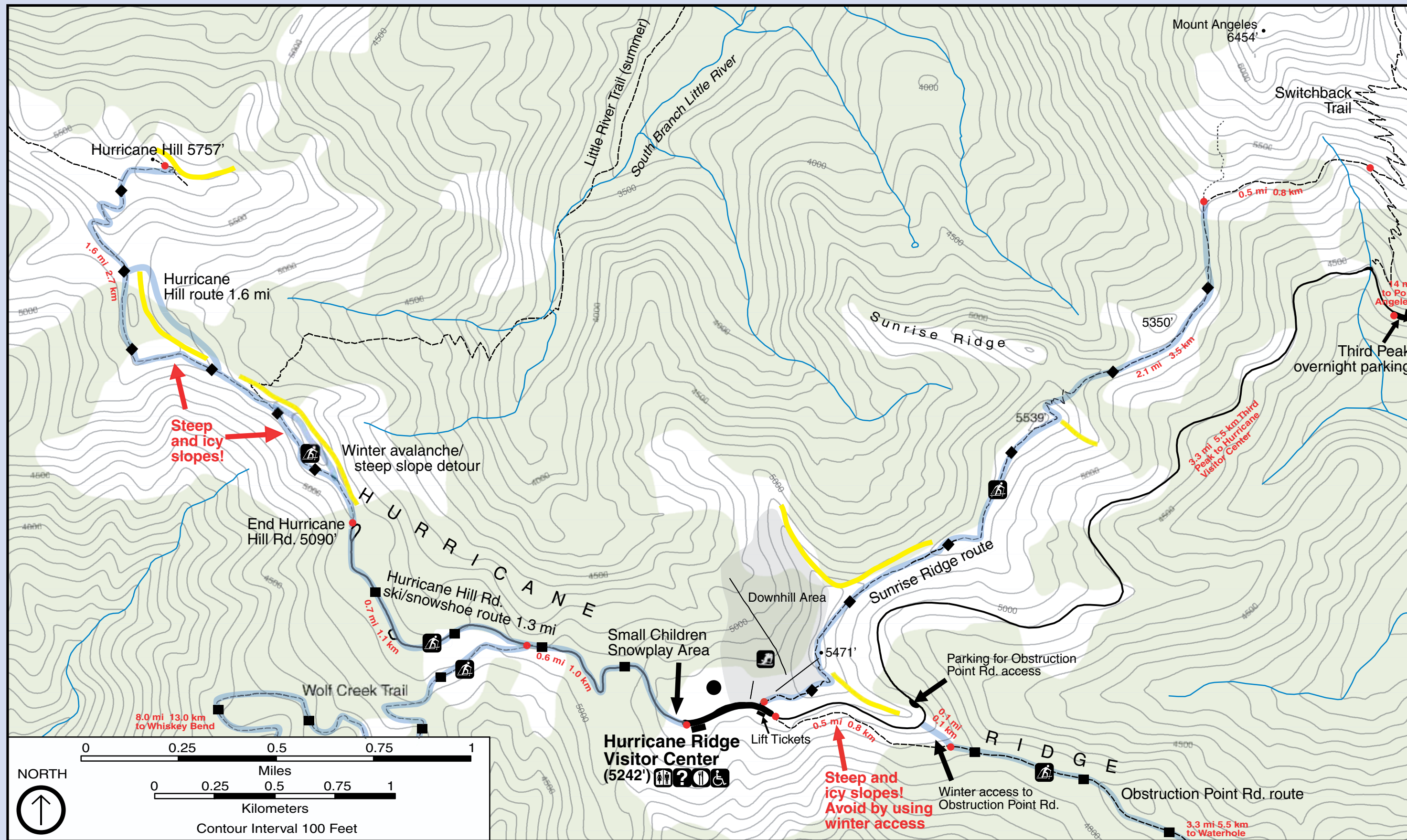
**January 10 – Olympic Glaciers: Past, Present, Future:** Join Olympic National Park's Bill Baccus to learn about Olympic's glaciers and how new research and repeat photography are revealing a dramatic retreat of these critical resources in our warming climate.

**February 14 – Olympic Elk: Monitoring a Park Icon:** Wildlife biologists Patti Happe and Kurt Jenkins will reveal how improving technology is adding to our understanding of these magnificent creatures, whose preservation was central to the establishment of Olympic National Park.

**March 13 – Coastal Response to Elwha Dam Removal: Present and Future:** John Warwick of the U.S. Geological Survey is researching how the river delta, former shellfish beds and habitat in the Strait of Juan de Fuca will respond to restoration of historic sediment flows after dam removal.

**April 10 – Cabins and Campfires: A Century of Recreation on the Upper Elwha:** Retrace the Elwha valley's past with historian Russell Dalton, who has collected stories and images of the many generations of hunters, anglers, explorers and homesteaders who traveled through or lived in the area.

# Hurricane Ridge Area in Winter



### Legend

- Ski/snowshoe routes (unmarked & ungroomed)
- Easiest
- More difficult
- ◆ Most difficult
- Summer trails
- Prevailing wind cornice areas (locations vary with wind patterns)
- Downhill ski area boundary
- 1.0 mi 1.6 km ● Distance between points

**!** Before heading out, check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current avalanche conditions. Wear avalanche beacons, carry a probe, snow shovel and the 10 essentials (see page 8), and avoid avalanche terrain such as cornices, gullies and steep lee slopes.

# Cross-Country Skiing & Snowshoeing

With its easy access and 15 to 20 miles of routes, Hurricane Ridge is the focus of cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in Olympic National Park. Though winter explorers of all abilities can enjoy the area, flat, easy, beginner ski terrain is limited to the meadows above the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Backcountry skiers can explore several slopes and bowls in the area. No trails are groomed or marked; however, two routes use unplowed roads which can usually be navigated.

**NOTE FOR SNOWSHOERS, WALKERS AND SNOWBOARDERS:** Skiers, walkers, snowshoers and snowboarders can safely share this area. Snowshoers, walkers and snowboarders, please stay to one side to avoid damaging ski tracks on trails, and do not snowshoe or walk through the downhill ski area.

**Before heading out on any trip remember to register at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center and check 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 everyone and excellent views in fair weather. Because the meadows are exposed to the wind, they are sometimes icy or wind packed.

## ■ More Difficult

### Hurricane Hill Road

**1.3 miles one way**

Beginning just west of the visitor center, this trail first descends steeply, then follows the rolling, moderate ridgeline along the snow-covered Hurricane Hill Road. Experienced skiers can use this trail to reach the Hurricane Hill Road (see Most Difficult), as well as several bowls for backcountry 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 ridgeline trail is sheltered by a subalpine forest, making it a good choice in windy, inclement weather or when there is elevated avalanche hazard.

### Wolf Creek Trail

**8 miles one way to Whiskey Bend**

This route begins 0.6 miles west of the visitor center along the unplowed Hurricane Hill Road (see above) and descends through meadows and forests into the Elwha valley. There are several south-facing slopes near the beginning which are good for backcountry 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.



**Cross country skier on the Hurricane Hill Road ski route, with Mount Angeles in the background.**

### Obstruction Point Road: To Waterhole

**3.4 miles one way**

Rather than descend the exposed, steep, often drifted and icy route of the summer Obstruction Point Road, the winter route starts at the sharp curve along the Hurricane Ridge Road, 0.5 miles below the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center. Park in the pull-off below the curve, cross to the east side of the road and walk the snow bank back uphill to the curve. After descending a steep but short meadow, the route intersects and follows the unplowed Obstruction Point Road. The first 1.5 miles are relatively easy and sheltered by forest. Near Steeple Rock the route crosses steep, exposed slopes which may be icy and difficult to traverse. After Steeple Rock the trail flattens and meanders through subalpine forest. Beyond Waterhole, it climbs steeply (see below).

## ◆ Most Difficult

### Hurricane Hill Route

**1.6 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 slopes. Check with the information desk before venturing out.

### Obstruction Point Road: Waterhole to the end

**4.3 miles one way**

(Obstruction Point Road is 7.8 miles one way)

This route begins at the midway point on the unplowed Obstruction Point Road (see description above for the first 3.4 miles to Waterhole). After Waterhole, the route gains 900 feet, climbing steadily for 0.5 miles to open slopes on Eagle Point. 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 can entail steep terrain with high avalanche potential.

### Sunrise Ridge

**2.1 miles one way**

Begin this route by crossing below the intermediate rope tow and climbing to the right of the ski hill (right of the trees). From the top of Alpine Hill, above the downhill ski slope, this route follows a narrow ridge toward the south side of Mount Angeles. There are several avalanche prone areas along the way, so check conditions and use caution under unstable conditions. Be especially careful to stay off cornices that form along the ridge and side ridges. Several nice slopes on the east side descend to the Hurricane Ridge Road.

## Other Areas

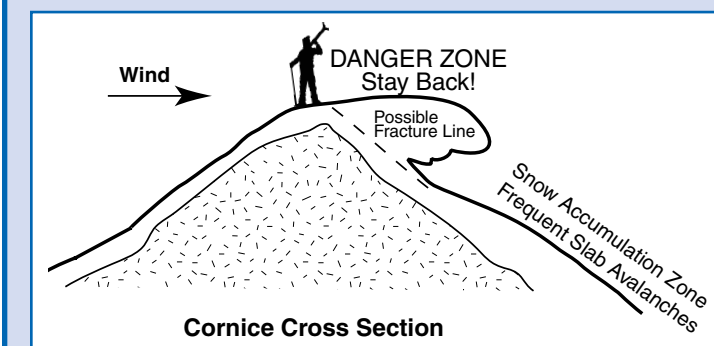
Depending on the snow level, other roads and trails in both the park and in Olympic National Forest may be snow-covered. Check at the visitor center for current snow levels. The Deer Park Road may provide skiing or snowshoeing opportunities. For safety, this steep, narrow road is closed at the park boundary, 9 miles from Highway 101, at about 2,000 feet elevation. The road climbs steadily about 9 more miles from the park boundary up to Blue Mountain. If the snow level is low enough, the road may be skiable from the boundary; but users usually need to hike several miles before reaching snow.

For other routes on the Olympic Peninsula, refer to *100 Best Cross-Country Ski Trails in Washington*, by Tom Kirkendall and Vicky Spring or *Snowshoe Routes: Washington* by Dan Nelson.

## Avalanche!

Olympic Mountain terrain and weather create ideal conditions for avalanches. Before heading out, call the Northwest Avalanche Center (206) 526-6677, [www.nwac.us](http://www.nwac.us), and check at the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center for current conditions. Wear beacons and carry a probe and snow shovel. The hazard levels range from low to extreme. Even in low hazard conditions avalanches can occur on some slopes. With extreme conditions backcountry travel should be avoided. Certain terrain features, for example steep gullies that funnel snow, unstable cornices (see below), or dark cliff faces on warm spring days, can increase avalanche hazard. The survival rate for avalanche victims is extremely low. 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 an 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.



**Overhanging shelves of snow called cornices form on the lee side of windblown ridges. They can be unstable, breaking off far from the snow edge. Stay back from ridge lines to avoid traveling on unsupported cornices.**



**Avalanche on a northeast slope along the ridge between Hurricane and Mount Angeles. NPS photo by Dave Turner.**

## Hey Kids!

Hurricane Ridge is a fun place to visit in the winter but would you want to live there? Nearly 70 years ago, Herb Crisler, a famous film maker, and his wife spent a winter in the old Hurricane Hill lookout (right). Imagine their experience...



- ❄️ **How did they travel?** Hurricane Ridge receives an average of 32 feet of snow each winter. If your house were up in the mountains, it could be buried! With such deep snow, snowshoes or cross-country skis are essential for efficient travel.
- ❄️ **Batten down the hatches!** Winter storms with hurricane force winds (over 73 mi/118 km per hour) sometimes hit Hurricane Ridge. Last winter, gusts over 100 mph were recorded! Notice the cable anchoring the lookout in the photograph.
- ❄️ **Who are your neighbors?** Despite what we might consider pretty tough conditions, Herb and his wife weren't alone on the mountain that winter. Look for tracks of snowshoe hares, squirrels, weasels, coyotes and more on your visit. The snow always has stories to tell!
- ❄️ **Unexpected dangers!** At 5,242 feet elevation there's less atmosphere between us and the sun, so ultraviolet radiation levels can be quite high. While sunscreen didn't exist in Herb's days, sunglasses and sunscreen are important parts of your winter survival kit!

## Snow Play

Snow sliding is a favorite pastime for some, but it has also been one of the most dangerous activities at Hurricane Ridge. **Serious injuries, even permanent disabilities occurred when people collided with trees, other sliders, or lost control and ended up in the road.** For your safety, sliding is permitted only in the Small Children's Snowplay near the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center where children eight and under may slide. **The Sunrise snowplay area was closed in 2009 due to hazards associated with the site.** These included:

- ❄️ The site's location next to the road, which led to children and adults actually sliding into the road.
- ❄️ The lack of parking, which resulted in both vehicles and pedestrians using the road's travel lanes for parking and walking, creating extremely hazardous conditions during the icy and snowy winter months.
- ❄️ Plowing and sanding operations were impossible when people and vehicles were along or in the road.

**If conditions are too icy to allow safe sliding at the Small Children's area, that area will be closed.**

For the safety of participants, metal or hard plastic runner sleds and 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 Small Children's Snow Play area. **Sliding is not allowed anywhere else in the Hurricane area or along the Hurricane Ridge Road.**
- ❄️ For your safety, be sure the path is clear before starting your slide. Collisions can result in injuries. Watch for cross-country skiers and snowshoers crossing below the area.
- ❄️ Descend one tube at a time and do not put more than one person on a tube.



# Exploring Olympic in Winter

Olympic is indeed a park for all seasons. In fact, hikers can experience several seasons in one outing. But hikers ready for unpredictable weather can experience the beauty and solitude of winter.

It can get very wet here. Snow and rain can swell streams overnight, making crossings treacherous and washing out trails. Camp well above flood plains. Boardwalks and bridges are very slippery when wet or icy. On the coast, storms push tides higher, creating huge waves (see photo of



Rialto Beach to right) that easily move beach logs or trap hikers on rocks. Winter storms and winds often leave behind many downed trees that may block trails. Be prepared, always carry the 10 essentials, even for short hikes. They are: **extra clothing, extra food and water, map, compass, flashlight, knife, sunglasses, matches, fire starter/candle, first aid kit.**

But don't let winter chase you inside! There are always some options for winter and spring exploration. Stop at the Olympic National Park Visitor Center in Port Angeles for maps, tide tables and trail condition reports or check the park website: [www.nps.gov/olym](http://www.nps.gov/olym). For you and your pet's safety, pets are not allowed on trails in the park. If you plan to camp overnight in the park's wilderness, you can get the required permit, bear canisters and information on wilderness fees at the Wilderness Information Center (WIC) in the Visitor Center. May through September some popular spots have limits, including parts of the coast. Call the WIC (360) 565-3100 for details or reservations. Below are options for winter hikes that are often accessible, depending on the snow level and storm damage.

## Low-Elevation Hiking

**Elwha Valley:** Geysir Valley Loop, West Elwha, Griff Creek, Cascade Rock trails and lower parts of the Elwha River trail.

**Lake Crescent:** Marymere Falls and Spruce Railroad trails.

**Ozette:** Cape Alava or Sand Point trails.

**Mora and La Push:** James Pond, Second, Third and Rialto Beaches.

**Kalaloch:** Short trails to beaches, beach hikes and the forest nature trail.

**Hoh:** Hall of Mosses and Spruce Nature trails, or lower Hoh River trail.

**Quinault:** Nature trails on both sides of the lake, Irely Lake and Cascading Terraces trails, lower stretches of the North Fork and Graves Creek trails.

## High Country Trips

Snow camping requires a lot of preparation and many safety precautions, but offers a 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. Be prepared!

**Hurricane Ridge** offers the easiest access to winter high country. For safety, please observe the following rules:

- \* **Overnight campers must get a permit at the WIC, and register and check with a ranger at Hurricane Ridge for camping and parking locations.**
- \* If a storm forces a road closure, you may need to install tire chains and have a shovel in case of a snowy descent. Use caution as plow operators may not see you! If you are locked in uphill from the gate, call (360) 565-3000 ext. 0 (before 5:30 p.m.) or (360) 417-2459 after hours.
- \* **Because of the risk of sudden storms, winter overnight parking is not allowed at Hurricane Ridge.** You must park 3.3 miles below the Ridge at Third Peak. Check with rangers at Hurricane to see if a shuttle is available.
- \* Winter camps must be 1/2 mile away from the Hurricane Ridge parking lot and out of sight of ski/snowshoe trails. Check with a ranger for suggestions.
- \* Use a camp stove. Campfires are prohibited.
- \* Share the trails—avoid walking or snowshoeing in ski tracks.
- \* In emergencies, dial 911 from the Hurricane Ridge Visitor Center foyer.
- \* Check avalanche conditions and carry beacons (see page 7).

## Restoring the Elwha

After years of planning and preparation, removal of the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams began in September 2011. Freeing the Elwha River after 100 years will allow all five kinds of Pacific salmon, steelhead, sea-run cutthroat and bull trout to return to more than 70 miles of habitat protected in Olympic National Park, carrying with them marine-derived nutrients to restore a vital link between sea, river and forest.

A free-flowing Elwha River and the salmon's return will bring economic and cultural healing to the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, whose members have lived along the river for generations. When the Lake Mills reservoir is drained, tribal members will also regain access to sacred sites currently underwater.

Dam removal began September 15, 2011 when an excavator-mounted hydraulic hammer operated by contractor Barnard Construction chipped the first chunks of concrete off the Glines Canyon Dam. On September 17, removal of the Elwha Dam began as the climax to a ceremony attended by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Governor Chris Gregoire, Senators Murray and Cantwell, Congressman Norm Dicks and many others.

A replacement hatchery on the Lower Elwha Klallam reservation was completed last spring and is now helping to maintain existing stocks of Elwha River fish during the dam removal period.

Modifications to levees near the mouth of the river have been completed and will protect landowners and the Lower Elwha Klallam reservation from flood impacts.

For more information, frequent updates and links to six project webcams, visit Olympic National Park's website at [www.nps.gov/olym](http://www.nps.gov/olym), share or interact with 'Elwha River Restoration' on Facebook, or pick up a brochure at a park visitor center. Take a 10-minute walk to an overlook of Elwha Dam to watch the process live. The trailhead is at the start of Lower Dam Road, on Highway 112, one-half mile from the 112 and Highway 101 junction west of Port Angeles.

Images from late October 2011 show notching progress on the 210-foot Glines Canyon Dam (right). To remove the stepped concrete Elwha Dam (below, left), the Elwha River has been redirected through a temporary channel in the former spillway.

