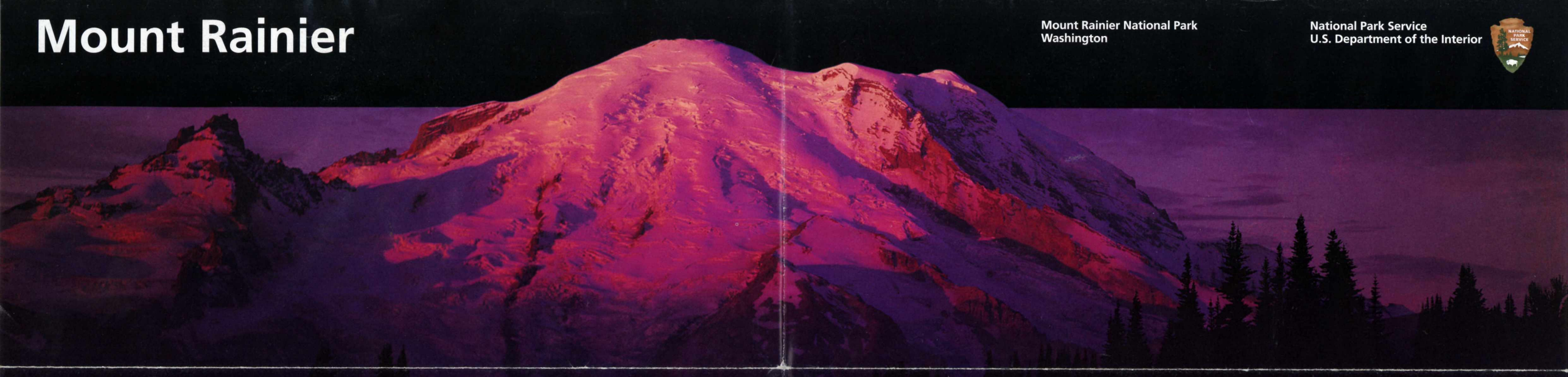
Mount Rainier

Mount Rainier National Park
Washington

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Welcome to a mountain wonderland famous for its dense forests, dazzling wildflower meadows, tremendous snowfields, and rugged glaciers. If you visit on a sunny day take time to absorb the fresh smell of living trees and soil, the soothing and sometimes deafening sound of falling water, and the intense green of the Pacific Northwest. If you visit on a cloudy day, remember that you are experiencing the park in its most frequent guise: cloaked in moisture and hooded by snow. Moisture-laden weather systems move off the Pacific Ocean, batter the sides of Mount Rainier, and drop record-setting quantities of snow at higher elevations before continuing eastward. The huge amount of precipitation—about 87 inches each year at Longmire and 126 inches at Paradise—shapes everything you see, from the 25 glaciers that cap the mountain to the stands of Douglas fir, western red cedar, and western hemlock that make up the old-growth forest at its base. In subalpine parks, or meadows, on the mountain's shoulder abundant moisture combines with volcanic soils and intense summer sunlight to create some of the most breathtaking wildflower meadows on Earth.

As an active volcano Mount Rainier stands as a reminder of the beauty and power of nature. The Cascade Range has been volcanically active for millions of years, thanks to its location close to the western edge of the North American tectonic plate. The mountain is relatively young in geologic terms: it formed about 500,000 years ago. Like Mount St. Helens and other Cascade volcanoes, Mount Rainier has the potential to erupt again. Volcanologists expect the mountain to give ample warning before entering an eruptive period, but the threat of unexpected mudflows exists today. See Volcanic Hazards *(below)*.

Mount Rainier National Park was established by Congress in 1899 after enthusiastic and persistent advocacy by American citizens, European dignitaries, and national and local scientific and business groups. The story of the park's establishment and protection shows the power of people who are dedicated to an idea of national significance. Today the issues are more complex, but the strength of stewardship still comes from the power of commitment.

October Sunrise *(above)* © LOREN E. LANE

Enjoying the Park

Christine Falls © LOREN E. LANE

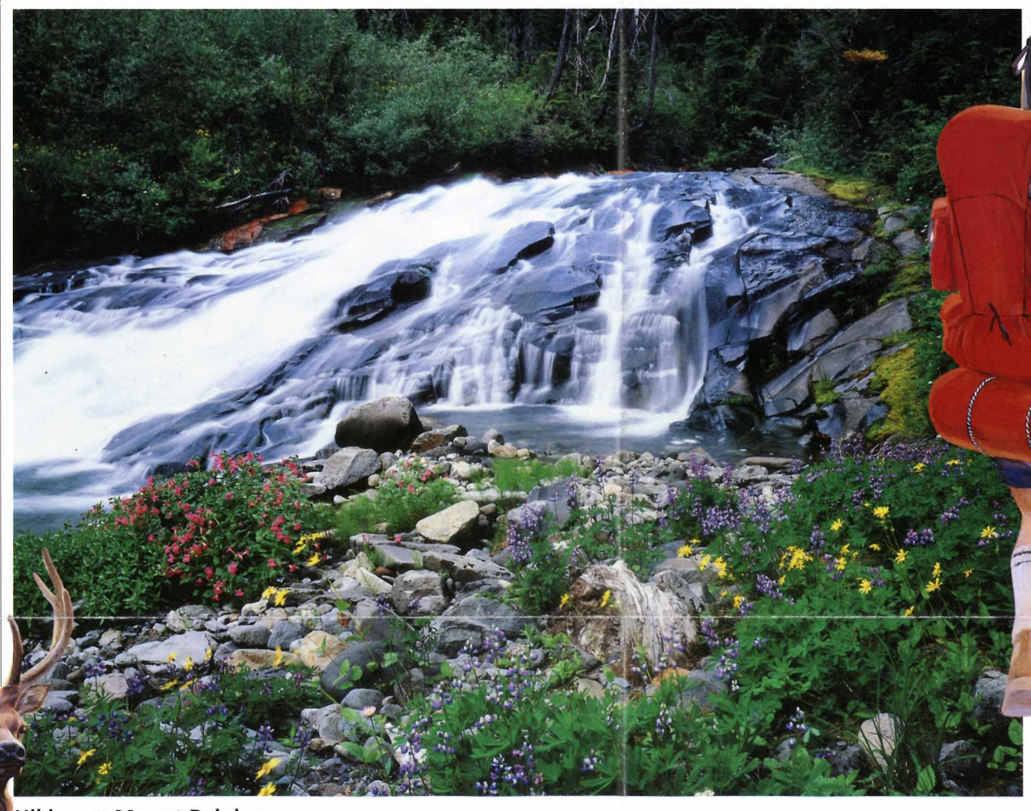
Mount Rainier's historic roads lead through spectacular mountain scenery in all seasons—from the cool lushness of summer to the wonderlands of winter. NPS

Exploring by Road

Roads lead through the old-growth forest and into subalpine areas. A major road system runs from the southwest entrance through the southern and eastern parts of the park, with a spur to Sunrise on the northeast side of the mountain. A road leads to Mowich Lake in the northwest. The roads were designed to make the least impact on the landscape. They are narrow, and, especially at lower elevations, trees grow close to them. All but 18 miles of road between the southwest entrance and Paradise are closed in winter. Carbon River Road is open to the park entrance year-round.

Wildlife In summer watch for chipmunks, squirrels, marmots, and pikas. Keep an eye out for Steller's jays, Clark's nutcrackers, gray jays, and ravens. You may see black-tailed deer, but black bears, mountain goats, and elk are more elusive.

Black bears may be brown, tan, or blond. Mountain goats stay close to high-country cliffs. Look for elk on the park's east side in September.



ILLUSTRATIONS: NPS / PATRICIA TOPPER
PHOTO *(LEFT)*: © JAMES RANDKLEV

Hiking at Mount Rainier

Trails ranging from less than one mile to the 93-mile Wonderland Trail offer chances for pleasant ambles or overnight backpacks. Short hikes suitable for all ages include:

Kautz Creek Trail (between Nisqually Entrance and Longmire) This 2-mile round-trip hike parallels Kautz Creek, site of the 1947 mudflow that covered the highway with 30 feet of cement-like mud. A short spur is wheelchair-accessible.

Trail of the Shadows (at Longmire) The 0.7-mile round-trip trail leads through the site of the Longmire family homestead. The **Rampart Ridge Trail**, a 4.5-mile loop, begins on the Trail of the Shadows and is moderately strenuous.

Nisqually Vista Trail (at Paradise) The 1.2-mile loop begins in the west end of the lower parking lot and leads through wildflower meadows to views of the Nisqually Glacier—guided walks are available in summer.

Grove of the Patriarchs Trail (near Ohanapecosh) This 1.5-mile round-trip trail passes through a beautiful old-growth forest. It leads across the Ohanapecosh River to an island of ancient giant trees. Ask about guided walks in summer.

Emmons Vista Trail (at Sunrise) This 0.5-mile round-trip walk will whet your appetite for more hiking, with overlooks of the Emmons Glacier and marvelous mountain views. Many trails begin at Sunrise Visitor Center; ask for other suggestions.

Precautions Be prepared for rain in any month and for snow and freezing temperatures from September through May. Trails are usually snow free from mid-July through September, but low clouds may hide landmarks at higher elevations. Carry a map, compass, first-aid kit, and extra food and water. Wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Stay on trails; never cut across switchbacks. **Note:** In the Paradise and Sunrise areas off-trail travel is prohibited.

NPS

Climbing Mount Rainier

Climbing Mount Rainier is hazardous and requires skill, proper equipment, and excellent physical condition. Climbers must register and pay a fee if climbing above 10,000 feet or on glaciers. Rock- and icefalls are a problem—wear a helmet and climb early in the day. Those lacking glacier travel experience are strongly encouraged to climb with one of many guide services authorized to lead climbs on Mount Rainier. Ask at visitor centers for information.

NPS

Preserving the Park

Mount Rainier National Park preserves very fragile ecosystems. In 1988 about 97 percent of the park was designated as the Mount Rainier Wilderness. Each year over two million people visit the park. Please help us protect this area by honoring these regulations: • Do not feed birds or animals; they need natural foods to stay healthy. • Collecting, damaging, or disturbing plants, dead plant material (including firewood), rocks, or historic or cultural items is prohibited by federal law. • Always practice minimum-impact camping, pack out your trash, and use recycling containers in the park. These fragile and heavily used areas are easily damaged. Protect the park for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Mountain Wonderlands

Longmire Administration Building NPS

Longmire

This is the site of Longmire's Medical Springs that James Longmire and his family developed in 1888 and 1889. It is now a National Historic Landmark District. After the park was established in 1899, Longmire became the park headquarters. Today the original headquarters building houses a museum and exhibits. The National Park Inn, a concessioner-operated hotel, is open year-round. The road from the Nisqually Entrance to Longmire is one of the world's most beautiful forest roads.

NPS

Paradise Inn NPS

Paradise

When Martha, James Longmire's daughter-in-law, first saw this subalpine meadow, she exclaimed, "Oh what a Paradise." Paradise is world-famous for its glorious views and wildflower meadows. It is also the most heavily visited area in the park. In the summer parking can be difficult, particularly on weekends. Visit on weekdays, arrive early, carpool, or ride the free Paradise shuttle. Excellent long and short hikes begin here. The park's main visitor center is located at Paradise. Interpretive programs are offered daily through the summer and on weekends and holidays in winter. Fall colors turn the hillsides crimson in September, and visitation slows after Labor Day. Paradise is the prime winter-use area in the park; an average of 680 inches of snow falls each winter. Paradise Inn is open only in summer, but the road is plowed throughout the winter. Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and sliding are major winter activities here. Some winter sports equipment can be rented at Longmire.

Silver Falls © LOREN E. LANE

Ohanapecosh

Named for a riverside Taidnapam or Upper Cowlitz Indian dwelling site, Ohanapecosh is thought to mean "standing at the edge." Ohanapecosh is nestled between the Douglas firs, western red cedars, and western hemlocks of an old-growth forest, and demonstrates the complex structure of old-growth forest habitat. Ohanapecosh Visitor Center and campground are open from late May through mid-October.

Mount Rainier from Sunrise © LOREN E. LANE

Sunrise

At 6,400 feet above sea level Sunrise is the highest point in the park that you can reach by vehicle. These high mountain meadows abound with wildflowers. On clear days Sunrise provides breathtaking views of Mount Rainier, Emmons Glacier, and other volcanoes in the Cascade Range. Sunrise is open from July to late September.

A Glacier's Snout © LOREN E. LANE

Carbon River and Mowich Lake

Carbon River, named for the coal deposits found here, is in the park's northwest corner. It receives about 70 inches of rain annually and hosts a temperate rainforest. Carbon River Road has been damaged by a series of floods. The road is closed to vehicles just inside the entrance; it is open to foot and bicycle traffic. You can reach Mowich Lake by a separate road *(see map on other side of this brochure)* that leads to wilderness trails and a walk-in campground.

Planning Your Visit

Approaching the Park Mount Rainier National Park is in west central Washington, an easy drive from Seattle, Tacoma, or Portland *(see map)*.

The Nisqually Entrance *(see map on other side of brochure)* is open year-round. Travelers from east of the Cascades may enter the park directly in summer; eastern mountain passes close in winter.

To reach the Carbon River area, take Wash. 165 from Buckley. The road forks after Wilkeson, with the Carbon River entrance to the left and Mowich Lake to the right.

Getting Here Airlines, Amtrak, and tour buses serve Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, and other cities. Private carriers provide bus service spring through fall. Contact: Gray Line Tours, 800-426-7532; or www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/directions.htm.

Bikes and Horses Bicyclists share narrow roads with vehicles; always wear a helmet. Bikes are prohibited on park trails. Saddle and packstock are permitted on only Laughingwater and Pacific Crest trails. Ask about the rules.

Fees Mount Rainier is a recreation fee area. Most fees remain in the park to help fund long-standing projects. Entrance and commercial fees and annual passes are listed on the park website at www.nps.gov/mora or ask at an entrance station.

Volcanic Hazards Hazards include unpredictable mudflows and glacier-generated floods. Be especially alert in river valleys. If you hear a loud rumbling or notice a rapid rise in water level—move to higher ground fast! Do not run downstream. Longmire and all campgrounds are in potential flood zones.

Facilities, Services, Safety/Regulations

Visitor Centers Begin at Longmire, Paradise, Ohanapecosh, or Sunrise. Ask about programs in summer and guided snowshoe walks in winter.

Lodging The National Park Inn at Longmire is open year-round. Lodging at Paradise Inn is available in summer only. Contact: Mount Rainier Guest Services, P.O. Box 108, Ashford, WA 98304; 360-569-2275; www.mtrainierguestservices.com.

Nearby communities have restaurants, motels, gas stations, and grocery and camping supply stores.

Accessibility The visitor center at Paradise is wheelchair-accessible Ask about other accessible facilities. TTY: 360-569-2177. Service animals are welcome.

Winter Driving The road from the Nisqually Entrance to Paradise is open year-round, weather permitting. Be prepared. Carry tire chains, drive carefully, and obey traffic directions. The road to Paradise closes at dusk in winter; check closure time before driving to Paradise.

Winter Activities You can snowshoe, cross-country ski, and slide at Paradise. **Note:** The visitor center at Paradise is open and staffed only on weekends and holidays from mid-October until early May.

Safety/Regulations
• Pets must be leashed and attended. Pets are not permitted on trails or the snow or in the wilderness. • Collecting plants, dead plant materials, firewood, rocks, or historic or cultural items is illegal. Leave wildflowers for everyone to enjoy. • Keep wildlife wild. Do not feed or harass wildlife, including birds. • Permits are required for all overnight stays in the wilderness. • No hunting or target practice is permitted. Federal law allows people who can legally possess firearms under applicable federal, state, and local laws to legally possess firearms in the park. Firearms are not allowed in buildings. • Do not drive or park off roads. • Fishing requires no license or permit, but certain waters are closed or open to fly fishing only.

Emergencies: call 911.

More Information
Mount Rainier National Park
55210 238th Ave. E
Ashford, WA 98304
360-569-2211
TTY 360-569-2177
www.nps.gov/mora

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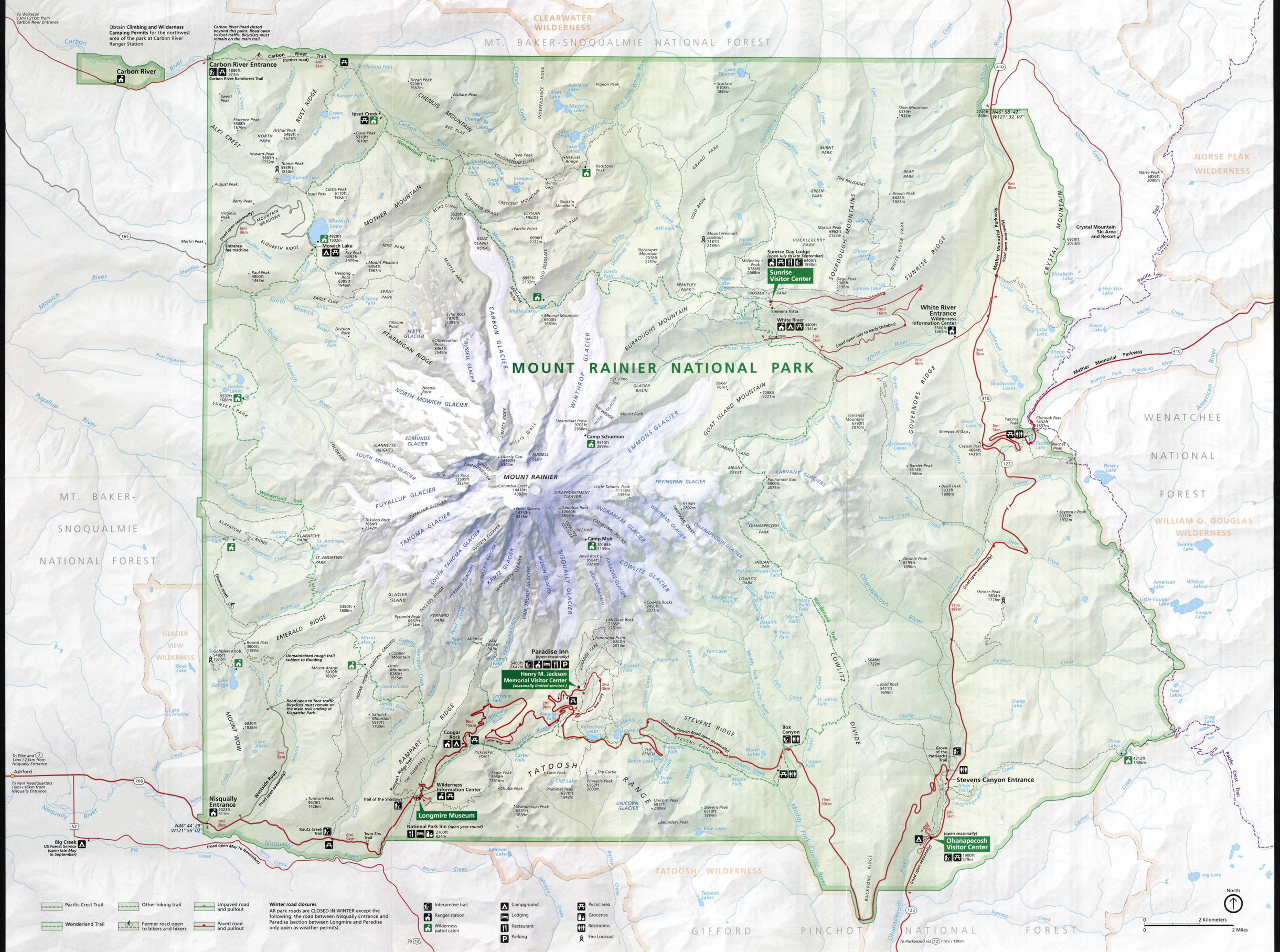
		RV Sites/Rooms	Tents	Fee	Limit of Stay	Drinking Water	Flush Toilets	Sanitary Dump	Food	Groceries	Gifts	Reservations/Summer	Accessible Site/Room
Cougar Rock Campground	173	●	●	●	14	●	●	●				●	●
Cougar Rock Group Camp	5		●	●	14	●	●						
Jackson Memorial Visitor Center						●	●		●		●		
Mowich Lake Campground (walk-in only)	30		●		14								
National Park Inn (Longmire)	25			●		●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Ohanapecosh Campground	188	●	●	●	14	●	●	●				●	●
Paradise Inn	126			●		●	●		●		●	●	●
Sunrise Day Lodge						●	●		●	●	●		
White River Campground	112		●	●	14	●	●						

Summer campground reservations:
www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/camping.htm

Mount Rainier National Park is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn about national parks, visit www.nps.gov.

Exploring Mount Rainier



Winter road closures
All park roads are CLOSED IN WINTER except the following: the road between Nisqually Entrance and Paradise (section between Longmire and Paradise only open as weather permits).