

North Cascades

Ross Lake and Lake Chelan

North Cascades National Park
Ross Lake National Recreation Area
Lake Chelan National Recreation Area
Washington

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Looking north from Sahale Peak, from a 360° photograph by Will Landon, using a #10 Cirkut panoramic camera.

A Wilderness Mountain Kingdom



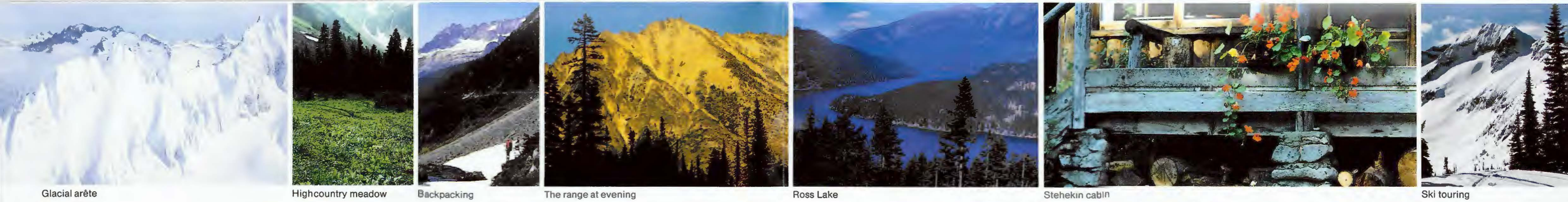
"No where do the mountain masses and peaks present such strange, fantastic dauntless and startling outlines as here," wrote Henry Custer. He worked his way through the North Cascades as assistant of reconnaissances for the International Boundary Commission in 1859. Custer was the first to extol this region in writing but admitted that words failed him. More than 100 years later the area became parkland with the establishment of North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan national recreation areas in 1968. In 1988 Congress designated approximately 92 percent of the three areas as the Stephen Mather Wilderness to provide additional legislated protection. The Cascades rank among the world's great mountain ranges. Extending from Canada's Fraser River south beyond Oregon, they contribute greatly to shaping

the Pacific Northwest's climate and vegetation. These three National Park System areas sit deep in the wild, nearly impenetrable northernmost reaches of the Cascade Range in northwestern Washington. This land stretches from rich lowland valleys through dense forests to the tops of glacier-covered peaks, then back down to the arid eastern slopes. The diversity of environments allows a corresponding profusion of different kinds of plants and animals. Few people were familiar with the wonders of this area before the parklands were established.

Recent historic exploration began in 1814 when Alexander Ross crossed the present national park's southern unit. The handful of explorers who followed Ross also commented on the region's rugged, isolated nature.

Miners prospected for gold, lead, zinc, and platinum here from 1880 to 1910. They recorded moderate strikes, but transportation proved to be arduous and profits so limited that mining was abandoned. Some logging and homesteading occurred around 1900. The electricity generating potential of the Skagit River was early recognized. Between 1924 and 1961, Seattle City Light built three dams on the river. Mountains do not stop at the park boundaries. The three areas are flanked on the south, east, and west by national forest lands and on the north by provincial lands of British Columbia, Canada. The national forest lands encompass a number of outstanding federal wilderness areas, including the Glacier Peak Wilderness on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie and Wenatchee National Forests. Only an invisible boundary separates the two national park units

from the two national recreation areas and the adjoining national forest lands. Evidence of Indian use of the Cascades is widespread, but little is known about it. History has touched little of the area. Today, readily reached areas are heavily visited, but some remote locations have yet to feel the boots of today's backcountry traveler. Forest giants of western redcedar and Douglas-fir dot the deep valleys. Off the trail, tangled growths of alder, vine maple, stinging nettles, and devil's club still defy crosscountry hikers. Glaciers scored by crevasses, permanent snowfields, sheer-walled cliffs, spires, and pinnacles challenge the mountaineer. From the North Cascades Highway, on clear days, you may get glimpses of alpine wonders that lie just beyond.



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Breathtakingly Beautiful Mountain Scenery

North Cascades National Park contains some of America's most breathtakingly beautiful scenery—high jagged peaks, ridges, slopes, and countless cascading waterfalls. Hiking, backpacking, and mountaineering are the most popular activities in the park. The park's 505,000 acres encompass some 318 glaciers, more than half of all glaciers in the contiguous United States. There are few roads into the park, but views into the park can be had on clear days from the North Cascades Highway at Goodell Creek, Diablo Lake Overlook, and other places. The Cascade River Road—25 miles of improved dirt and gravel—gives summer and fall access into the park and to the Cascade Pass Trailhead.

From many park trails endless views unfold of glacially sculpted valleys, glaciers, and snowfields. Rumbling sounds frequently interrupt the subalpine stillness as icefalls crash into the valley floor. At Cascade Pass, over which Alexander Ross is presumed to have traveled, flower-sprinkled hillsides and meadows enhance spectacular views of the Cascade and Stehekin

Valleys. Here, as at other passes and high elevation viewpoints, you can best see the rock ridges, glaciers, snowfields, cascading waterfalls, and other alpine and subalpine features against their backdrops of sky.

Most hikers enter the national park from trailheads along the North Cascades Highway. Others enter from trailheads along the Cascade River Road, the Stehekin Valley, and via Forest Service trails surrounding the park. Within the three National Park System areas, more than 1,500 different species of plants have been identified along with hundreds of birds, reptiles, amphibians, and thousands of insects. While not abundant, bears, wolves, mountain lions, falcons, and bald eagles also add to the genetic richness of the area. Many scientists feel that the future of our planet lies in preserving biological diversity in places such as the North Cascades.

Scenic Corridor for the North Cascades Highway

Ross Lake National Recreation Area divides the two units of the North Cascades National Park. Its 117,000 acres encompass all three of Seattle City Light's power projects and provide the corridor for the popular North Cascades Highway (see strip map). This scenic route across the Cascade Mountains affords travelers many recreational opportunities. From trailheads, hikers may head off into the park's far reaches. At roadside locations are self-guiding trails, exhibits, and information and camping facilities.

Seattle City Light sponsors regular, scheduled tours of Diablo Lake and Ross Dam hydro facilities. The reservoirs provide spectacular water gateways to the more remote areas of three areas. Ross Lake, 24 miles long and 2 miles at its greatest width, covers about 12,000 acres. Diablo Lake is 910 acres and Gorge Lake is 210 acres. Food, lodging, gasoline, boat and motor rentals, tackle, licenses, and basic camper supplies are available in the recreation area.

The only launch facilities on Ross Lake are at its north end, at Hozomeen, reached by a 39-mile dirt-and-gravel road from Canada. Bald eagles are frequently seen in mid-winter feeding on salmon along the Skagit River between Newhalem and the Ross Lake Recreation Area boundary near Bacon Creek.

The North Cascades Highway is closed by snow for part of the year. The date of the opening and closing may vary, but it is generally from mid-November to April, depending on the weather and on snow depths and avalanche hazard. In all seasons, please watch for fallen rocks in the road.

A Passenger Ferry Ride To Wilderness and History

You can hike, boat, or fly to Stehekin, at the head of Lake Chelan, but you can't drive there in your car. This wilderness community, some 55 miles uplake from Chelan, Washington, is popular with hikers, backpackers, canoeists, boaters, and campers. The Stehekin Valley, surrounded by towering mountains, enjoys a rich history of fur trapping and mining (both short-lived), and homesteading and recreation. It was recognized early this century that the Stehekin area's greatest importance lay in its recreational and scenic values. About 1900, hotels and summer cabins began to be built. The few year-round residents at that time depended on fruit farming, timber, horse-packing, and recreation to make a living.

Travelers find refreshment in the coolness and beauty of Rainbow Falls. A touch of nostalgia surrounds the log school house used from 1928 through 1988 and the historic Buckner Orchard. In season you can take the National Park Service shuttle bus to up-valley campgrounds, or the valley road's end within North

Cascades National Park. Most people take the commercial uplake boat trip to Stehekin from Chelan. The four-hour trip (quicker boat service is available seasonally) provides shoreline views of private residential and farming development on the lower lake, rugged mid-lake shorelines and national forest lands, and the lake's deepest lakes, and its bottom lies about 400 feet below sea level. A dam built at Chelan in 1927 raised the lake level 21 feet to increase power production. Lodging and meals, postal service, and some basic supplies for campers are available at the Stehekin Landing.

Lake Chelan, a natural lake, rests in a glacially carved trough. At a depth of nearly 1,500 feet, it is one of the Nation's deepest lakes, and its bottom lies about 400 feet below sea level. A dam built at Chelan in 1927 raised the lake level 21 feet to increase power production. Lodging and meals, postal service, and some basic supplies for campers are available at the Stehekin Landing.

North Cascades Highway



Planning Your Visit

Information The National Park Service administers these three national park and national recreation areas. Information about both National Park Service and Forest Service facilities is available at North Cascades Headquarters in Sedro Woolley or at national park or national forest information or ranger stations at Marble Mountain, Stehekin, Glacier, or Chelan. For more information write: Superintendent, North Cascades National Park, 2105 Highway 20, Sedro Woolley, WA 98284.

Publication Sales Books, maps, and pamphlets are sold at park headquarters and at ranger and information stations by the nonprofit Northwest Interpretive Association. For a free sales list, write to the association at the park address.

Seasons and Weather Lower-elevation trails and lakes are usually free of snow from early April through mid-October. Some higher elevation trails will not be open until mid-July. More than 360 miles

of maintained trails take you into the park and recreation areas and adjacent national forest lands. Many provide easy walks into the Cascades. The North Cascades get more rain on their western side than on their eastern side. Expect cooler weather and more cloudy days on the west and more sunshine and higher temperatures on the east.

Naturalist Activities Enjoy nature trails, evening programs, and conducted walks in summer at Colonial Creek and Newhalem Creek campgrounds, and at Hozomeen and Stehekin. Ask a park ranger for details.

Accommodations Services are limited. Find lodgings only in the national recreation areas and only in summer and fall. Campgrounds with vehicle access on the North Cascades Highway are located at Goodell Creek, Newhalem Creek, Colonial Creek, Lone Fir, and Early Winters. These are first-come, first-served; reservations not accepted. Group camp-

sites (reservations required) are located at Goodell Creek in Ross Lake National Recreation Area and at Harlequin and Bridge Creek in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area.

Backcountry permits Backcountry permits are required for all overnight backcountry and boat-access camp use. The permit system helps prevent overcrowding and destruction of fragile mountain environments. Climbers: register before attempting ascents or mountaineering procedures. Most climbing accidents occur when experienced climbers ignore recommended procedures. Ask a park ranger for advice and local conditions.

WARNING: The cold waters of Ross, Diablo, and Gorge lakes and Lake Chelan are not conducive to swimming or waterskiing. Cold waters from glacial runoff and melting snowfields make swimming and other water activities dangerous. They are not recommended because of the danger of hypothermia, the rapid loss of body heat. Sudden summer storms can also lead to hypothermia if you are not properly dressed.

Boating Find boat launch ramps for Diablo Lake at Colonial Creek Campground and Diablo Lake Resort. Ross Lake has one launch ramp at Hozomeen. Gorge Lake has a small ramp near the town of Diablo. Rent fishing boats at Diablo Lake Resort, Ross Lake Resort, and North Cascades Lodge at Stehekin. Skagit River raft trips begin at Goodell Creek Campground and terminate near Bacon Creek. Ask for current information. Find boat access to Lake Chelan at Chelan and Manson, and

at the state parks at First and Twenty-five Mile creeks.

Fishing Many streams and mountain and valley lakes—some easy to reach—challenge anglers. Washington state fishing licenses required; state laws apply.

Hunting Hunting is not permitted in the national park—except on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, where they must be on a leash. Pets are permitted in the national recreation areas, but they must be on a leash. Fires are permitted only at authorized locations; only dead and down wood may be used for fuel. Overnight

wilderness camping and overnight boat-in camping require a backcountry use permit. Before drinking any water from a mountain stream, boil it at least one minute to destroy organisms that cause giardia, "backpacker's diarrhea." Use extreme caution outside developed areas; falls in rugged terrain have resulted in several fatalities. Cross unbridged streams with caution, especially during spring's runoff. Slippery stream bottoms and swift currents can knock you away.

Bears Bears are attracted to food odors and can open or damage ice chests. Lock foodstuffs and ice chests in your vehicle at night.

