



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

A Wilderness Mountain Kingdom

Kayaking the Skagit River



A poisonous fungus



Mule deer with twin fawns



Mountain lion



Climbing adventures abound



Crossing a snowfield



Wildflower accents



At Happy Creek



"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 93 percent of the three areas as the Stephen Mather Wilderness to provide additional legislated protection for their wild character. The Cascades rank among the world's great mountain ranges. Extending from Canada's Fraser River south beyond Oregon,

they contribute greatly to shaping Pacific Northwest 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 plant and animal species. Before the parklands were established, few people knew this area's wonders well. Recent historic exploration began in 1814, when Alexander Ross crossed the present national park's southern unit. The handful of explorers after Ross also noted 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 was arduous and profits so low mining was abandoned. Some logging and homesteading occurred around 1900. That the Skagit River could generate electricity was early recognized, and between 1924 and 1961 Seattle City Light built three dams on the river.

Mountains do not stop at 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 outstanding federal wilderness areas, including 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 adjoining national forest lands. Evidence abounds that Indians used the Cascades area, but we know little about their use, and 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 red-cedar 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 mountaineers. From the North Cascades Highway, on clear days, you may catch glimpses of alpine wonders that lie just beyond.



Glacial arete



Highcountry meadow



Backpacking



The range at evening



Ross Lake



Stehekin cabin



Ski touring

North Cascades National Park

Breathtakingly Beautiful Mountain Scenery

North Cascades National Park contains some of America's most breathtakingly beautiful mountain scenery—high jagged peaks, ridges, slopes, and countless cascading waterfalls. Hiking, backpacking, and mountaineering are the most popular activities in the national park, whose 505,000 acres encompass more than 300 glaciers, or more than half the 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 Visitor Center and North Cascades Highway at Goodell Creek, Diablo Lake Overlook, and other places. The Cascade River Road, 23 miles of improved dirt and gravel, gives summer and fall access to the park and 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, which Alexander Ross presumably

crossed, flower-sprinkled hillsides and meadows enhance spectacular views of the Cascade and Stehekin valleys. As at other passes and high viewpoints, here you can best see the rock ridges, glaciers, snowfields, cascading waterfalls, and other mountain features against 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 and Stehekin Valley or via Forest Service trails next to the park. Within the three National Park System areas more than 1,500 species of plants have been identified along with hundreds of birds, reptiles, and amphibians and thousands of insects. Bears, wolves, mountain lions, falcons, and bald eagles are not abundant but add to the area's genetic richness. Many scientists feel the future of our planet lies in preserving biological diversity in places such as the North Cascades.

Ross Lake National Recreation Area

Scenic Corridor for the North Cascades Highway

Ross Lake National Recreation Area divides the two units of the North Cascades National Park. Within its 117,000 acres are all three Seattle City Light power projects and the corridor for the popular North Cascades Highway (see strip map). This scenic route across the Cascade Mountains affords the traveler 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 its Diablo Lake and Ross Dam hydro facilities. The reservoirs provide spectacular water gateways to the more remote parts of these three NPS areas. Ross Lake, 24 miles long and two miles wide at its greatest width, covers about 12,000 acres. Diablo Lake is 910 acres and Gorge Lake 210 acres. Food, lodging, gasoline, tackle, licenses, basic camper supplies, and boat and motor rentals are available within 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 National Recreation Area boundary near Bacon Creek.

The North Cascades Highway is closed by snow for part of the year. Closing and opening dates may vary but are generally mid-November and April, depending on the weather, snow depth, and avalanche hazard. In all seasons, watch for fallen rocks in the road.

The North Cascades Visitor Center near Newhalem, open daily spring to fall and weekends in winter, offers information, exhibits, and audiovisual and ranger-led programs.

Lake Chelan National Recreation Area

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 by car. This wilderness community some 55 miles uplake from Chelan, Washington, is popular with hikers, backpackers, canoeists, boaters, and campers. Surrounded by towering mountains, the Stehekin Valley 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. Hotels and summer cabins began to be built about 1900. The few year-round residents then 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 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 upper four miles within Lake Chelan National Recreation Area. Floatplane service is available from Chelan.

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

North Cascades Highway



Planning Your Visit

Information The National Park Service runs these national park and recreation areas. Find information about National Park Service and Forest Service facilities at North Cascades Headquarters in Sedro-Woolley or national park or forest information or ranger stations at Newhalem, Marblemount, Stehekin, Glacier, or Chelan. For information write: Superintendent, North Cascades National Park, 2105 State Route 20, Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284.

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

Seasons and Weather Trails and lakes at lower elevations usually are free of snow from early April through mid-October. Some trails at higher elevations will not 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 for 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 western side and more sunshine and higher temperatures on the eastern side.

Accommodations Services are limited, and lodgings are found only in the national recreation areas and only in summer and fall. Campgrounds with vehicle access on North Cascades Highway are at Goodell,

Newhalem, and Colonial creeks, Lone Fir, and Early Winters, on a first-come, first-served basis (reservations are not accepted). Group campsites (reservations are required) are at Goodell Creek in Ross Lake National Recreation Area, at Harlequin in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, and at Bridge Creek in North Cascades National Park.

Backcountry Permits Backcountry permits are required for all overnight backcountry and boat-access camp use. The permit system helps pre-site overcrowding or destruction of fragile mountain environments. Most climbing accidents occur when experienced climbers ignore recommended procedures. Ask a park ranger for advice and a report on local conditions.

WARNING: Waters of Ross, Diablo, and Gorge lakes and Lake Chelan are cold from glacial runoff and the melting snowfields. Swimming and other water activities can be dangerous and may cause hypothermia, rapid loss of body heat. Sudden summer storms also can lead to hypothermia, so take proper precautions.

Boating Diablo Lake has a boat launch ramp at Colonial Creek Campground; Ross Lake at Hozomeen; and Gorge Lake a small one near the town of Diablo. You can rent fishing boats at Ross Lake Resort and North Cascades Stehekin Lodge. Skagit River raft trips put in at Goodell Creek Campground and take out near Bacon Creek. Ask for current information. Chelan and Manson and state parks at First and Twenty-five Mile creeks offer boat access to Lake Chelan.

Fishing Many streams and lakes in both mountains and valleys—some easy to reach—attract anglers. State fishing licenses are required, and state laws apply.

Hunting Hunting is not permitted in North Cascades National Park. Trapping is not permitted in the park or recreation areas. Hunting is permitted in parts of the recreation areas in season, however. Washington state hunting licenses are required, and state laws apply.

Regulations and Safety Pets are prohibited in the national park, except on a leash on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Pets are permitted on a leash in the recreation areas. Fires are permitted only at authorized locations; use only dead and down wood for fuel. Overnight wilderness and boat-in camping require backcountry permits.

Before drinking any water from any untreated source, treat it by an approved method.

Use extreme caution outside the developed areas; falls in rugged terrain have resulted in fatalities. Cross all unbridged streams with caution, especially during spring's runoff: slippery stream bottoms and swift currents can knock you down and sweep you away.

Bears Bears and other wild animals are attracted to food odors and to odors—such as toothpaste—that don't say "food" to you. Lock food and associated items—dishes, ice chests—in your vehicle at night or while you are away from camp. In the backcountry keep a clean camp and hang food and other odorous items properly. Do not feed wildlife, even unintentionally; help keep wildlife wild.

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

North Cascades Highway

Access To reach the North Cascades, drive Washington State Route 20, the North Cascades Highway, from Burlington on the west and Twisp on the east. It is considered the "most scenic mountain drive in Washington." Vehicle access to Ross Lake is by unimproved road from Canada only. Stehekin is reached only by boat, floatplane from Chelan, or trail; there is no vehicle access.

DO NOT USE THIS MAP FOR HIKING

The highway passes Gorge, Diablo, and Ross lakes in Ross Lake National Recreation Area. Only Gorge and Diablo can be reached by vehicle from State Route 20. Stop at the Diablo Lake Overlook for its superb views of Diablo Lake; Sourdough Mountain; Davis, Colonial, and Pyramid peaks; and the Skagit River drainage. The Happy Creek Forest Walk is a short, wheel-

chair accessible boardwalk through old-growth forest. Wayside exhibits and views of Ross Lake and other points of interest are found at roadside turnouts in the Ross Lake area.

Rainy and Washington passes in Okanogan National Forest to the east provide rest stop and picnic facilities. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail crosses the

highway at Rainy Pass, elevation 4,860 feet. The Rainy Lake National Recreation Trail begins near the Rainy Lake rest stop. This one-mile walk to a subalpine lake is wheelchair-accessible. At Washington Pass, elevation 5,477 feet, near the rest stop and picnic area, an overlook provides breathtaking closeup views of the rugged Cascade Mountains. The Baker Lake

area of Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest offers camping, boating, fishing, hiking, and picnicking.

Posted speed limits for State Route 20 are often lower than the state-wide limit: obey them. Use roadside turnouts for safe scenic viewing. Drive cautiously—and watch for pedestrians or hikers on road shoulders, rocks in roadways,

wildlife, and drivers who may be less careful.

North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake and Lake Chelan national recreation areas are units of the National Park System, which consists of more than 360 parks representing important examples of our country's natural and cultural inheritance.

Wilderness Some 93 percent of the park and recreation areas is designated as the Stephen Mather Wilderness Area under the National Wilderness Preservation Act. Mather was the first director of the National Park Service.

