



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

North Cascades National Park
800 State Street

Sedro Woolley, Washington 98284

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Thank you for your inquiry. We hope a form letter like this will help us answer your questions more quickly and provide additional detail. It will relieve our clerical and administrative staff of a very heavy correspondence burden. If this impersonal response does not answer your questions, please write to us again stating that you have received our form letter and specifying which points need clarification.

GENERAL: The North Cascades National Park and Ross Lake National Recreation Area is about 160 km (100 miles) or 2 1/2 hours drive from Seattle, Washington or Vancouver, B.C. via Interstate Highway 5 and State Highway 20. There is no public transportation available to the north section of the park. The closest bus station on the west side is in Mt. Vernon. Access to the northern part of this complex, to Hozomeen, at the northern end of Ross Lake is via the Trans-Canada Highway in B.C. and the Silver/Skagit (gravel) road which goes south from Hope, B.C. Please note there is no road access or boat launching available on the south end of Ross Lake. Access to the east side of the southern part of the Park and to the Lake Chelan National Recreation Area is via U.S. Highway 2 and 97, or 2 and State Highway 151 to Chelan. Greyhound has bus service to Wenatchee with connecting buses to Chelan 2 times a day. From Chelan, reach Stehekin via boat (once daily in the summer, 3 days a week in the winter) or float plane (charter) to Stehekin. Shuttle bus service is available on the Stehekin Valley Road to High Bridge.

ACTIVITIES: Lake Chelan and Ross Lake National Recreation Area provide fishing and boating, camping, hiking, sightseeing and small-scale lodging and meal service. The Ross Lake National Recreation Area is accessible by private car and also offers car and camper camping. Rangers give interpretive programs, nature walks and hikes in both areas, and are always happy to provide information and suggestions. Services are, on the whole, small-scale and non-commercial. Although there are concession operations, some services you would expect to find in similar places elsewhere, may not be available here.

The North Cascades National Park areas are generally not accessible by vehicles. These areas, in two large wilderness units divided by the Highway 20 corridor, are essentially backcountry, accessible by foot only, or on certain trails, by horse. These National Park areas do not permit vehicles, except on the Cascade River Road. Dogs or other pets, hunting, firearms and groups larger than twelve are prohibited. It is our intent to provide an uncrowded and unhurried wilderness environment for backpackers, mountaineers and day hikers.

The U.S. Forest Service and Washington State Parks also provide recreational facilities in the areas adjacent to this National Park Service Complex. The policies and purposes of these other agencies are different enough from those of the National Park Service that a very wide spectrum of recreational activities is available within the general geographical area.

CAMPING: Tent camping and recreational vehicle camping is provided for in our two campgrounds along Highway 20. Special group campsites are provided at the Goodell Creek Campground near Newhalem. Group sites must be reserved. All other sites, including backcountry camps, are first-come, first-served. Camping in the backcountry is provided only for backpackers and horsemen. Campsites have been constructed, and travelers must stay in them rather than anywhere else along the trail. Mountaineers and cross-country travelers may bivouac off the trail provided they are 1 km (1/2 mile) or more from maintained trails and 2 km (1 mile) from designated camps. Tent and recreational vehicle camping is also provided at Hozomeen. Boat launching facilities are available at Hozomeen (Ross Lake), Colonial Creek Campground (Diablo Lake) and at the State Park in Chelan at 25 Mile Creek (Lake Chelan).

THE BACKCOUNTRY: The North Cascades are very rugged mountains. Slopes are very steep, glaciers and snowfields are deceptively hazardous, vegetation below 1,000 m (3,500 ft) elevation is dense, streams and rivers are swift and cold, weather is capricious and insects can at times be aggressive and persistent. There are no other mountains like the North Cascades in the U.S., and for this reason people who are familiar with mountains in other parts of the country, sometimes encounter difficulties traveling here. We would suggest particular attention to these points:

1. Be prepared for cold wind and rain, or even snow at higher elevations, at any time during the summer. Carry a good tent with fly or at least a water-proof tarp. Carry a change of dry clothing, including wool garments which can be worn next to your skin. Always bring extra food.
2. Plan a flexible itinerary. Be able and willing to change your plans if the weather turns bad or if you encounter technical difficulties. Be especially flexible in planning departure and arrival dates. Cross-country travelers particularly should allow extra time for solving route-finding problems in the dense, low elevation forests and along the technically challenging high routes. Mountaineering guide books frequently underestimate the travel times and difficulty of routes they publish.
3. Be in good condition. Trails are steeper and longer than commonly used field maps suggest. Be sure your equipment and routine work for you. Blisters from untested boots, fatigue resulting from water or salt deficiency in diet, and discomfort resulting from unused muscles or untested equipment are very common problems.

4. Get the latest trail conditions and weather forecasts from the ranger stations at Stehekin (or Chelan 509/682-2540) or Marblemount (206/873-4590). The Park employees who staff these stations frequently have first-hand information about the Park backcountry. If they haven't actually been to certain places, they have at least received recent reports on them from backcountry rangers.

BACKCOUNTRY PERMITS: Backcountry Use Permits are required of all people who want to camp overnight in the backcountry. Permits are not required of those who hike the trails during the day and spend the night in a roadside camp or commercial lodgings. Permits can be obtained at ranger stations in Stehekin, Marblemount, and Hozomeen. They are also available from U.S. Forest Service Ranger Stations in Darrington, Early Winters, Twisp and Glacier and from National Park Service information stations at Chelan and Concrete.

Permits are intended to disperse people in the backcountry in order to avoid concentrated impact on natural resources and to avoid crowding in popular areas. People will almost always be issued a permit for the places they plan on going, but when certain places are full to capacity, permits will not be issued for that place until the next day.

People traveling by boat or canoe on Diablo or Ross Lake should also obtain permits if they will be camping. Permits are available at Marblemount and Hozomeen.

Permits are issued on a first-come, first served basis. They cannot be reserved. It is suggested that you get your permit early in the day if you plan on going to a popular area such as McAllister Camp, Monogram Lake, Thornton Lakes, Basin Creek, Copper Ridge or Fireweed.

Have a good trip!

Sincerely,

North Cascades National
Park Service Complex

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