

The National Parks of Washington



The wind whistled past my ears as I stood on the edge of the world. The voices of the few hikers we had passed faded away and all I could hear was my heart beat in my ears.

One of my favorite things about traveling is experiencing moments like that— where, for once, my wandering heart settles and I simply want to *stay*. The particular moment happened at the top of Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park. The mountain is over 5,000 feet tall and offers views over the entirety of the Park and into Canada. It is one of my favorite spots in Olympic and by extension Washington state.

I have done a Washington National Parks road trip on three separate occasions and although I have yet to visit all three parks at once, I want to share my favorite stops in each, with the hope of inspiring you to take your own trip. Besides Olympic, Mt. Rainer, and North Cascades National Parks, I'm also including Mt. Saint Helens because it's too cool to pass up, even if it's only a National Monument, not a park.

My first ever road trip into Washington included stops at Saint Helens and Olympic. St. Helens happens to be the most active volcano in the lower 48 and the area is filled with lava fields and tunnels that you can explore. My favorite hike that I did was Ape Canyon Trail, a rocky scramble that follows an old lava flow path that has turned into a river. There's a suspension bridge, ladders, and some beautiful icy blue waterfalls making for an interesting, moderately difficult hike.



Later on that road trip I had my moment on the top of Hurricane Ridge in Olympic. But it wouldn't be fair to reduce the park to only my one favorite spot. Highway 101 winds past Lake Crescent, which has crystal clear waters perfect for a dip, especially in the summer. You can also rent kayaks or spend the night in the lodge or one of their cabins overlooking the lake. The other side of the Park offers the Hoh Rainforest, which stays green, drippy, and mystical all year round.

I'm only halfway through the incredible National Parks that Washington has to offer and I've already run out of space in this newsletter. Next week I'll share about Mt. Rainier and North Cascades National Parks and my favorite spots within.

Happy Driving!
Rachael



Roadtrippin With Rachael
Junction City, OR

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