

North Cascades, Mt. Rainier and... cold water swims?



The day has finally come folks. Perhaps you've heard me mention cold water swims in my newsletters or seen one of my Instagram posts about them. Maybe you've even had to listen to me overenthusiastically explain them in-person. Today I finally share about the place that started it all.

But first! The rest of my Washington National Parks road trip. Last newsletter I shared about my favorite spots in Mount St. Helens and Olympic, today is about North Cascades and Mt. Rainier. I organized this particular WA road trip for my mom's birthday (I know, I'm such a good daughter) and my best friend also joined us.

North Cascades National Park is one of the more remote and lesser known parks in the U.S., although it still has plenty to offer. We mostly found it to be a "drive-thru" park i.e. lots of beautiful views and short stops, but not many places to explore unless you happen to be a backpacker. However, what makes this park so dramatic is the jewel-like tones of the waters of its many lakes. Perhaps it's most famous is Lake Diablo, where we stopped for a dip. In the sunlight the water turns a teal so vivid it seems unnatural.



Alas, the colors lied and the waters were icy cold. However, this wasn't my first foray into frozen waters on this trip, although it was the dip that cemented my desire to go for a swim in every National Park that has a body of water deep enough to do so.

Instead, Mt. Rainier was where my obsession with cold water swims started, so it makes sense to share about the hike where it all began. Even though we went in July, a late snowfall meant that the real gems of Mt. Rainier— the wildflowers— were hidden, so we decided to hike up to a glacier lake aptly named Snow Lake. In a moment of bravery I decided to wear my swimsuit under my hiking clothes, a challenge to myself set from the start.

The hike is about 2.5 miles out and back, and passes an overlook of another glacier lake on the way to the final destination. Despite the fact that we were well into summer, snow covered the ground turning a fairly easy hike slightly more strenuous. But the end was definitely worth it! We sat on the edge of that steel gray lake, warmed from our exertions, but with anticipatory shivers racing down our spines.



We took the plunge. There was shrieking involved. But I couldn't help but go in a second time. There is nothing like the high of your heartbeat kicking into overdrive in an attempt to survive freezing cold temperatures. The adrenaline is through the roof and apparently the health benefits are pretty great too. After that, I was hooked. Lake Diablo followed, and then Crater Lake, the Irish Sea... well, those are stories for another time.

Happy Driving!
Rachael



Roadtrippin With Rachael

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I started Roadtrippin With Rachael in May of 2023 as a way to record my adventures and share them with friends, family, and fellow adventurers. I have travelled to South Africa, Spain, Ireland, the UK, and across the United States.





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