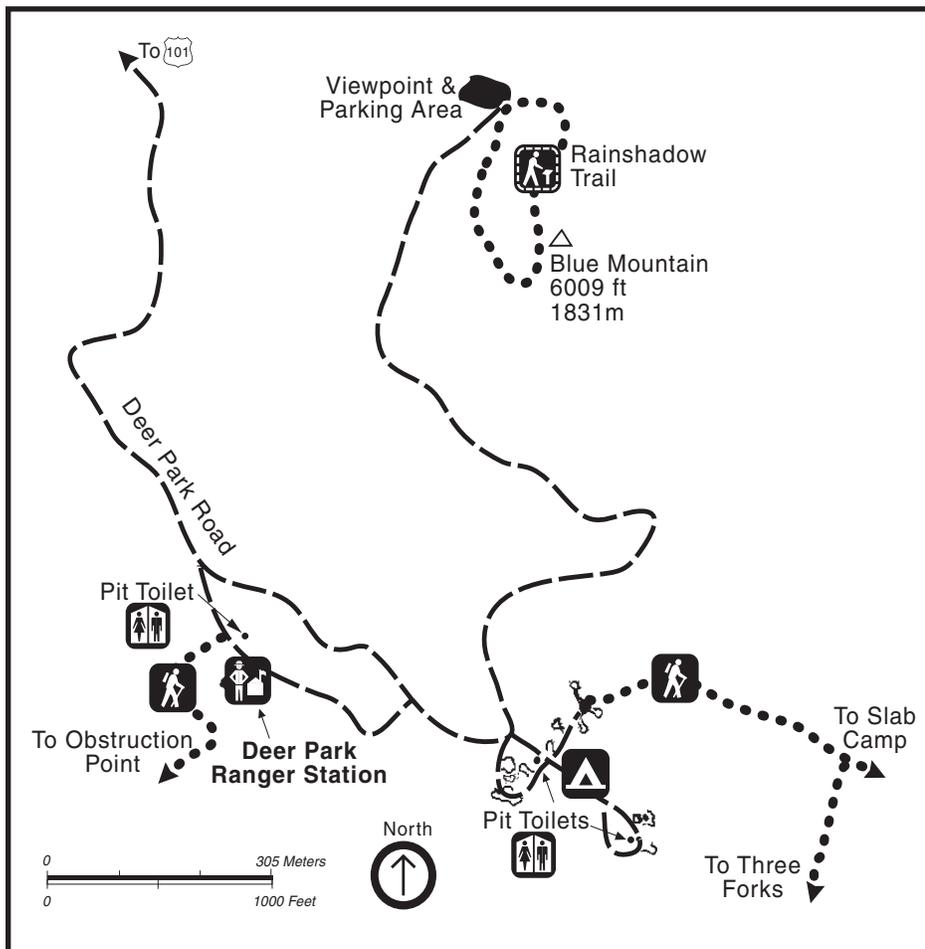


Olympic



Olympic National Park

Deer Park Area



Deer Park Information

- NOTE:** The 18-mile Deer Park Road is narrow and steep with occasional turn-offs. The last 9 miles are gravel. **It is not suitable for RVs or trailers.** Please use caution. From late fall until melt out in late spring, the road is closed at the park boundary, about 9 miles from Highway 101.
- Facilities:** Deer Park Ranger Station: Intermittently staffed during summer and fall. Information available.
- Camping:** 14 sites, fire pits with grates, picnic tables, accessible pit toilets, animal-proof food storage. **Potable water is not available.** Firewood gathering prohibited. If it's windy, watch for branches falling from trees killed by a 1988 fire.
- Regulations:** Pets and bicycles are not permitted on the trails. Open fires outside of campground fire pits are not permitted above 3,500 feet. Backpackers must obtain a wilderness camping permit by calling the Wilderness Information Center at 360-565-3100.

A Sunny Shadow

The Pacific Northwest has a reputation for being dark and gloomy, shrouded in year-long mist. Indeed, the west side of the Olympic Peninsula is the wettest spot in the lower 48 states. But the dry eastern Olympics tell a different story.

Much of the area's weather originates in the Pacific Ocean. Fronts storm inland from the southwest, heading straight for the Olympics. As the clouds rise over the mountains, pressure and temperature drop, so the air can no longer hold all its moisture. The moisture falls as rain and snow. By the time the clouds pass northeast of Mount Olympus and the Bailey Range, they have dropped most of their water. So here in the eastern Olympics, we are in a dry rainshadow.

Just as less sunlight reaches the shadow of a tall building, less moisture reaches a mountain's rainshadow. The Hoh Rain Forest can get 140 inches of rain a year, but Sequim, just north of Deer Park, gets only 18 inches!



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Day Hikes at Deer Park

Rain Shadow Loop: This 0.5-mile self guided loop trail to the top of Blue Mountain has panoramic views of lowlands and mountains. Elevation gain about 170 feet.

Deer Park to Obstruction Point: 7.4 mile trail to Obstruction Point through subalpine forests and mountain meadows. The trail starts at 5,380 feet and ends at 6,150, with a high point at 6,650.

Three Forks: Strenuous 4.3 mile hike to junction with Gray Wolf River Trail. Elevation drops from 5,400 to 1,600 feet.

Deer Ridge: Starts at Three Forks Trail and splits after 0.2 mile. Dropping 400 feet, the first 1.5 miles take you to the park boundary. The trail continues for another 3.1 miles to Slab Camp, in Olympic National Forest. Total elevation loss is 2,856 feet.



Don't be a meadow stomper!

Mountain meadows are fragile. Plants that grow here cope with harsh weather and a very short growing season. You can help protect these meadows. Stay on designated trails and leave flowers where they are so that others might enjoy their spectacular beauty.

Islands in the Sky

For nine kinds of plants and 20 animals, the Olympic Peninsula is a very special place. It is their only home—the only place in the world you can find them. Species limited to a specific area are called endemics and are often concentrated on islands, land that has remained in absolute isolation for a long time. Why are there so many endemics in Olympic's high places, like on Blue Mountain?

During the last ice age, which ended 10-15,000 years ago, the Olympic Peninsula was isolated by glaciers. Glaciers born on high peaks spread into the valleys, and great ice sheets from Canada wrapped around the northern and eastern edges of what is now a peninsula. A low valley full of melting glacial water lay to the south. The higher peaks in the rainshadow were not covered by extensive glaciers. Mountaintops became islands, refuges for plants and animals that were trapped by the advancing ice.

Species that survive on such islands are isolated from their counterparts elsewhere and over time may evolve into distinct species or subspecies. There is no place in the world outside of the Olympic Peninsula where you might see the Olympic chipmunk, Flett's violet, the Olympic torrent salamander, or any of the region's other endemics.

At Deer Park you can see evidence of the powerful forces that shaped these mountains and their residents. Glacier-rounded foothills spread out below you. You might spot the endemic Piper's bellflower, or hear an Olympic marmot whistle in the distance. Refugees once again, this time from human influences, endemics have found sanctuary in Olympic National Park. At least until the next ice age....



Flett's violet

