



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Mount Rainier National Park News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mount Rainier National Park Announces Winter Operating Hours

Snow play area remains closed due to insufficient snow

Recent storms have set the stage for winter recreation at Mount Rainier National Park, with enough snow at Paradise for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and snowboarding. However, the **Paradise snow play area remains closed** due to an insufficient snow depth to open. A minimum of five feet of snowpack is needed throughout the area to create the run and containment berm, and to prevent resource damage from the grooming equipment and sledding activity. The Paradise snow play area is the only location in the park where visitors are allowed to use soft-sided sliding devices, such as 100% plastic sleds and discs.

Beginning Friday, December 22, the **Henry M. Jackson Memorial Visitor Center** at Paradise is open throughout the winter on Fridays through Sundays, from 10:00 am to 4:15 pm. In addition, this visitor center will be open December 25-January 1, January 15, and February 19.

Ranger guided snowshoe walks at Paradise are scheduled to begin Saturday, December 23, 2017 through March 25, 2018. The walks will be offered on weekends and holiday periods at 11:00 am and 1:30 pm, and last two hours each. Sign-ups are filled on a first-come, first-served basis, and begin one hour in advance of each walk at the Jackson Visitor Center information desk. Participants should dress warmly (layers), wearing warm hats, gloves, and waterproof footwear suitable for snowshoes. Sunglasses, sunscreen, and water are also advised. On January 6, snowshoe walks for organized groups of 15 to 25 visitors begin. Group snowshoe walk reservations can be made by calling 360-569-6575 between the hours of 9:30 am and 4:00 pm. If the gate opening between Longmire and Paradise is delayed, snowshoe walk times may be adjusted or led from the Longmire Museum.

The Longmire area is open seven days a week, unless major storm events require closure. Open daily from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm, the **Longmire Museum** provides general park information, winter activity guidance, backcountry permits, and Discover Your Northwest books and maps for sale. The historic **National Park Inn** is also open daily and provides lodging, food, gifts, and snowshoe/ski rentals. For reservations, call 360-569-2275 or visit mtrainierguestservices.com.

The main gate at the southwest entrance to the park will remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week unless conditions require a temporary closure. The higher elevation gate, located on **the road between Longmire and Paradise** is closed nightly to ensure visitor and staff safety, with uphill access closing at 4:00 pm to allow for visitors and staff to exit safely. Each morning, rangers and road crew staff evaluate road, weather, avalanche, and equipment conditions to determine when it is safe to open the road above Longmire. Unexpected staffing shortages due to illness or injury can also impact projected opening times. While park staff understand that visitors are disappointed when the gate is opened later than projected, in all cases, public and staff safety is the highest priority. Webcam viewers should note that a clear parking lot at Paradise doesn't mean road conditions between Longmire and Paradise are safe. Standard open hours of this road are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm with daily road opening and closing updates posted to Twitter. Follow the feed at twitter.com/MountRainierNPS.

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Visitors are reminded that **all vehicles (including 4WD) are required to carry tire chains or other state-approved traction devices when traveling in the park** from November 1 – May 1. Road conditions can deteriorate quickly at any time and mandatory chain use may be required even for 4WD vehicles. Tire chains are available for sale in Ashford and at the National Park Inn in Longmire.

Overnight winter camping is allowed in many areas throughout the park with a valid permit; however, access is dependent on road conditions and snow depth, as follows:

- In the Paradise Day Use Zone (surrounding Paradise, outside of Wilderness), camping is permitted when snow depth exceeds 5 feet at the campsite. All Paradise Zone camping must be at least 300 feet from buildings, roads, established winter trails and the designated sledding area. The maximum party size is 12 persons.
- Elsewhere the park, camping is permitted in undeveloped areas, where snow depth is at least 2 feet. Campsites must be more than 200 feet from roads and at least 300 feet from lakes, streams and wetlands. The maximum party size is also 12 persons.

Campers should plan travel with gate closures in mind. Overnight camping in vehicles is not allowed in the park. For camping reservations, call 360-569-6575 between the hours of 9:30 am and 4:00 pm.

Backcountry travelers are encouraged to get updates on weather conditions, current and projected snow, and avalanche conditions before coming to the park. Additionally, backcountry travelers must heed warnings, and come prepared to survive winter conditions.

Vehicle access to other areas of the park is closed for the winter, but the following areas remain open for recreation. Please note that temporary closures may become necessary due to changing conditions:

- Carbon River Road
- Mowich Lake Road
- Paradise Valley Road
- Ricksecker Point Road
- SR123 (Cayuse Pass)
- SR410 (Chinook Pass)
- Stevens Canyon Road
- Sunrise Road
- Westside Road
- White River Road

Information on current park road closures and weather conditions can be obtained by calling the park at **360-569-2211** for recorded information that is updated regularly. Park information, announcements, and the Mount Rainier webcams are available on the park's official website, nps.gov/mora.

- Get additional information and updates by joining the Mount Rainier community on **Facebook** facebook.com/MountRainierNPS
- Find out breaking news and road status updates through Mount Rainier's **Twitter** feed twitter.com/MountRainierNPS
- Explore the park and behind-the-scenes operations with our videos on **YouTube** youtube.com/MountRainierNPS
- Share your own photos of Mount Rainier with other visitors in the Mount Rainier **Flickr** group flickr.com/groups/MountRainierNPS

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