


Skyline Trail Hike, Mount Rainier National Park, Washington, WA



 Daniel Sherman | 09.11.13



Highlights

CONGESTION: High

PETS ALLOWED: No

NET ELEVATION GAIN: 1,400.00 ft (426.72 m)

PARKING PASS: National Park Pass

PREFERABLE SEASON(S): Summer

SUITABLE FOR: Hiking

TOTAL DISTANCE: 5.40 mi (8.69 km)

TRAIL TYPE: Loop

TRAILHEAD ELEVATION: 5,400.00 ft (1,645.92 m)

Adventure Description

by Tyson Gillard | 09.11.13

This hike on the Skyline Trail leads to arguably the most well-known and visited subalpine meadow in all of North America, [Mount Rainier's](#) Paradise Park, which draws outdoor enthusiasts from all over the world. High altitude, southern exposure, and massive amounts of precipitation (on average 126 inches of annual rainfall and 680* inches of snowfall in the winter) create a landscape that comes alive when the snows melt in late summer to reveal some of Washington's best hiking.

For the few months every year when soil is greeted by sunlight, the volcano's southern slopes erupt with lush meadows of violet and yellow asters, white-topped western bistort, lupine, and various shades of paintbrush. Snowmelt culminates into streams lined with vibrant yellow and magenta monkeyflower. Streams turn to creeks cascading over volcanic rock, and visitors are greeted by the high-pitched chirp of hoary marmots and pikas. Spend enough time here and you'll see the occasional traverse of a black-tailed deer or even the distant sighting of a Roosevelt elk.

Without doubt, the best way to experience this natural paradise is to head out on the 5.4-mile Skyline Trail. It makes a big loop around the entire Paradise Park and climbs 1,400 feet to the aptly named, 6,800-foot Panorama Point, where [Mount St. Helens](#), [Mount Adams](#), [Goat Rocks](#) and the Tatoosh Range all stand in view. Because of the impressive snow accumulation over the winter, many parts of the trail may never be completely exposed, so it doesn't hurt to bring hiking poles and gaiters for your boots, even in August and September.

Whether you hike the Skyline Trail to Paradise Park in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, other trail highlights include Mount Rainier's massive Nisqually Glacier, a worthwhile stop to take in 72-foot [Myrtle Falls](#), and a recommended detour for a glimpse of 155-foot Sluisin Falls, which lingers just below the intersection of the 1.1-mile Paradise Glacier spur trail.

*By comparison, Mount Elbert in Colorado receives an average of 143 inches of annual snowfall. In the winter of 1971-72, Paradise set the world record for snowfall in a single season with 1,122 inches, which held until 1998-99, when nearby Mount Baker set the new world record with 1,140 inches. Paradise still holds the record, however, for most snow on the ground at 367 inches, measured in 1956.

Getting there (from Tacoma, WA):

- From Tacoma, head south on I-5 toward Olympia and take exit 127 for WA Hwy 512 E toward Puyallup
- After 2 miles, turn right onto WA Hwy 7/Pacific Ave toward

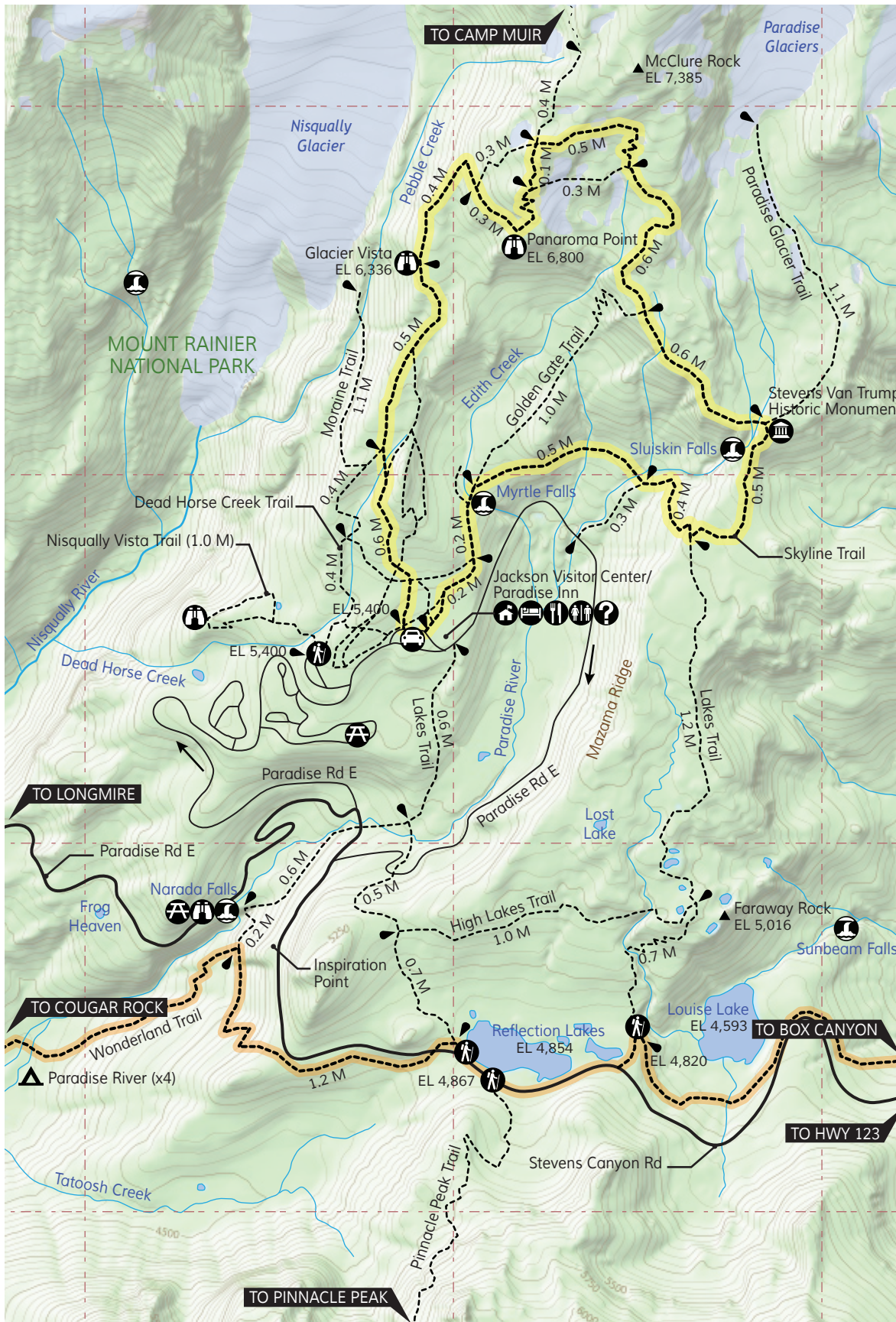
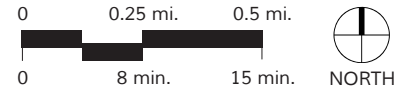
Parkland/Spanaway

- After roughly 36 miles (just past Alder Lake), turn left onto WA Hwy 706/National Park Hwy
- After 13.6 miles, you will come to the NP Nisqually Entrance
- Continue on Paradise Rd E for an additional 17 miles to Paradise Park and turn left into the first large parking area
- The trailhead is on the north side of the upper parking lot

Getting There (from Portland, OR):

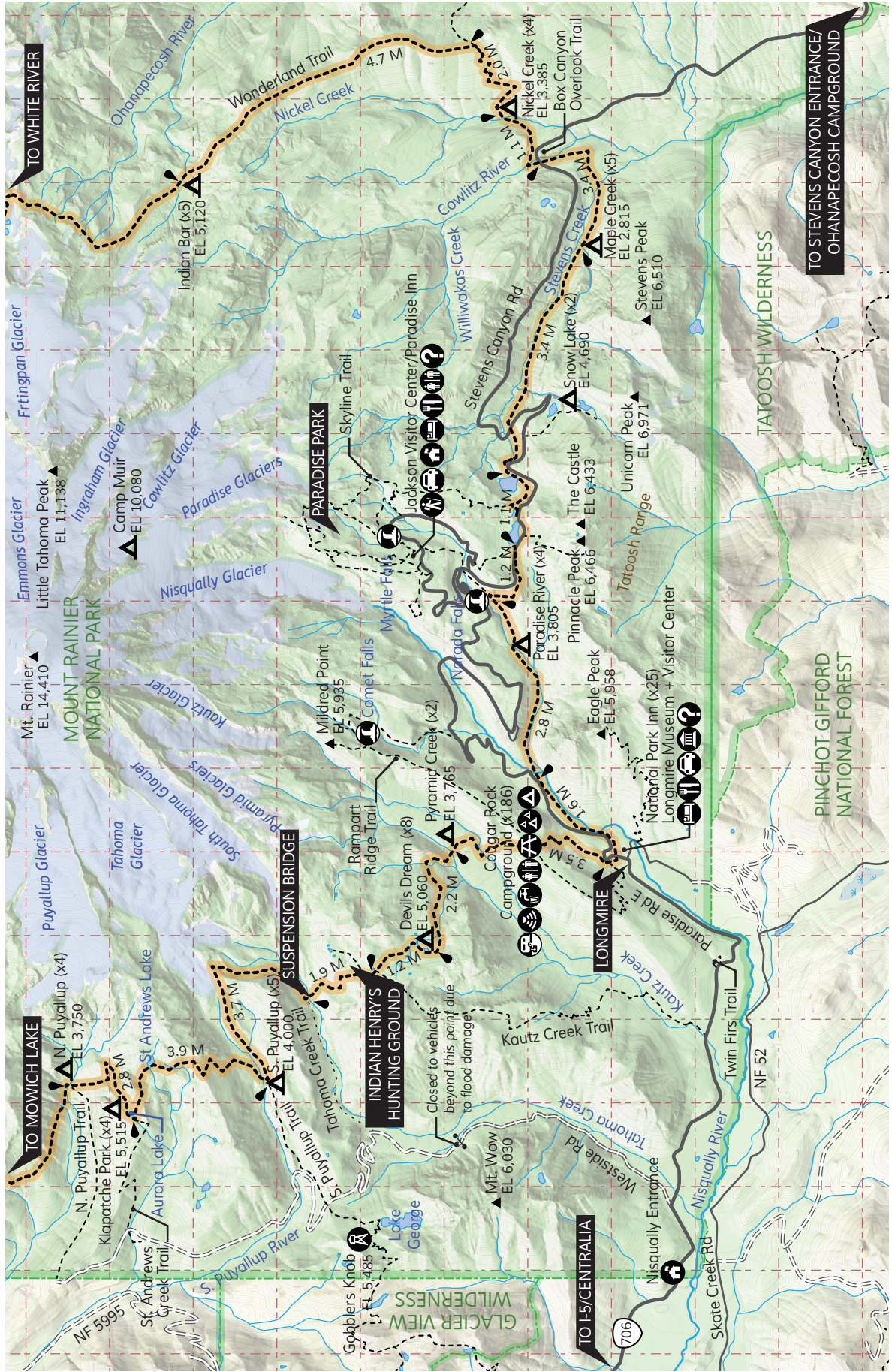
- 154 miles; 3 hours
- From Portland, head north on I-5 toward Olympia, WA
- After roughly 74 miles, take exit 68 for US Hwy 12 toward Morton/Yakima
- After 31 miles (once in Morton), turn left onto 2nd St/WA Hwy 7/Morton Rd toward Alder Lake
- After 16.2 miles, turn right onto WA Hwy 706/National Park Hwy
- After 13.6 miles, you will come to the NP Nisqually Entrance
- Continue on Paradise Rd E for an additional 17 miles to Paradise Park and turn left into the first large parking area
- The trailhead is on the north side of the upper parking lot

Paradise Park–Skyline Trail Mt. Rainier, WA



- Trail (major)
 - Trail (minor)
 - Alpine Climbing Trail
 - Paved Rd (major)
 - Paved Rd (minor)
 - Forest Rd (major)
 - Forest Rd (minor)
 - Featured Route
 - Wonderland Trail
-
- Trailhead
 - Parking
 - Restrooms
 - Vault Toilet
 - Picnic Area
 - Picnic Shelter
 - Ranger Station
 - Historic Landmark
 - Vista / Viewpoint
 - Waterfall
 - Information
 - Swimming
 - Campground
 - Backcountry Campsite
 - RV Campground
 - Showers
 - Shelter
 - Cabin
 - Yurt
 - Potable Water
 - Food/Dining
 - Lodging
 - Horseback Riding
 - Wildlife
 - Beach
 - Distance Marker
 - Peak
 - One Mile Grid

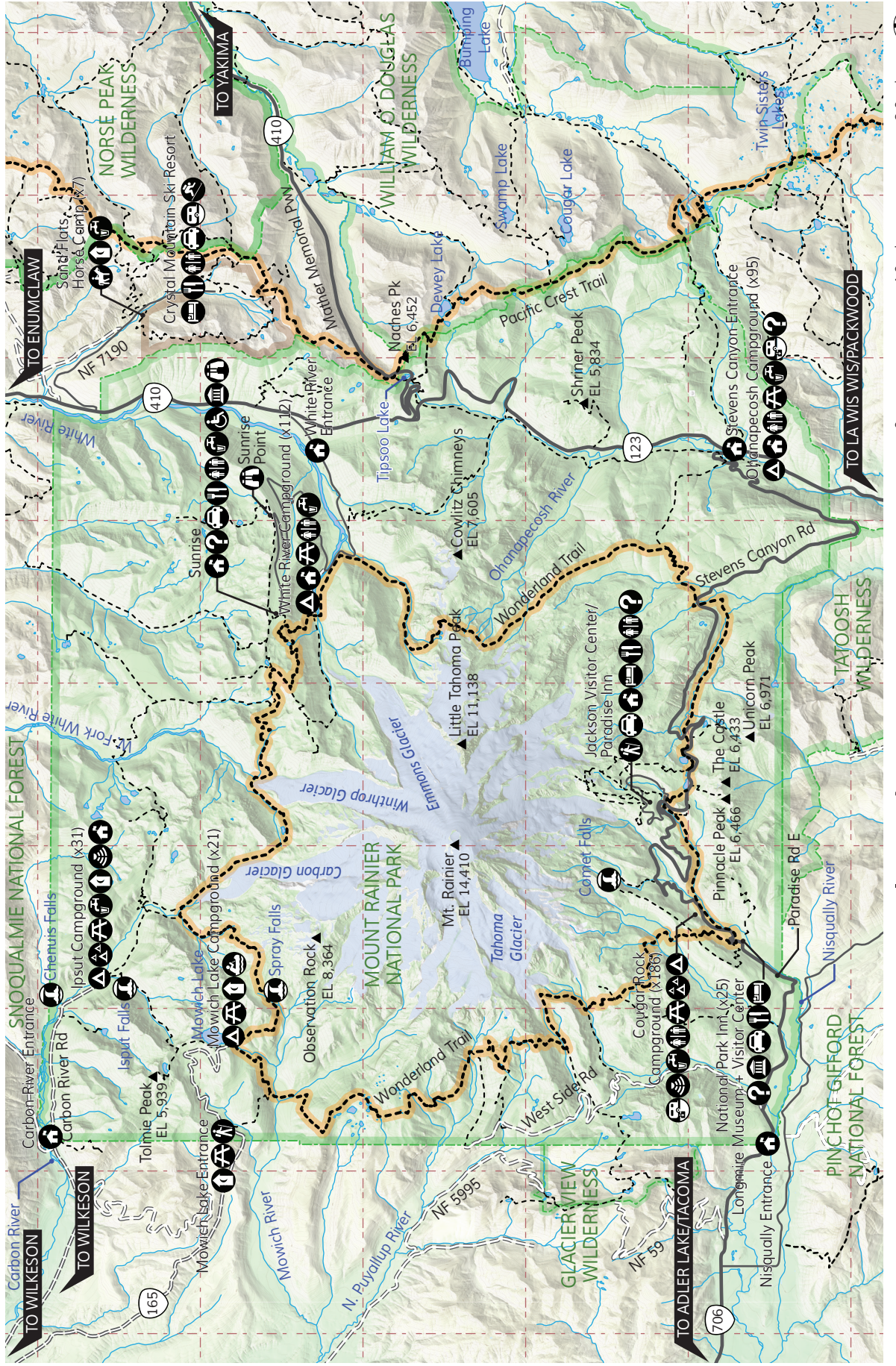
- Trail (major)
- Trail (minor)
- Trail (unmaintained)
- Paved Rd (major)
- Paved Rd (minor)
- Forest Rd (major)
- Forest Rd (minor)
- Featured Route
- Wonderland Trail
- Trailhead
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Vault Toilet
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Shelter
- Ranger Station
- Historic Landmark
- Vista / Viewpoint
- Waterfall
- Boat Ramp
- Information
- Campground
- Backcountry Campsite
- RV Campsite
- Group Campsite
- Shelter
- Cabin
- RV Waste Dump
- Potable Water
- Food/Dining
- Lodging
- Horseback Riding
- Lookout Tower
- One Mile Grid
- Amphitheater
- Distance Marker
- Peak



Mount Rainier National Park-South, WA



- Trail (major)
- Trail (minor)
- Trail (unmaintained)
- Paved Rd (major)
- Paved Rd (minor)
- Forest Rd (major)
- Forest Rd (minor)
- Featured Route
- Wonderland Trail/PCT
- Trailhead
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Vault Toilet
- Picnic Area
- Picnic Shelter
- Ranger Station
- Historic Landmark
- Vista / Viewpoint
- Waterfall
- Boat Ramp
- Information
- Campground
- Backcountry Campsite
- RV Campsite
- Group Campsite
- Shelter
- Cabin
- Yurt
- Potable Water
- Food/Dining
- Lodging
- Horseback Riding
- Skiing/Boarding
- Amphitheater
- Distance Marker
- Peak
- Four-Mile Grid



Mount Rainier National Park, WA

0 4.0 mi. 8.0 mi.

0 2 hrs. 4 hrs.

NORTH