Columbia National Park

Through fire and flame, rain or snow, nature will always find a way, and it will be greater and more beautiful than before.

The two great jewels of the Cascade mountain range, Mount St Helens and Mt Adams are the main features of Columbia National Park. It’s a place filled with history, geological wonders, and new discoveries.

The park is comprised of what used to be the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, until 1975 when Mount St Helens had a violent eruption. The eruption scarred the landscape permanently and its effects can still be felt all around the region.

After the eruption it took many years to rebuilt infrastructure that was already lacking in the region. As this was happening the nearby Yakama Indian Reservation expressed interest in establishing recreational infrastructure around Mount Adams, specifically for skiing and lodging. The Tribe worked consulted with the National Park Service, and eventually began to work with them and creating the Mt Adams Recreation Site.

Even with the new locations and centers of tourism, there is still many historical locations within the park such as Government Mineral Springs Resort, a hotel built in the 1900s which still stands today. There is also the Johnston Ridge Observatory which stands overlooking Mt. St. Helens. The observatory is built near the site of David A. Johnston’s Camp, where he was on the morning of the Mt. St. Helens eruption.

In 1978, Congress designated the southern region of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest to become this park, further driving tourism into the region. Since then the park has grown substantially in capability, but the capacity for wonder and discovery still remains the same, just waiting for you to explore it.

St. Helens

Mount St. Helens is one of most famous mountains in the Cascade Mountain Range. The mountain is an active stratovolcano that dramatically erupted in 1975 causing devastation to the area around it and itself. It’s easily recognizable due to the large crater caused by the eruption. Since then, the volcano has been mostly quiet, with the status of the volcano is constantly monitored at the Johnston Ridge Observatory. Hiking tours to the rim of the crater are very common and provide an excellent view of the mountain and the surrounding area.

Adams

Mount Adams is another major mountain in the park, and the second largest mountain in the state of washing. It too is an active volcano although has not erupted in at least a thousand years. The mountain is famous for it climbing as many established mountain routes have been defined for ease of hiking. The mountain is also famous for skiing, mostly on the southwestern region of the mountain, near the Mount Adams Recreation Area which establishes ski routers and a ski lift from the Pítxanuk Lodge.

Mount Adams Recreation Area

The Mount Adams Recreation Area, also known as the Adams Village, is a small village which serves as the center of tourism for the park. The area contains various businesses with many indigenous run stores, restaurants, and hotels. The area also serves as housing for seasonal and permanent staff, which leave some of the areas off limits to visitors. Otherwise there are most of the village is open to the public with locations to stock up on trial mix, or rest your eyes after a long day of exploration.

Johnston Ridge

Johnston Ridge is a famous and beautiful view point that overlooks Mount Saint Helens to the west of the park. The area is also the location of the Johnston Ridge Observatory. Part of the building serves as a visitors center, the building’s primary purpose is to serve as the geological and volcanic center for park, mainly monitoring Mount Saint Helens for volcanic activity. At the observatory, one can get guided hikes with park rangers, or tours of the observatory.

Government Mineral Springs Resort

The Government Mineral Springs Resort is a historic building located on the southern area of the park. The building was completed in 1918 to serve as a hotel within the forest. The building was almost destroyed in a forest fire in 1935, but was heroically saved by fire teams and hotel staff who tirelessly worked for three days to save the resort. Today the resort with still in operation, and with a refurbishment in 2005, has been brought up to modern standards in terms of amenities. The area around the resort also serves many campsites and cabin sites to allow for stays outside of the resort building.

The Yakama Nation

The Yakama Nation and its peoples is an integral part of this park. Its important to note their importance and influence on this park, and the region as a whole, as it would not be the beauty it is today without their guidance, leadership and cooperation.

The Yakama Nation is comprised of several peoples whom have similar cultures and languages, these are the Klikitat, Palus, Wallawalla, Wanapam, Wenatchi, Wishram and Yakama Peoples. The area where the park is today is traditionally lands belonging to these people and they had been using it for hundreds of years before European settlers had moved west. Archeological findings have found many areas are spatially and culturally significant. These areas have been marked and are not accessible to park visitors without special permission. It’s important to remember that, while this land is for everyone, you must respect it, the people who were here before you and the people who will come after.

Visiting the Park

Protecting and Preserving the Park

Following park rules and regulations is important to making that the park is persevered for everyone and making sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to experience the park. ● Pets must be on leashes no longer thant six feet are allowed in buildings, on trials, in off trail or backcountry areas or in snow parks ● Federal lowers protect all natural and cultural features in the park ● You must have a permit to travel above 10,000ft and for any overnight stay. ● Fishing does not require a permit or license, but some waters are closed to fishing or are fly fishing only.

Firearms

The use of firearms is prohibited withing Columbia National Park. People who can legally possess firearms under federal, Washington State, and local laws may possess them in the park. However, federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities in this park; those places are posted with signs at public entrances.

Fees

Columbia National Park collects fees from visitors who enter the park. All fees go to the park or to the National Park System or enhance the visitor experience.

Lodging

Mt Adams Village and Government Mineral Springs are open year round for lodging, although some campsites in those areas are closed during winter months. Visit the park website for more information and alerts about lodging.

Accessibility

Most visitors centers, restrooms, picnic areas and designated campsites are accessible or accessible with help for wheelchair users, however some areas are more rugged and do not have modern amenities. Most trails are not paved, and may be inaccessible for wheelchair use. Be sure to check online to see what trails are paved and easily accessible.

Emergencies call 911 from any phone located in the Park.