

THE WASHINGTON COAST

The Official Visitor Guide

Grays Harbor County • Forks • Olympic National Park Coast



thewashingtoncoast.com

Ocean Shores • Westport • Forks • La Push • Kalaloch • Ruby Beach • Hoh Rainforest

START HERE

Welcome to the Washington Coast

This coast is not one destination, it is a string of them: a working fishing port, a beach town built for kite flying and razor clams, a rainforest that gets over 100 inches of rain a year, and a stretch of Olympic National Park where sea stacks rise straight out of the surf. This guide covers all of it, town by town, so you can build a trip around what you actually want to do.

How to use this guide

Read the six-region overview below to decide where to base yourself, then jump to the season planner to time your trip around what you want to see or do, then use the practical-info section for fees, permits, and packing. A suggested 3-day and 5-day itinerary closes out the guide.

70+ mi	of protected wilderness coastline
2.5 to 3 hrs	drive from Seattle or Portland
6	distinct coastal regions
Year-round	storm watching, whales, beaches, rainforest

WHERE TO GO

The Six Regions

GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY

Ocean Shores & Grays Harbor



The region's biggest beach-vacation base. Wide, hard-packed, drivable sand, kite festivals, razor clamming, and the largest concentration of hotels, condos, and vacation rentals on the coast. Also home to Aberdeen and Hoquiam, the county's largest towns, and the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge.

GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY

Westport



Washington's best surf town and the self-proclaimed Salmon Capital of the World. Charter boats for salmon, halibut, and whale watching, the tallest lighthouse in the state, and the coast's best-known storm-watching tower.

OLYMPIC PENINSULA

Forks



The rainiest town in the Lower 48 and the practical gateway to the Hoh Rainforest and the park's northern beaches. The best-equipped home base for hikers, with the most lodging, groceries, and gas closest to the park. Also known well beyond the region as the setting for the Twilight novels.

KALALOCH, RUBY BEACH, HOH RAINFOREST

Olympic National Park Coast



The postcard version of this coast: sea stacks, driftwood-piled beaches, moss-draped rainforest trees, and lodges that put you inside all of it. Ruby Beach is the most photographed beach on the coast; the Hoh Rainforest's Hall of Mosses trail is one of the best short walks in the entire park system.

QUILEUTE NATION

La Push & Rialto Beach



First Beach, Second Beach, Third Beach, and Rialto Beach, all within a few miles of the village of La Push on the Quileute Indian Reservation. Some of the most dramatic sea stacks on this entire coast, reached by short, well-loved forest-to-beach hikes.

BEYOND THE TOWNS

Wildlife & Wild Places



Roosevelt elk are a regular sight around the Hoh valley and Quinault area, especially early and late in the day. Gray whales migrate past this coast twice a year, and tide pools along the rocky sections teem with sea stars, anemones, and urchins at low tide.

WHEN TO COME

Season-by-Season Planner

Season	What's Best
July to September	Driest, sunniest weather. Peak season for beach visits, hiking, and general sightseeing. Busiest and priciest lodging.
October to February	Storm watching season, peaking December and January (Westport, Kalaloch). Most of razor clamming season falls here (check WDFW-approved dig dates). Fewer crowds.
March to May	Gray whale migration passes closest to shore (Westport charters run seasonally). Wildflowers and the tail end of razor clamming. Variable weather.
Year-round	Hoh Rainforest and tide pooling work in any season. Dress for rain no matter when you visit; this coast is wet nearly year-round.

Signature Activities

- **Razor clamming:** October to May, on WDFW-approved dig dates only. Check wdfw.wa.gov before you plan a trip around it.
- **Storm watching:** Late October through February, peaking December and January. Westport and Kalaloch are the best-known spots.
- **Whale watching:** December and January southbound migration, March to May northbound (closest to shore). Westport is the charter hub.
- **Surfing:** Westport's jetty break is beginner-friendly and rentable year-round; the water is cold, wetsuits required.
- **Tide pooling:** Best at low tide, especially a minus tide. Beach 4 (Kalaloch) and the Rialto area are the most reliable spots.
- **Hiking:** Hall of Mosses (Hoh) and Second/Third Beach (La Push) are the must-do trails for most visitors.

BEFORE YOU GO

Practical Information

Getting Here

Seattle to Ocean Shores / Westport	About 2.5 to 3 hrs via I-5, US-12/SR-8
Seattle to Forks / La Push	About 3 to 3.5 hrs via US-101
Portland to Grays Harbor	About 2.5 to 3 hrs via I-5, US-12
Portland to Forks	About 4+ hrs
Nearest airports	Seattle-Tacoma (SEA) or Portland (PDX); no major commercial airport on the coast itself

Fees & Permits

A per-vehicle entrance fee applies to enter the coastal units of Olympic National Park (Kalaloch, Ruby Beach, Hoh). Annual Olympic-specific and America the Beautiful passes are typically available, and the park periodically offers fee-free days. Confirm current pricing at [nps.gov/olym](https://www.nps.gov/olym) before you go, since fees are adjusted from time to time.

Overnight wilderness or beach camping (Second Beach, Third Beach, Ozette coast, Shi Shi Beach, Hoh backcountry) requires a permit booked through [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov). Popular zones can sell out in summer, so book as early as the system allows.

What to Pack

- A genuinely waterproof outer layer, not just water-resistant
- Closed-toe shoes suited to walking on wet sand, driftwood, and rock
- Layers; temperatures are mild but the wind off the water cuts through
- A printed or downloaded offline map; cell service is patchy to nonexistent through much of the park
- A current tide table if you plan to tide pool or hike to Hole-in-the-Wall at Rialto Beach

Good to Know

La Push, Rialto Beach, and much of the coastline north of Moclips sit on the Quileute or Quinault Indian Nation reservations. Stay on marked trails and public access points and respect posted signage. This is home to living communities, not a backdrop.

Suggested Itineraries

The 3-Day Weekend

- **Day 1:** Drive in, base yourself in Ocean Shores. Afternoon on the beach, dinner in town.
- **Day 2:** Morning in Westport (harbor, lighthouse, maybe a charter). Afternoon drive up to Kalaloch; watch the sunset from the bluff.
- **Day 3:** Ruby Beach at low tide in the morning, then the Hall of Mosses in the Hoh Rainforest before heading home.

The 5-Day Coast & Rainforest Trip

- **Days 1 and 2:** Ocean Shores and Westport, as above, with a full day for razor clamming or a whale-watching charter if the season lines up.
- **Day 3:** Drive north to Forks, stopping at Lake Quinault along the way for a short rainforest walk.
- **Day 4:** Full day in the Hoh Rainforest and Rialto Beach (Hole-in-the-Wall hike at low tide).
- **Day 5:** Second Beach or Third Beach hike near La Push in the morning, then the drive home.

For the full, continuously updated version of every page in this guide, including current links to official fee, permit, and tide-table sources, visit thewashingtoncoast.com.