

## Washington: Olympic National Park

### Tour-Only Itinerary

You won't find many walking tours of Olympic National Park—and that's exactly what makes this unique naturalists' adventure so special. Without the crowds, you're free to explore this diverse landscape in serene tranquility, walking through temperate rainforests, verdant valleys, and along the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Your experienced local leaders are experts in the region—regaling you with tales of local sustainability efforts in the rainforest and along the salmon-rich Elwha River. Learn about the local Quinault people from Harvest Moon, a community elder and storyteller who entertains you with enchanting fireside tales. Along the way, you'll stay in rustic waterfront lodges with charming lakes and the shores of the Pacific Ocean right out your door. Here, you'll enjoy the region's warm hospitality, exceptional farm-to-table cuisine, and clear, starlit nights.



### Highlights

- Gain a fascinating perspective on Native American culture as a Quinault elder shares her stories and legends with you over a glass of wine.
- Explore the enigmatic Mima Mounds Natural Preserve as your leader shares theories on the creation of this vast prairie of six-foot-high earthen hummocks.
- Marvel at majestic Sol Duc Falls, then descend to Sol Duc Hot Spring Resort for a relaxing soak followed by a cold beverage.
- Stay in iconic national park lodges, from lakeside retreats to rustic beachfront cabins, each steeped in history and surrounded by natural beauty.
- Visit the Elwha River to witness the powerful impact of the largest dam removal in U.S. history and learn how salmon, ecosystems, and communities are being restored.

## On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



**Air Packages** include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

## Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with daily walks ranging from 4 to 9 miles. Considered one of our easier trips, it features minimal elevation gain overall, though two optional routes with scenic views include more substantial climbs (up to 1,550 feet). Some travelers may find the longer distances challenging, even on relatively flat terrain, so shorter alternatives are available. Walks take place on wooded trails, rocky beaches, and dirt paths that may include loose rocks and exposed roots. You'll explore three distinct ecological zones—seacoast, rainforest, and mountains—each offering peaceful trails,

breathtaking vistas, and opportunities to spot rare wildlife.

## DAY 1

### Your Country Walkers Vacation Begins. Travel to Lake Quinault

*Mima Mounds; 1.5 miles, easy. Optional afternoon walk to arrive at lodge on foot; 2-3 miles, easy*

Your leaders will meet you at our meeting point hotel in Seattle—The Westin Seattle—at 8:30 a.m. in the lobby. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts for easy identification. Please be dressed for walking—comfortable, weather-appropriate attire, sturdy footwear, and a daypack (to carry essentials such as rain gear and a water bottle) are required.

From the meeting point in Seattle, you begin a scenic drive, admiring picturesque views of the Olympic Mountains, Mount Rainier, and the Seattle skyline. Soon you leave the city behind and enter a dramatic landscape of towering Douglas firs, western hemlock, and western red cedar. En route, stop to enjoy a picnic lunch and warm-up walk around the Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve, where you'll explore the mysterious prairie landscape dotted with six-foot-high earthen mounds.

An optional second walk brings you into the heart of the temperate rainforest as you approach your lodging on foot—an excellent introduction to the unique ecology of the region, interpreted by your leader(s).

Your home for the next two nights is Lake Quinault Lodge, a grand rustic retreat nestled in Olympic National Forest. Built in 1926, this historic lodge sits on the shores of glacier-fed Lake Quinault and is surrounded by some of the most spectacular old-growth rainforest in the Pacific Northwest. Its cozy, wood-paneled interiors, crackling fireplace, and sweeping lake views provide a tranquil setting to unwind after a day of discovery. If time allows, you may explore the lodge's forested trails before gathering for a welcome dinner in its scenic dining room.

Country Walkers provides you with city information, including recommendations on what to see and do in Seattle if you arrive early or depart after the tour.

**Included Meals:** Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 2

### Graves Creek to Pony Bridge. Quinault Valley

*5-8 miles, easy to moderate*

Today's exploration of the temperate rainforest begins with a visit to the world's largest Sitka spruce tree. This ancient giant has stood watch over the Quinault River for nearly 1,000 years and boasts an astounding 58-foot circumference. From here, you follow the river past waterfalls and riparian glades, driving to the end of the road at the edge of the vast Olympic wilderness.

Your walk takes you along either the Quinault's East or North Fork (depending on seasonal trail conditions), offering the chance to spot Roosevelt elk or migrating salmon. As you ramble through a magnificent forest of towering firs and cedars, you'll pass huckleberry bushes, queen's cup, and bunchberry dogwood. Approaching Pony Bridge, the river plunges through a narrow gorge carved in slate and sandstone—a quintessential rainforest scene, perfect for a photo with its dramatic play of light and cascading water.

You'll enjoy lunch beside the tranquil river, its waters tinted icy blue from glacial silt. Afterward, those with extra energy may choose to continue farther up the Quinault Valley, marveling at alder groves along the way.

This evening, before dinner, you'll meet Harvest Moon—a Quinault elder, storyteller, and basket maker—who will captivate you with legends and stories of her culture by the lodge's stately fireplace.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 3

### Sam's River Loop Trail. Independent Exploration on the Kalaloch Lodge Nature Trail

*3 miles, easy. South Beach to Kalaloch Lodge; 3 miles, easy*

This morning, depart your lodge and travel to the Queets River trailhead to begin your hike along

Sam's River Loop Trail. Fed by the glaciers of Mt. Olympus, the Queets River flows through one of the rarest ecosystems on Earth—a coastal temperate rainforest. Found in only a few places worldwide, including Tasmania, Scotland, Japan, and Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula, this environment teems with life. As you hike beside the river, you'll pass moss-draped trees, towering Sitka spruce—some reaching 300 feet tall and 23 feet wide—and massive fallen logs known as “nurse” trees, which host new seedlings as they decay. Keep watch for elk in the open pastures and through the misty forest undergrowth.

After a savory lunch along the riverbank, continue to the South Beach trailhead for your first walk along the Pacific Coast. This protected stretch of Olympic National Park is virtually untouched by development. Here, you may spot otters, seals, eagles, or even whales offshore. The sandy beach is also a haven for birders, with chances to observe pelicans, cormorants, and oystercatchers.

Your walk concludes at Kalaloch Lodge, your home for the next night. Perched atop a dramatic bluff overlooking the Pacific, this rustic coastal retreat offers cozy log cabins outfitted with wood stoves and thoughtful, modern touches. Surrounded by crashing surf and towering evergreens, Kalaloch is an ideal base for sunset strolls, quiet reflection, and reconnecting with nature. Before dinner, you may wish to explore the scenic one-mile Kalaloch Lodge Nature Trail.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 4

### Sol Duc Valley. Port Angeles

*5-9 miles, easy to moderate*

After breakfast overlooking Kalaloch Creek and the beach, set out on a two-hour scenic drive, passing through the logging town of Forks—recently made notable in the *Twilight* series of books and films. Follow the Sol Duc River through a broad valley, climb into the mountains to road's end, and begin your walk through towering western hemlocks to the iconic Sol Duc Falls.

From here, you can choose between two walking options. The more relaxed route follows the enchanting Lover's Lane Trail to the quaint Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort. At the resort, you may soak in the healing mineral springs or enjoy a drink at the outdoor café beside the Sol Duc River

(this option is approximately four miles). Those seeking a more challenging hike can set out for Deer Lake, ascending 1,500 feet through shifting forest zones, past wetland orchids, and alongside cascading Canyon Creek. At the top, you're rewarded with views of Deer Lake—a peaceful alpine jewel cradled beneath high ridges and meadows.

Later, continue to Lake Crescent, a glacier-carved marvel over eight miles long and 600 feet deep, making it one of Washington's largest lakes. Your home for the next two nights is the historic Lake Crescent Lodge, a beloved national park property where Franklin D. Roosevelt once stayed before initiating discussions that led to the creation of Olympic National Park.

This evening, enjoy a relaxing dinner at the lodge's restaurant or the cozy Singer Tavern Lounge, and take in the peaceful beauty of the lakefront setting.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 5

### Hurricane Hill Trail

*3 miles, easy*

After a brief stop at the National Park Service Visitor Center, you head to Hurricane Ridge for a walk along the Hurricane Hill Trail. Here, you'll take in the sweeping grandeur of the Olympic Mountain Range to the south, with the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island visible to the north. One dramatic peak after another forms a striking skyline. According to Native American legend, these peaks were once part of a single towering mountain—the home of the Thunderbird, the mythical creator of lightning and thunder.

En route, enjoy a picnic lunch surrounded by subalpine meadows. Isolated by glaciers some 10,000 years ago, the Olympic Peninsula became a sanctuary for rare species. Today, these meadows are home to flora and fauna found nowhere else on earth, including the Olympic Mountain daisy, Flett's violet, and the iconic Olympic marmot.

After a full day of walking and wonder, return to your lodge to relax and reflect—then gather for a hearty farewell dinner.



**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 6

### Marymere Falls. Travel to Seattle. Your Country Walkers Vacation Ends

*2 miles, easy to moderate. Elwha River; 2 to 4 miles, easy*

Start your day early with a sunrise walk to the impressive Marymere Falls. This dramatic 90-foot cascade is named for Mary Alice Barnes, sister of Charles Barnes, the cartographer who produced the first map of the Olympic Peninsula's interior during the famous—and perilous—Seattle Press Expedition of 1889.

Later this morning, visit the Elwha River, site of the largest dam removal in U.S. history. This ambitious restoration project, located in the heart of Olympic National Park, has reopened 45 miles of river and 100 miles of tributaries to salmon migration. The returning salmon are revitalizing the ecosystem and supporting the cultural traditions of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

Enjoy an easy walk along a former park road—now abandoned following the dam removal—to a washed-out bridge, where the river's force has reshaped the landscape. Along the way, learn about the motivations behind the dam removal, the process of its execution, and the ongoing efforts to restore this vital watershed.

Later, depart for Seattle via the Bainbridge Ferry, stopping en route to enjoy a special lunch provided by your leaders.

**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## What's Included

### Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
15 on-tour meals: 5 breakfast, 6 lunches, 4 dinners	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓