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## ***Stop 41. Olympic National Park***

Arrival datetime: Monday, June 2, 8:30PM  
Sites visited: Olympic National Park  
Accommodations: Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort  
States traveled: Washington

On the way out of the park, we passed Kautz Creek, the site of one of our hikes the previous day. At that time, it had been too cloudy to see the mountain, but driving by in the morning, Mount Rainier dominated the view over the creek. We had also not seen much leaving the park the previous evening. But this morning, leaving the Park, we were struck by lake Elbe. It was on our left for a few miles along the highway. There were two things that struck us. One, it was green. We were used to crater lakes so deep that all colors in the light spectrum except blue fade away before being reflected. We knew this lake was comparatively shallow. The driftwood also struck us. Huge trees rolled around on the surface, presenting a significant hazard for the small motorboats whizzing around it. The drive was then through new growth forest, lots of leafy trees and a few conifers, none much over fifty feet. We passed the Nisqually River in a little town and surmised that they must have an evacuation plan.

As per the advice of the couple we met at Mount Hood, we headed for scenic 101 to enter Olympic National Park from the West. We tried to have lunch on the water at Aberdeen but there was nothing but industrial port life, so we ended up further up 101 at a small bar that had tree trunk tabletops, reminding us of

Harvey's woodshop and our anniversary chair. The highway turned west to the Pacific coastline, a long stretch of which was actually part of the park.

We stopped at a trailhead for the beach and walked a few hundred feet to the coastline. The forest trail was dark and lush. The maple and cedar trees were very tall and old and many had multiple huge burls like those in on the giant redwoods. The beach was full of large flat rounded stone like those used to etch cute sayings on small flower gardens. It was also completely overrun with driftwood in the form of whole trees and very large trunks and branches. A sign warned against trying to swim or fish anywhere near, saying that "Beach logs kill." These trees lined the coast for as far as we could see in either direction.

We stopped at the Kalaloch Information Station and got a map and some advice on short day hikes. We two more beaches. The first had a bridge leading from the woods to the sand made from large pieces of driftwood. Its rocks were red sedimentary standing on its side and being eroded by the waves into sculptures of the waves themselves. An eagle flew overhead, dipping close enough for our camera to capture the distinctive hooked beak. The next beach, Ruby Beach, was also full of tall trees



*"Beach logs kill", whole tree driftwood on the beach along route 101.*

and flat smooth rocks. Waves crashed into sea stacks and small tidal pools revealed circular sea life that looked like live flowers, their tentacles flowing in the water as if blowing in the wind. We climbed on the tree trunks and sea stacks and walked along the sand until water rising into a sandy tidal inlet forced us to turn around.

The Ranger had recommended some short hikes in the Hoh Rain Forest, so even though it was by then 5:00PM, we decided to drive the twenty or so miles out of our way for one last park experience for the day, well worth the drive. The Rain Forest had well-groomed flat paths leading through a cool shadowy forest

accentuated with thick tree trunks, up to three feet or more in diameter. These trees were tall enough for us not to be able to see the top. Neat wooden bridges crossed streams lined with bright light green ferns, dull green moss, deep dark green bushes, and low hanging tree branches dripping with olive green fungus. Virtually every square inch of ground was covered with trees, tall grasses, or leafy bushes, or patches of wildflowers, at least 64 different shade of green, plus a few wildflower highlights. It was certainly an old growth forest by Ranger Curt's definition. We saw one dead tree trunk that supported at least ten new trees of varying ages and heights. We saw several snags teaming with new



*Sea stacks at Ruby Beach.*

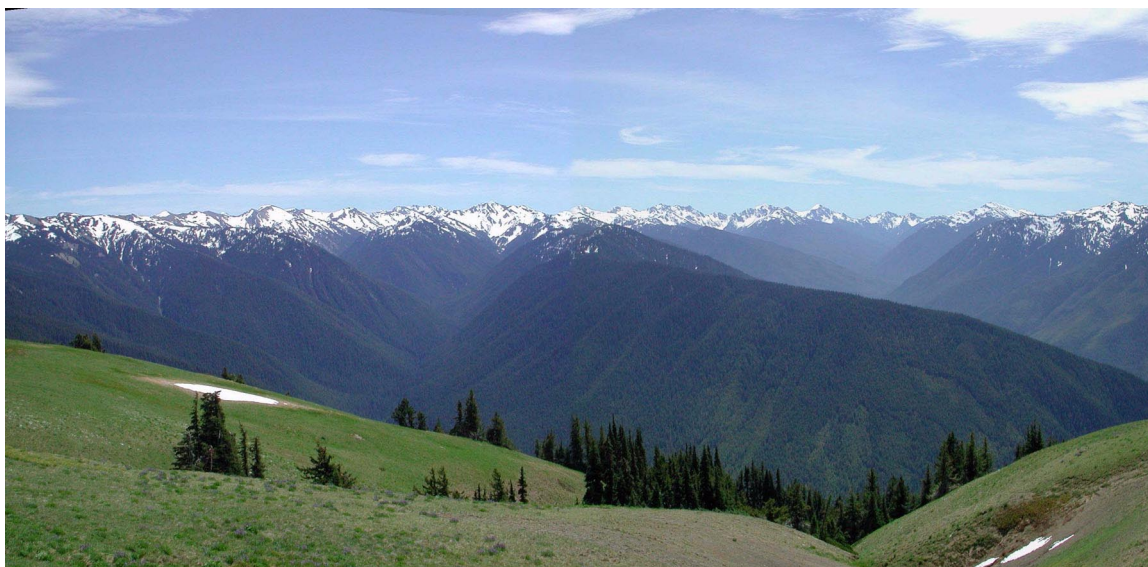
life, including a full-grown tree sprouting from the top and of fungus covering the roots of trees.

One of the hikes afforded a view of the Hoh River. Like the Nisqually and Kautz Creek, it meandered through rock beds and mud piles laid down by previous flows. In contrast to the old growth from which we had just emerged, it was framed with young green forest and strewn with large logs of bare driftwood.

Luckily, the days were long and we were still driving in daylight when we arrived at the Sol Duc Hot Springs Resort at 8:45PM. More luckily, the dining room was not yet closed. The dining room looked out on the pools that also closed at 9:00PM and did not open until 9:00AM the next day. There were four pools of differing temperatures. People stayed until a woman with a brush full of detergent, ready to clean around them kicked them out.

Leaving Sol Duc Tuesday morning, we saw some Roosevelt Elk feeding along the roadside. It reminded us we had seen some the previous morning driving out of Mount Rainier, leaving us to conclude the morning was the best time to catch them should anyone be so inclined. Still following the advice of the couple we met at Mount Hood, we were headed for Hurricane Ridge.

It was cold and windy, but the views were great. First of Lake Crescent framed on all sides by steep forests, then of Mount Baker and Glacier Peak in the distance from a westward looking overlook, finally of Mount Olympus and the Olympic Mountain Range to the southeast. At the top was an alpine meadow. We had learned the difference between alpine and subalpine from Ranger Curt, and given that there were very few and only very small trees at the overlook, we concluded the meadow was an alpine rather than a subalpine one. Only a few hundred feet of paved trails



*The view from Hurricane Ridge.*



*The Hoh Rain Forest.*



*Lake Crescent..*

were open, ropes warning visitors not to venture onto the snow. We walked these and browsed through the visitor center, then headed down to the town of Port Angeles.

The previous morning, Michael had discovered a nick in the windshield right in his line of sight. We had no idea how it could have happened in the parking lot of the Paradise Inn, though there were certainly enough “Falling Rock” signs around everywhere else we went. We contacted our insurance company by cell phone and they directed us to a glass shop in Port Angeles to get it fixed, that they did in less time than it took to settle the insurance claim. It was a treat to find a tourist restaurant on the water, the

Crab House. A nice selection of wine, a great variety of seafood, and service that was not still in high school was a welcome change from the National Park scene.

From Port Angeles, we headed to Salt Creek, supposedly a great place for tidal pool exploring. But we hit the tide wrong and could only move around on ten or twelve high rocks while the waves washed the pools between them with too much white water to see much at all. But we enjoyed the fact that we could look out at Canada, reminiscing about looking at Mexico a month before, another “Rim to Rim” credit for Michael in the Cadillac.

We again passed Lake Crescent. The water was not crater blue, but it was calm and scenic enough to be tempting to try another cold mountain lake swim. But the Hot Springs beckoned, so we instead swam in the very large but irregularly L-shaped 88° pool. Some kids had left a

small basketball in the pool, and Michael taught Jennifer the basics of water polo. We played until exhausted, then made for the smaller, round set of hot pools. The lifeguard informed us we had chosen the hottest one, 104°. We stretched and soaked, then went in for dinner.

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Miles traveled: 464  
Departure datetime: Wednesday, June 26, 7:40AM  
Departure weather: 53° Partly Cloudy