Land Carved by Water

Water is the master architect of the Central Cascades. Mountain streams, rivers, and falls have shaped the landscape surrounding the Columbia Gorge. So have the winds that prevailed across the Columbia Plateau in the distant past. The intervening millions of years have seen the peaks, valleys, and forests that are today's Cascades evolve and change. These are the mountains we know and the mountains we have known. They speak to us of the power of nature and the heritage of the land.

Clackamas River

The Columbia Plateau, source of this flowing water, is ancestral to the Plateaus that stretch to the west of the Cascades. Here, at one time, the ancestors of the Plateau peoples lived. They saw the Plateau as a great river swelling in the distance and flowing between shores of glassy, smooth rock. To them, the Columbia River and the waterways of the Pacific were sources of life, and the spirits of the waters were to be respected and feared.

St. Helens, Hood, Jefferson, the Santiam, and the Colville Plateau. These are the mountains that rise above the Clackamas River. They mark the boundary between the eastern and western natural regions of the Cascades. The boundary is not a line, but rather a zone of transition, a mixture of the eastern and western landscapes. The mountains that stretch from the Cascades to the westernmost mountains, the mountains of the Coast Range, are also a part of this transition zone.

The central Cascades, which lie between the eastern and western regions, are a land of diversity. The region is a land of both the past and the present, a land of the old and the new. The central Cascades are a land of the past, a land of the present, and a land of the future. They are a land of the past, a land of the present, and a land of the future.

Sustainable Travel Tips

Natural or Scenic Area

Museum

Burgers made from locally raised
RoadRunners Roadside Café

Road trip: Washington's Wine Country

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Mountains

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Sustainable Travel Tips

1. Travel with local businesses and employees. Consider spending your time and money at local businesses with local employees, especially when camping.

2. Visiting a national park or other park? Check out our Community Supported Agriculture (C.S.A.). We purchased local fruits and vegetables that are delivered to communities from Chehalis to Olympia, WA. Many of our parks are perfect for a leisurely stroll, hike, or bike ride. Some parks are home to historic buildings, such as a hilltop mansion overlooking the Columbia River Gorge. Hike the incline back up to Mount Rainier National Park, or book a whitewater rafting adventure.

3. Consider using a hybrid vehicle when a car is necessary. For additional traveler tips and tools for offsetting your carbon footprint, visit the U.S. Forest Service-Pacific Northwest Region, Bureau of Land Management, or the Columbia River Gorge Visitors Association. These resources provide information on how to reduce your environmental impact while traveling.

4. Be aware of the growing areas of native plants. Native plants are important to the local ecosystem and can provide a valuable habitat for local wildlife. Many parks and reserves have designated areas for native plants, which can be easily identified by signs or maps. Be sure to stay on designated trails and avoid disturbing these valuable areas.

5. Respect the natural environment. Keep in mind that you are in a delicate and fragile ecosystem. Do not litter or damage natural resources. Follow Leave No Trace principles and help protect these areas for future generations.

6. Support conservation efforts. Consider supporting conservation efforts necessary to protect and maintain these areas. Many parks and reserves have visitor centers where you can learn more about the conservation efforts and how you can get involved.

7. Visit the Children's Museum and trolley tours. Both are perfect for a leisurely stroll, hike, or bike ride. Some parks are home to historic buildings, such as a hilltop mansion overlooking the Columbia River Gorge. Hike the incline back up to Mount Rainier National Park, or book a whitewater rafting adventure.