



RV TRIPGEN

The Complete Guide to
RV Travel in
Washington

Speed limits, towing rules, NPS reservations, Cascade-pass windows, ferry rules,
and everything else you need to know before you cross the state line.

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rvtripgen.com

RV travel in Washington

Washington packs three national parks (Olympic, Mt. Rainier, North Cascades), an ocean coast, the San Juan Islands, the Columbia Plateau wine country, and the Cascades into one drivable state. The catch is that everything on the west side gets weather -- the Olympic Peninsula is genuinely a rainforest, Mt. Rainier closes most of its high roads from November through May, and North Cascades' WA-20 closes the high pass entirely in winter. The east side (Spokane, Tri-Cities, the Columbia Plateau) is drier and stays drivable year-round. Ferry travel to the San Juans is RV-doable but expensive and you need reservations; Sea-to-Sky travel with a fifth wheel is a different exercise than with a Class B. Plan around the seasonality and Washington is one of the highest-density RV states in the country.

Washington by the numbers

Boondocking + dispersed sites	1,618
Established campgrounds	556
Dump stations	115
Propane refills	128
Potable water fill-ups	201
Laundromats	86
RV showers	109
Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)	127

Source: iOverlander community database (71% of Washington spots verified in the last 24 months).

Driving rules

Interstate (cars)	70 mph (rural I-90 east stretches); 60-65 mph elsewhere
Interstate (trucks + towing)	60 mph
US/State highway (cars)	55-60 mph (posted)
US/State highway (towing)	55 mph
Built-up areas	25-35 mph (posted)
Drive on	Right
RV passenger seatbelts	Required for all occupants in all seats (primary enforcement)
Cell phone use while driving	Hands-free only since 2017; all hand-held banned (calls + text); \$136 first offence

Highways

RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-5	Main north-south spine, Vancouver BC to Portland OR. Big-rig standard. Heavy traffic through Seattle 0500-1900 weekdays.
I-90	Seattle east over Snoqualmie Pass to Spokane and on to Idaho. Snoqualmie is chains-required Nov-Mar in storms. Vantage bridge over the Columbia is wind-exposed.
I-82 / I-182 / I-184	Yakima south to the Tri-Cities. Easy.
I-405	Eastside bypass of Seattle.
US-101	Olympic Peninsula loop. Two-lane, slow, but RV-friendly throughout. Hood Canal Floating Bridge is rare-but-real wind closures.
US-2	Everett east over Stevens Pass to Wenatchee. Stevens Pass is heavy-snow chain-required area Nov-Apr.
US-97	Goldendale north through Wenatchee and on to Canada. Blewett Pass (US-97) is open year-round.
WA-20 (North Cascades Hwy)	Burlington east over Washington Pass to Winthrop. CLOSED mid-Nov to mid-Apr typically. Spectacular when open.

RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
Sunrise Road (Mt. Rainier NP, east side)	Trailers prohibited; RVs over 25 ft strongly discouraged on the upper switchbacks.
Paradise / Stevens Canyon Road (Mt. Rainier)	Long combinations (motorhome + toad) restricted on Stevens Canyon. Check current NPS vehicle rules.
WA-410 Chinook Pass	Trailers over 30 ft tough on the switchbacks; closed in winter (typically late Nov to late May).
Hurricane Ridge Road (Olympic NP)	Open year-round in good weather; chains required winter. Narrow shoulders near top -- not for big rigs.
San Juan Islands ferries	Vehicles over 22 ft pay much higher fares; over 30 ft and you may need a height-restricted lane. Reservations REQUIRED for vehicles in summer (Apr-Sep) via wsdot.com/ferries .

Mountain passes

Pass	Elevation	Note
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Snoqualmie Pass (I-90)	3022 ft	Open year-round; chains-required area Nov-Mar.
Stevens Pass (US-2)	4061 ft	Open year-round; chains-required area Nov-Apr.
Washington Pass (WA-20)	5477 ft	CLOSED mid-Nov to mid-Apr typically.
Rainy Pass (WA-20)	4855 ft	Same closure window as Washington Pass.
Blewett Pass (US-97)	4102 ft	Open year-round; chains in storms.
Chinook Pass (WA-410)	5430 ft	Open mid-May to mid-Nov typically.
White Pass (US-12)	4500 ft	Open year-round; chains Nov-Apr.
Sherman Pass (WA-20 east)	5575 ft	Open year-round; chains Nov-Mar. Highest year-round-open pass in WA.
Loup Loup Summit (WA-20 east)	4020 ft	Open year-round.

National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
Mt. Rainier NP	\$30/vehicle (7 days), \$80 America the Beautiful annual	Cougar Rock and Ohanapecosh Campgrounds reservable via recreation.gov; RVs to 35 ft (some sites). White River first-come; RVs to 27 ft only. Timed-entry reservations now required for the Paradise and Sunrise corridors mid-May through Labor Day -- separate from camping reservations.
Olympic NP	\$30/vehicle (7 days)	Multiple campgrounds; Kalaloch and Mora reservable, others first-come. Sol Duc reservable summer only. RV size limits vary by campground (typically 21-35 ft). Many Olympic NP roads dead-end at trailheads -- pick a base and day-trip.
North Cascades NP	Free entry	Newhalem Creek Campground reservable; Goodell Creek first-come. RVs to 45 ft at Newhalem. Park is only realistically reachable May-Oct via WA-20.
Lake Roosevelt NRA	Free entry; camping \$10-30	27 campgrounds along the Columbia; most first-come, several reservable. RV-friendly.
Lake Chelan NRA (Stehekin)	Free entry	Stehekin is boat- or floatplane-access only from Chelan. No vehicle access. Day-trip from Chelan instead.
Mt. St. Helens NVM (USFS-managed)	Free; some sites \$8	Iron Creek and Seaquest (state park) reservable; RVs welcome. The volcano monument is USFS not NPS strictly.
Whitman Mission NHS	Free entry	Day-use only.

Fort Vancouver NHS	Free entry	Day-use only; commercial RV options in Vancouver.
Ebey's Landing NH Reserve	Free entry	Whidbey Island; Fort Casey State Park has RV camping nearby.
San Juan Island NHP	Free entry	Day-use only; commercial RV camping on the island (book ferry well ahead).

State parks

Washington has 100+ state parks, of which 50+ have RV sites with hookups. Standouts: Deception Pass (Whidbey Island), Fort Worden (Port Townsend), Cape Disappointment (south coast), Steamboat Rock (Grand Coulee), Lake Wenatchee, Seaquest (near Mt. St. Helens), Sun Lakes-Dry Falls. Reservable up to 9 months ahead via parks.wa.gov / 1-888-CAMPOUT. Full-hookup non-resident \$35-50/night; partial \$30-40. Day-use \$10/vehicle or \$30 annual Discover Pass (required for parking on all state lands).

Boondocking + dispersed camping

BLM: Washington has relatively little BLM compared to the rest of the West -- mostly small pockets in eastern WA around the Yakima Training Center, Methow Valley, and along the Columbia. Free 14-day dispersed camping where allowed. Don't expect Quartzsite-scale acreage; you'll mostly be on Forest Service.

National Forest: Olympic, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, Wenatchee (now part of Okanogan-Wenatchee), Gifford Pinchot, Colville, and Umatilla National Forests cover most of the state's mountains. Free dispersed camping along forest roads; 14-day limit. Popular FR areas around Methow Valley, Leavenworth, and the Columbia Gorge fill summer weekends. Fire restrictions Jun-Oct east-side; less so west-side.

Stay limit: 14 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

Tribal lands

Washington has 29 federally-recognized tribes. Several reservations are large enough to affect routing: Yakama (south-central), Colville (north-central; WA-21 and WA-155 cross it), Quinalt (Olympic west coast), and Makah (NW tip at Neah Bay). Tribal lands are sovereign; dispersed camping not permitted without permission. The Makah Reservation requires a Makah Recreation Pass (\$20) to access Cape Flattery. Several tribes operate gas stations with tax-free fuel along I-5 and US-101.

Propane, dump stations, fuel

Propane: Reliable in Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Tri-Cities, Yakima, Bellingham, Olympia, Wenatchee, and along I-5/I-90/I-82. Sparse on the Olympic Peninsula west side (Forks has one, Aberdeen reliable), the Methow Valley (Winthrop has seasonal supply), and the WA-20 corridor in shoulder seasons. U-Haul reliable; Les Schwab and many Co-op stations in eastern WA do refills.

Dump stations: Most Washington state parks have free dumps for registered guests. Flying J / Pilot stops along I-5 and I-90 charge \$10-15. Seattle metro has multiple commercial options. Some city public works yards (smaller towns) offer free dumps for through-travellers -- worth asking. The wsdot.com state-park

map flags dump-station availability per park.

Fuel: Diesel widely available along interstates. Long gaps to watch: WA-20 across the North Cascades (Mazama is the last reliable diesel before Diablo when open Jun-Oct; closed entirely in winter); US-101 northwest of Forks (50+ miles to next reliable on the west Peninsula); WA-21 across the Colville Reservation (60+ miles between Curlew and Republic). Washington fuel taxes among the highest in the country; fill before crossing into Idaho or Oregon (especially) if heading north or east.

Weather windows

Best months: Late June through early October for the whole state. West side daytime 65-80 F; east side 80-95 F. Cascades cool quickly above 4,000 ft.

Avoid: November through April for any pass above 3,500 ft. North Cascades WA-20 closed entirely. Snoqualmie, Stevens, Chinook, White, and Cayuse passes all chain-required or closed in storms. West side stays drivable but very wet (Forks averages 100+ inches annual rainfall; mould risk in stored rigs). East side stays cold-and-dry but I-90 east of Vantage closes regularly for ground blizzards.

Climate caution

Washington's chain laws are enforced strictly Nov-Mar. "Tire chains required" means actual chains or studded snow tires for vehicles over 10,000 lbs GVWR -- and most travel-trailer rigs hit that. WSDOT inspects at pass entrances and turns rigs around. Carry chains for the drive axles AND the trailer if towing in winter.

Emergency + road conditions

State patrol

Dial *WSP (*977) from a cell phone for Washington State Patrol non-emergency

Road conditions

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/real-time/map>

How RV TripGen helps

Cascade-pass winter window check

RV Tripgen tracks WA-20 (Washington Pass) seasonal closure dates plus Stevens, Snoqualmie, Chinook, and White Pass chain-required status, and reroutes winter trips through low-elevation alternates.

San Juan ferry reservation lead time

RV Tripgen flags any San Juan Islands overnight in the May-Sep window without a confirmed WSDOT ferry vehicle reservation (sailings often book out 2-4 weeks ahead in summer).