Rampart Ridge, WA



Vicinity Location: 61 miles southeast of Seattle in Mt. Rainier National Park.

Directions:
From Portland, take I-5 North and take exit 68 to Hwy 12. Take Hwy 12 for about 30 miles to Morton. Turn left on Hwy 7 and drive about 17 miles to Hwy 706. Turn right on Hwy 706 and drive to the Nisqually entrance on the west side of Mt. Rainier National Park. Drive about three miles from the entrance and cross the bridge over Kautz Creek. Continue to Longmire and take a right turn just after the lodge. Drive about .1 mile and park on the right.

From Seattle, take I-5 South to Hwy 512 East and go towards Puyallup (Exit 127). Follow Hwy 512 East for about 2 miles. Turn south onto Hwy 7 towards Mt. Rainier. Follow Hwy 7 south to Elbe. At Elbe, turn left onto Hwy 706, travel through Ashford, and then to the Nisqually entrance of Mt. Rainier National Park. Drive about three miles from the entrance and cross the bridge over Kautz Creek. Continue to Longmire and take a right turn just after the lodge. Drive about .1 mile and park on the right in the parking lot.

Flush toilets are available at Longmire.

Pets aren’t allowed on National Park trails.

National Park Entrance fee of $30.00 for a car or $25 for a motorcycle and a single passenger or Annual Pass is required to enter the park.

Length and Elevation:
5 Miles round trip. Elevation gain 1,320 feet and no loss. Total gain and loss is 2,640 feet. Elevation at the trailhead is 2,750 feet, the high point of the trail is 4,070 feet.

Trail:
Rampart Ridge Trail. Connections to Trail of Shadows, Wonderland Trail and Van Trump Park Trail.

Trail Maps:
Topo Map, National Park Service Map

Review: July 8, 2008
It is recommended this loop be hiked clockwise for the best views of Mt. Rainier. From the National Park Inn, walk across the road and turn left on the trail. In about ¼ mile is the trailhead for the Rampart Ridge Trail. Turn left and begin ascending the switchbacks up to the southern edge of the ridge. The trail switchbacks fairly steeply and the northern switchbacks pass close to a seasonal stream. The trail passes through a dense second-growth forest with limited vistas. Near the top of the switchbacks is an off-trail view of the Nisqually Valley. From here the trail is fairly level for the next 1 ¼ miles. There is a signed viewpoint with views of Eagle Peak, Nisqually River, and the National Park Inn about ¼ mile from the top of the switchbacks.

The trail begins to descend and there is a fine off-trail viewpoint straight out from where the trail takes a sharp left. Stay a while on a sunny day and enjoy splendid views of Mt. Rainier to the north and Kautz Creek Valley with Mt. Wow near the horizon to the west. Along the way, look for a small pond on the left. There is one last glimpse of Mt. Rainier across the pond. From here the trail drops a bit and then continues on a fairly level track to the junction with the Wonderland Trail. Turn right and continue downhill.

The trail shortly passes the junction for the Van Trump Park Trail. Continue straight and descend through the forest and It passes by a burbling seasonal stream and crosses a boardwalk over a swampy area. Sometimes you can smell the Skunk Cabbage. The trail drops down to the Nisqually-Paradise Road, crosses it, gently ascends a bit, drops past another junction with the Wonderland Trail, then descends back to the National Park Inn.

The loop can be hiked in either direction, but going clockwise keeps Mount Rainier in front more of the time and is thus recommended. The hike begins steeply as the trail leads through dense forest to the top of the ridge. Once on the ridgetop, the there is about 1.3 miles of relatively level hiking before starting the descent along the Wonderland Trail back to Longmire.

This trail is suitable for small children as long as they stay on the trail. The signed viewpoint along the ridge is at the edge of the cliff but there is a railing. The trail is mostly in a dense forest with little undergrowth. Though this trail is heavily used, it is not the most scenic trail in the park. The greatest advantage of this trail is that it is at low elevation and is hikeable when most other trails are snowed in.

Enjoy the photos!!
Gallery Pics
Switchback Steve