

NW WEEKEND: Winter Retreats

By Brandon Fralic & Rachel Wood

From the blustery Olympic Peninsula to snowy Eastern Washington, a stay at a cozy, rustic lodge is the perfect way to warm up and relax after spending a frosty day snowshoeing at Mount Rainier, skiing in the Methow Valley or beachcombing along the coast.

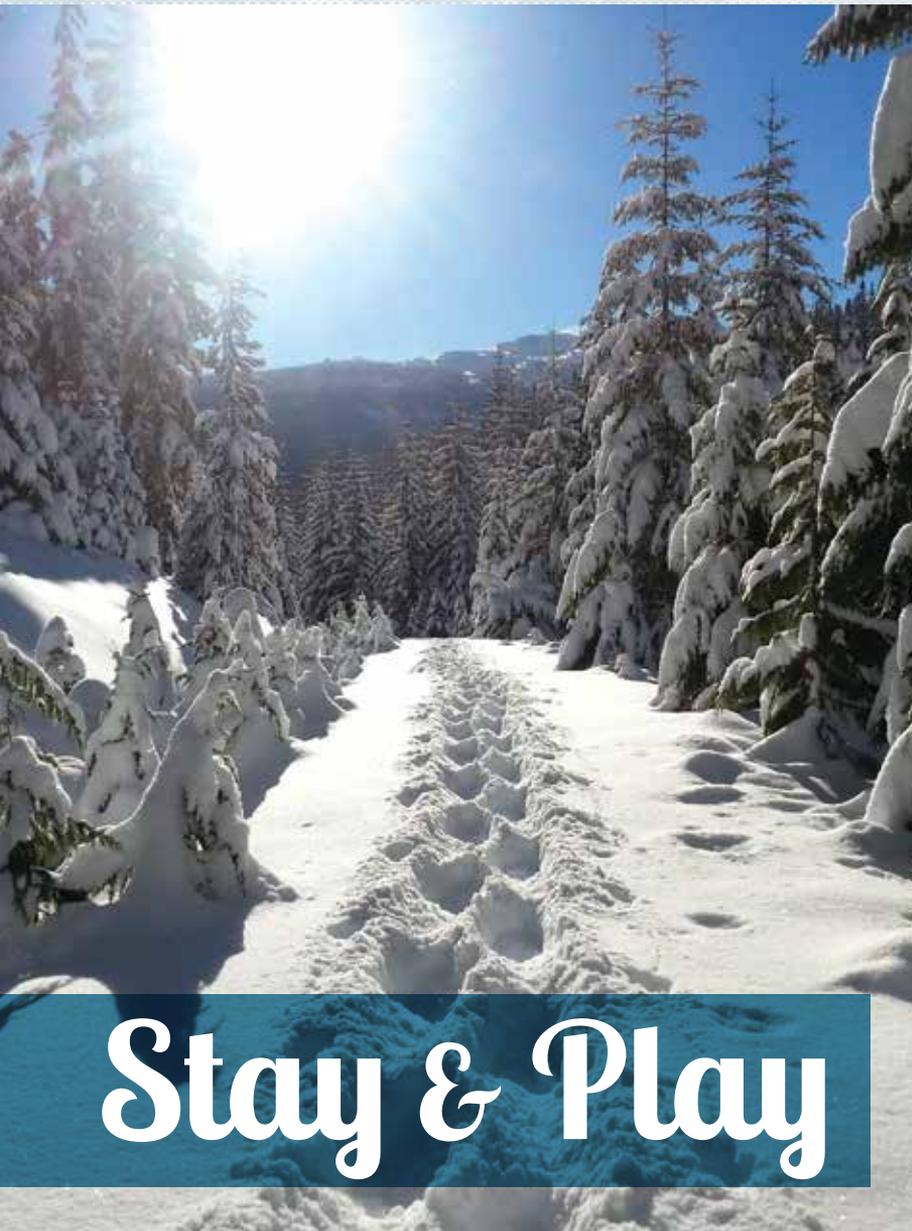


Photo courtesy of Kalaloch Lodge

KALALOCH LODGE

On a scenic bluff overlooking the crashing surf of the Pacific Ocean, Kalaloch Lodge offers shelter from the Olympic Peninsula's 12 feet of annual precipitation. Mild coastal temperatures and the potential for storm-watching make this destination an ideal winter retreat.

Originally built in 1925 as Becker's Cabin Camp, Kalaloch Lodge was initially a collection of nine cabins until a 1931 expansion that followed the completion of Highway 101. Today, it welcomes travelers with 10 rooms in the main lodge and 44 cabins and 10 rooms in the Seacrest House. Many of the rooms offer ocean views and cabins are pet-friendly with full or partial kitchens. Rooms do not include Internet, televisions or phones. Take the time instead to walk along the beach, explore the Hoh rainforest or curl up by the fireplace in your cabin to read against the backdrop of ocean waves.

EAT HERE The Creekside Restaurant at the main lodge offers Pacific Northwest fare made with local and seasonal ingredients. For a hearty breakfast, try the smoked salmon hash; the Dungeness crab mac and cheese makes for an indulgent dinner.

HIKE HERE Kalaloch and the surrounding beaches are part of 65 miles of wild coastline in Olympic National Park. Visit **Beach 4** at low tide for the best tidepools, home to intertidal wildlife including sea stars, anemones and barnacles. North of Kalaloch, picturesque **Ruby Beach** offers views of rugged sea stacks. Visit the ranger station south of Kalaloch Lodge to learn more about the area's diverse ecosystem.

GET THERE Kalaloch Lodge is 91 miles from Port Angeles; drive west, then south, on US 101. From Olympia, the lodge is 117 miles; drive west on WA 8, continue west, then north, on US 101.

INFO thekalalochlodge.com

Photo by Dan Oliva



NATIONAL PARK INN LONGMIRE

As America's fifth national park, Mount Rainier is full of history—and it begins at Longmire. Set serenely within the Longmire National Historic Landmark District, the National Park Inn is over a century old. Those in search of a cozy retreat will find it here. Fine examples of the western national park rustic style, or “parkitecture,” surround the inn, including the 1916 museum building and 1930 administrative building.

The National Park Inn at Longmire is the only lodge and restaurant open year-round within the park. The inn offers 25 rooms, mountain views and a boardgame-stocked guest lounge—sans the modern-day distractions of phone, television and Internet. Order up one of their signature hot cocktails and warm up by the oversized stone fireplace—or bundle up to relax on the front porch while watching sunset alpenglow light up Mount Rainier.

GEAR UP The general store at the National Park Inn rents snowshoes and cross-country gear for adults and children.

HIKE HERE The 0.7-mile **Trail of the Shadows** loop presents a casual stroll among forested meadows. Points of interest include the mineral springs responsible for Longmire's settlement and a restored cabin originally built in 1888. For a challenging winter hike or snowshoe, head for **Rampart Ridge**. This 4.5-mile loop begins with a series of relatively steep switchbacks, gaining 1,200 feet to a pleasant stroll along the ridgetop and a viewpoint that offers a wide panorama of Mount Rainier.

GET THERE The National Park Inn at Longmire is 70 miles east of Olympia, 65 miles southeast of Tacoma and 96 miles south and east of Seattle. Drive to Elbe, then continue 20 miles east on WA 706. National park entry fee required.

INFO mtrainierguestservices.com



BEAR CREEK LODGE

Mount Spokane State Park receives an average of 300 inches of snow each winter that's perfect for downhill or cross-country skiing, snowboarding and snowshoeing. Just outside the state park, Bear Creek Lodge is conveniently located for an easy winter getaway. Originally opened in 1952, the family owned and operated lodge offers 15 comfortable rooms. All rooms have a private bathroom; some even feature a spa tub. Designed in a rustic spirit, these no-frills rooms are without television, phone or cell service; Internet access is available. Two large fireplaces warm the lodge, and big-screen TVs are available for a movie night. When you're ready to play in the snow, be sure to ask about Bear Creek's nearly 800-foot-long snow tubing hill.

EAT HERE The restaurant and lounge serve up standard American fare, beer and wine. Try the country-style BBQ pork ribs special (Wed. only), or tackle the massive Bear Creek burger.

HIKE HERE For a moderately challenging snowshoe, trek to the **CCC Cabin** on Beauty Mountain. Enjoy views across Spokane Valley while you hike beneath old-growth trees and ascend to the old cabin where a wood stove awaits to warm you up.

GET THERE Bear Creek Lodge is 26 miles from Spokane; drive north on US 2, then northeast on WA 206.

INFO bearcreeklodge.com



METHOW RIVER LODGE

Just a 10-minute walk from the charming Old West-inspired town of Winthrop, Methow River Lodge welcomes travelers ready to explore the Methow Valley. This modern pinewood lodge has 26 rooms with patios overlooking the Methow River. The property also includes six cabins, each sleeping 4 to 6 comfortably, complete with fully stocked kitchens. All accommodations include Internet, satellite television and mini-fridge. The lodge is also right next door to the outdoor Winthrop Ice and Sports Rink. Try your luck on the ice, then head out to the Methow Community Trail to play in the snow.

EAT HERE Head into town for a pint and something to eat at one of the many restaurants within walking distance of Methow River Lodge.

HIKE HERE West of Winthrop, the **Big Valley Wildlife Area** is 1,164 acres of scenic forest. The 5-mile round-trip **Big Valley Loop Trail** is a flat, double-loop section of the Methow Community Trail. Perfect for snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, with plenty of opportunities to view the river and moments to catch the winter sun through the surrounding ponderosa pines.

GET THERE Methow River Lodge is 163 miles from Ellensburg; drive north on US 97 and continue on WA 20 to Winthrop. From Spokane, the lodge is 183 miles; drive west on US 2, then continue north on WA 17 and US 97 to WA 20.

INFO methowriverlodge.com

MOUNT RAINIER CHAIN REQUIREMENTS: All vehicles are required to carry tire chains when traveling in the park during the winter season (Nov. 1–May 1). This requirement applies to all vehicles (including four-wheel-drive), regardless of tire type or weather conditions.

MOUNT SPOKANE PERMIT REQUIREMENTS: As all of Mount Spokane State Park is considered a Sno-Park, both a Sno-Park permit and Discover Pass are required for all visitors during the winter season (Nov. 1–Apr. 30). To use the groomed trails, a groomed trails sticker is required in addition to the regular Sno-Park permit.