



Hiking with the Family

Where shall we go?

Figuring out where to take the kids hiking is not a simple matter. We can't give you a list of surefire perfect hikes, because **there aren't any surefire perfect hikes** that work for every family every time. Several factors need to be taken into consideration:

- Age and capabilities of your kids
- Features and attractions of the hike
- Time available/ How far you're willing to drive
- Time of year/ Condition of the trail
- Weather forecast

Choosing the "right" trip requires **a little homework**. The more you can learn about your destination ahead of time, the less likely that unexpected troubles will pop up. But rest assured, unexpected troubles will ALWAYS pop up, so keeping a **positive attitude** and **being flexible** is a must.

To learn about where to hike with your family, we suggest using a number of resources:

- 1) **Talk to friends** and acquaintances who are experienced at hiking with kids.
- 2) **Research books** which have endless suggestions and helpful ideas. Among our favorites:

Best Hikes with Children – Joan Burton (The Mountaineers)
Sharing Nature with Children- Joseph Cornell (Dawn Publications)
Kids in the Wild – Cindy Ross & Todd Gladfelter (The Mountaineers)
Are We Having Fun Yet? – Brian Baird (The Mountaineers)
Hiking Snohomish County – Ken Wilcox (NW Wild Books)
Mac's Field Guides – MacGowan & Sauskojus (The Mountaineers)

- 3) **Study Maps** to help understand how to get there and what to look for. Road Maps, Forest Service, National Park, Green Trails, and TOPO custom Maps are all very helpful.

- 4) **Talk to Park and Forest rangers** who work in the areas you might visit. This is a good way to learn about permit requirements, road and trail conditions.

- 5) **Check feature columns in newspapers**, which often give great suggestions with detailed information about a hike.

- 6) **Use the internet.** Here are several great sites to become familiar with:
- www.everettmountaineers.org/family/family.html - Everett Mountaineers site, with listings of family activities
 - www.wta.org – Washington Trails Association, with trip reports from hikers like us for many of the region’s trails.
 - www.fs.fed.us/r6/mbs – Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, the largest area of public lands in Western Washington, with hundreds of miles of trails.
 - www.nps.gov/mora – Mount Rainier National Park, for information about trails near Mt. Rainier.
 - www.wrh.noaa.gov/Seattle/forecast03.html – National Weather Service forecasts for the mountain areas of Washington.
 - www.parks.wa.gov - Washington State Parks site, with information about many parks with hiking trails.
 - www.alpineandy.com – Personal site by Everett Parks guide Andy Boos with news and photos of outings offered by the parks department.

Learn to “measure” a hike by comparing the **mileage and elevation gain** figures. With a little experience, you learn what distance and how much elevation gain makes a good hike for your family. Start off conservatively with short, easy hikes and work forward from there.

Be aware that when hiking on Public Lands in the state of Washington, often a fee or permit is required. Following are the major land agencies in our state, and what requirements there are for using the lands there.

1) **National Forests** such as the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie, the Wenatchee, and the Olympic make up a majority of the public land in the mountainous regions of the state. A **Northwest Forest Pass** is required for parking at a National Forest Trailhead. An annual pass is \$30, available at major outdoor stores, ranger stations, and selected stores in the vicinities near the forests. A one-day pass is \$5.

2) Mount Rainier and Olympic **National Parks** are overseen by the National Park Service. When entering these parks, a **\$10 per vehicle fee** is charged. North Cascades National Park does not charge an entry fee, but does require the Northwest Forest Pass at trailheads, similar to the National Forests.

3) **Washington State Parks**, which include popular hiking spots such as Wallace Falls and Deception Pass, charge a \$5 per day fee to park and use any facilities. An annual pass for \$50 is available as well.

Be prepared to adhere to these permit and fee requirements. Fines are imposed for those who don’t comply.