



# Olympic Peninsula & Washington Coast

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## Best Places to Stay

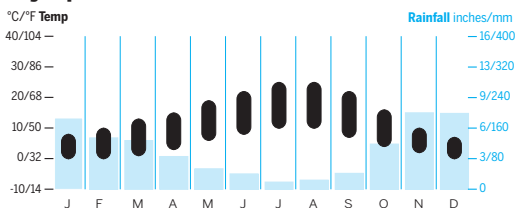
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## Why Go?

It took a lucrative series of 'tweenage' vampire novels to put the Olympic Peninsula on most people's radar. But if you've come here purely in search of *Twilight* paraphernalia, you're missing 99% of what this wild, storm-lashed, fog-shrouded landmass is all about. The Olympic Peninsula is an unblemished wilderness of the highest order with an interior redolent of Middle Earth and an end-of-the-continent coastline that makes Big Sur look positively calm. Then there's the precipitation. While Seattleites whine about a little winter drizzle, the Hoh Rain Forest is drowning in up to 200in of rain a year. There's an upside to all this water, of course; it's green here, a thousand verdant shades of it if you stare hard enough. And it's virgin too. Untouched in over a millennium lie sapphire lakes, rarely climbed mountains, and ancient cedar and spruce trees older than most of Europe's medieval castles.

## When to Go

### Olympia



**March** Visit Port Townsend's unique Victorian Days festival

**July & August** Best hiking opportunities and least likelihood of rain

**August (third week)** Long Beach's International Kite Festival

## OLYMPIA

POP 43,330

Small in size but big in clout, state capital Olympia is a musical, political and outdoor powerhouse that punches well above its 43,000 population. Look no further than the streetside buskers on 4th Ave belting out acoustic grunge, the smartly-attired bureaucrats marching across the lawns of the resplendent state legislature, or the Gortex-clad outdoor fiends overnighting before rugged sorties into the Olympic Mountains. Truth is, despite its classical Greek-sounding name, creative, out-of-the-box Olympia is anything but ordinary. Progressive Evergreen college has long lent the place an artsy turn (creator of *The Simpsons*, Matt Groening, studied here) while the dive bars and secondhand guitar shops of downtown provided an original pulpit for riot grrrl music and grunge.

## Sights & Activities

### Washington State Capitol

NOTABLE BUILDING

(☺8am-4:30pm) Looking like a huge Grecian temple, the Capitol complex dominates the town. Its beautiful setting, in a 30-acre park overlooking Capitol Lake with the Olympic Mountains glistening in the background, is a visitor favorite. The campus' crowning glory is the magnificent **Legislative Building**. Completed in 1927, it's a dazzling display of craning columns and polished marble, topped by a 287ft dome that is only slightly smaller than its namesake in Washington, DC.

As well as the Legislative Building, visitors are welcome to peek inside both the Supreme Court or **Temple of Justice** flanked by sandstone colonnades and lined in the interior by yet more marble, and the **Capitol Conservatory**, which hosts a large collection of tropical and subtropical plants.

The oldest building on the campus is the **Governor's Mansion**, built in 1908. The home of the governor is open for tours only on Wednesday; call to reserve a space. Outdoor attractions include the Vietnam War Memorial, a sunken rose garden, a replica of the Roman-style fountain found in Tivoli Park, Copenhagen, plus a Story Pole carved by Chief William Shelton of the local Snohomish tribe in 1938. The manicured grounds are an attraction in themselves and a well-marked path zigzags down to Capitol Lake where it connects with more trails.

### State Capital Museum

MUSEUM

(211 W 21st Ave; adult/child \$2/1; ☺10am-4pm Tue-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun) This premier museum is housed in the 1920s Lord Mansion, a few blocks south of the campus, and preserves the general history of Washington State from the Nisqually tribe to the present day.

### Hands On Children's Museum

KIDS ACTIVITIES

(106 11th Ave; admission \$7.95, free 1st Fri of month 5-9pm; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; ♿) Resuscitate the kids next to the State Capitol with creative exhibits on human anatomy and nature including a simulated x-ray machine and a TV studio where children can create their own weather reports.

### Old State Capitol

NOTABLE BUILDING

(600 S Washington St; ☺8am-noon, 1-5pm Mon-Fri) Eye-catching in Sylvester Park, this maverick building was constructed in 1892 in an unusual Romanesque-revival style and now acts as an office for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Its nine-story central tower was badly burned in 1928, and the building's 11 turrets fell off during a 1949 earthquake. Nonetheless, the old capitol, with its castle-like facade and fairytale flourishes, is still a head-turner. Pick up a brochure for a self-guided tour at the 2nd-floor reception area.

### Percival Landing Park

PARK

When Olympia was founded, its narrow harbor was a mudflat during low tides, but after years of dredging, a decent harbor was established. This park is essentially a boardwalk along the harbor that overlooks the assembled pleasure craft and provides informative display boards describing Olympia's past as a shipbuilding port and a center of the lumber and cannery trades.

### Olympia Farmers Market

MARKET

(700 Capitol Way N; ☺10am-3pm Thu-Sun Apr-Oct) Second only to Seattle's Pike Place in size and character, Olympia's local market is a great place to shop for organic herbs, vegetables, flowers, baked goods and the famous specialty oysters.

### Batdorf & Bronson Tasting Room

COFFEE-TASTING

(www.dancinggoats.com; 200 Market St NE; ☺9am-4pm Wed-Sun) Located in the company's coffee-roasting house, this aromatic concern allows caffeine junkies to sample choice brands from Africa, Indonesia and Latin America. Knowledgeable staff provide the background facts.