



# Olympic Peninsula & Washington Coast

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## Best Places to Eat

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## Best Places to Stay

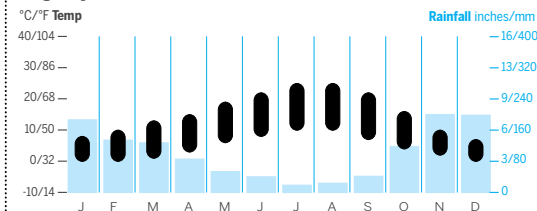
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## Why Go?

The Olympic Peninsula is an unblemished wilderness of the highest order, with an interior redolent of a unicorn fantasy novel 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. It took a lucrative series of vampire novels to put the Olympic Peninsula on the world's radar, but *Twilight* is only 1% of what this wild, fog-shrouded land-mass is about.

## When to Go

### Olympia



**Mar** Port Townsend's unique Victorian Days festival.

**Jul & Aug** Best hiking opportunities and least chance of rain.

**Aug** Long Beach's International Kite Festival in the third week.

## OLYMPIA

POP 47,266

Small in size but big in clout, state capital Olympia is a political, musical and outdoor powerhouse that punches well above its 47,000-strong population. Look no further than the streetside buskers on 4th Ave, the smartly attired bureaucrats marching across the lawns of the resplendent state legislature or the Gore-Tex-clad outdoor fiends overnighing 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

LANDMARK

(☉8am-4:30pm) **FREE** 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 aka the **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; admission \$2; ☉10am-4pm Tue-Fri, from noon Sat) 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

MUSEUM

(114 Jefferson St NE; admission \$9.95; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun; ♿) Recently remodeled and relocated at a cost of \$9 million, this is the ne plus ultra of kid interactive fun. Highlights include an eagle's nest that can be scaled – a slide tumbles down from here to the Puget Sound interpretive area, where there's an underwater world and crane-lift port area. The **WET Science Center** next door is dedicated to water-reclamation education (and has an artificial creek to play in).

#### 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 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.

#### Priest Point Park

PARK

(2600 East Bay Dr NE) Many Olympians cite this as their favorite park for the nature trails that lead to Bud Inlet on Puget Sound, the many shore birds, the rose garden and the playground with views of downtown and the Capitol Building.

#### Tumwater Falls Park

WATERFALL

(110 Deschutes Way SW, Tumwater; ☉8am-8pm) **FREE** Paralleling I-5 near the turnoff to US 101, 15 acres of park trails follow the Deschutes River from the abandoned 1906 Olympic Brewery brick building up to the same brewery's midcentury location, the 82ft falls, fish ladders and a small salmon hatchery.

#### Olympia Farmers Market

MARKET

(700 Capitol Way N; ☉10am-3pm Thu-Sun Apr-Oct, Sat & Sun Nov-Dec) 🌿 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.