

# CLIMBING MOUNT ST. HELENS

## CLIMBING INFORMATION AT A GLANCE

- Climbers may be exposing themselves to volcanic hazards that can occur without warning.
- Climbing permits are required year-round to climb above 4,800 feet elevation. Each person must read and sign their permit.
- Climbing is limited to 100 climbers a day from May 15 through Octobr 31.
- Maximum party size is 12 people.
- A permit fee of \$15.00 plus a transaction fee of \$7.00 per person is charged for a one day climbing permit from April 1 through October 31. Total cost is \$22.00.
- Climbing permit fee and administrative charges are not refundable. Please plan accordingly.
- All climbing permits are sold in advance on a first come-first serve basis by the Mount St. Helens Institute and sold online at [mshinstitute.org](http://mshinstitute.org).
- Permits will not be sold at Lone Fir Resort. There will be no lottery for unsold permits.
- Climber registration is required year round. The Climbers Register is located outside Lone Fir Resort.
- Any commercial use, including paid guiding is prohibited, unless authorized by a Special Use Permit.
- Entry into the crater of Mount St. Helens is strictly prohibited.



**MOUNT ST. HELENS  
NATIONAL VOLCANIC MONUMENT**



**and the MOUNT ST. HELENS  
INSTITUTE**

A stylized graphic of a mountain range or volcanic landscape, with jagged peaks and a central volcano.

## WELCOME

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Mount St. Helens is an active volcano in southwest Washington and is the central feature of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument. Mount St. Helens is a popular climb for both beginning and experienced mountaineers. Although people climb Mount St. Helens year-round, late spring through early fall is the most popular season.

Most climbers use the Monitor Ridge Route from Climbers Bivouac. This route gains 4,500 feet in 5 miles to the crater rim at 8,365 feet elevation. Although strenuous, this non-technical climb is suitable for people in good physical condition who are comfortable scrambling on steep, rugged terrain. Most climbers complete the round trip in 7 - 12 hours.

## PERMIT SYSTEM

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All people must have a climbing permit to be above 4,800 feet elevation on Mount St. Helens. Permits are required year-round. Each climber must display their own climbing permit. Permits are valid for 24 hours starting at midnight for the date of climb and are nontransferable. Maximum party size is 12 climbers. **Permit fees are non-refundable.**

From **May 15, through October 31**, climbing use is limited to 100 people per day. From **April 1, through October 31**, a fee is charged for climbing permits. From **November 1, through March 31**, there is no use limit and no charge for climbing permits.

The climbing permit system has been in effect since 1987. The system protects the volcano's physical and biological features and processes, reduces crowding, and provides climbers with information on climbing conditions, Leave No Trace principles, and safety.

## PERMIT FEES

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All Mount St. Helens climbing permits are sold by the **Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI)** through an online vendor. MSHI is a non-profit partner of Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, providing educational and resource management programs. MSHI also raises funds to help support Monument programs.

There is a \$15.00 fee for climbing permits, plus a transaction fee of \$7.00. Total cost is \$22.00 per person. **Fees are not refundable.** Please plan accordingly.

Permit fees are charged from **April 1, through October 31**. Climbers must pay for their climbing permits in advance through an online vendor that accepts all major credit and debit cards. Climbers will be emailed a confirmation receipt at the time of purchase. Climbers will then exchange their receipt for their actual permit at the Climbers Register, at Lone Fir Resor starting the day prior to the date of the climb, during business hours. Lone Fir Resort will not be selling climbing permits. Permits must be bought in advance, first come, first serve at our online vendor. Unsold permits will not be available by lottery as in the past. Trip leaders are asked to pick-up their entire groups permits. **All climbers need to read and sign their permits and abide by all permit conditions.** Hours at Lone Fir is adjusted seasonally; visit our website or call ahead to verify.

## PERMIT FEES, CONTINUED

From November 1, through March 31, there is no charge for permits. During this period, self-issue permits are available 24 hours a day at the Climbers Register located outside Lone Fir Resort.

The climbing permit fee is part of a National program which allows the Monument to retain funds collected from climbing permit sales to support services and facilities for climbers.

## USE LIMITS

Climbing is limited to 100 people a day from May 15, through October 31. Access is limited to protect the volcano's physical and biological features and processes, and reduce crowding. During the limited use season, permits will be available for purchase online until the limit is reached.

Below compares the use limits, fees and permit reservations by date.

Date	Use Limit	Fee	Advance Permit Sale
Nov 1-Mar 31	None	\$0	Self-issue permits available at Lone Fir Resort
Apr 1-May 14	None	\$22	Purchase through an online vendor
May 15-Oct 31	100 per day	\$22	Purchase through an online vendor

## CLIMBERS REGISTRATION

All climbers must sign-in and sign-out after their climb. The register is located outside Lone Fir Resort and is accessible 24 hours a day. Lone Fir Resort is located in Cougar, Washington on State Route 503, 28 miles east of Woodland and Interstate 5.

## MOUNT ST. HELENS INSTITUTE

The Mount St. Helens Institute (MSHI) is a non-profit partner of Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, providing educational and resource management programs. MSHI also raises funds to support the monument. They are helping to build a community of people who are passionate about the preservation and utilization of Mount St. Helens. People just like you.

## MONITOR RIDGE CLIMBING ROUTE

The Monitor Ridge Climbing Route is the primary route used by climbers during summer. It is a nontechnical scramble, gaining 4,500 feet in 5 miles. Most climbers complete the round trip in 7 to 12 hours.

The route begins at Climbers Bivouac, located at the end of Forest Road 830, south of the volcano. Toilets are located at Climbers Bivouac and near timberline. At 3,700 feet elevation, Climbers Bivouac has the highest vehicle access on Mount St. Helens.

Start on Ptarmigan Trail #216A which climbs 1,100 feet in 2 1/4 miles to timberline at 4,800 feet elevation. Above timberline, the route generally follows Monitor Ridge, climbing steeply through blocky lava

flows and loose pumice and ash. From timberline the route is marked with large wooden posts to about 7,000 feet elevation.

## **MONITOR RIDGE CLIMBING ROUTE, CONTINUED**

The upper 1,300 feet of the route is unmarked and covered with loose, rock, pumice and ash. On your descent, take care to stay on route, a minor detour may put you far off route at timberline.

## **IS CLIMBING THE VOLCANO FOR YOU?**

Climbing to the crater rim is only one of many ways to experience Mount St. Helens. Climbing the volcano is not a trail hike, it is a rugged, off-trail scramble and is not for everyone. Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument has nearly 200 miles of trails where hikers can experience this volcanic landscape. Most of these trails can be accessed without a permit or use limit.

Recommended hiking trails in the Monument include:

### **Trails accessed from Forest Roads 81 and 83 (Southside):**

Ape Canyon #234

Lava Canyon #184

Toutle Trail #238

### **Trails accessed from Forest Roads 99 and 26 (Eastside):**

Boundary #1

Independence Pass #227

Truman #207

### **Trails accessed from State Route 504 (Westside):**

Boundary #1

Hummocks #229

South Coldwater #230A

## **CAMPING**

Campgrounds are located nearby, in the community of Cougar and at Beaver Bay and Cougar Camp, managed by PacifiCorp.

Camping is allowed at Climbers Bivouac. It is a developed site with parking, tent pads, fire grates and toilets, but no running water, or picnic tables. Please pack out all litter.

Hike-in camping is allowed below 4,800 feet elevation on the south side of the volcano. Use Leave-No-Trace practices to reduce impacts.

Due to the sensitivity of the upper slopes of the volcano, camping is discouraged above 4,800 foot elevation. If a high camp is planned, climbers must have permits for each date that they intend to be above 4,800 elevation.

## **USDA CIVIL RIGHTS POLICY**

Persons of any race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, or with any disability are welcome to use and enjoy all facilities, programs, and services of the USDA.

Discrimination in any form is strictly against agency policy, and should be reported to the USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20250.



## SAFETY

Though Mount St. Helens is not a particularly dangerous climb, some accidents and injuries do occur. Most serious accidents happen when climbers slide or glissade down snowfields and are unable to stop or avoid hazards. **Always control your speed and be able to stop yourself.**

The rim is precipitous with drops of over 1,000 feet to the crater floor. A snow cornice develops in winter and often lasts well into summer. Take care as portions of the rim may be unstable year-round. **Stay off the cornice!**

There are no active glaciers on the south slopes of Mount St. Helens. There are however, large permanent snow fields which may be very icy and may have large cracks caused by settling.

Check the forecast and watch the weather as conditions can change rapidly. Be prepared for weather extremes.

Pets must be on a leash six feet or less in length at all times. For the safety of your pet, consider leaving it at home.

## VOLCANIC HAZARDS

Climbers may be exposing themselves to volcanic hazards which cannot be forecast or can occur without warning. **Volcanic hazards may include:**

**Ashfall:** Explosions and lava dome rock fall can produce plumes of volcanic ash (gritty dust) that rise above the crater rim and drift downwind. Volcanic ash can cause discomfort to your nose, mouth and lungs and make breathing difficult. Ash can decrease visibility and traction, making travel hazardous.

**Ballistics:** (rock hurled onto the flanks of the volcano). Explosions in the crater may throw rock fragments above the crater rim. In rare instances, rocks may be large enough to cause injury or death.

**Volcanic gases:** Under normal conditions, climbers may detect the faint odor of sulfur dioxide (lit match) and hydrogen sulfide (rotten eggs). Under rare circumstances, climbers may experience irritation to their nose, mouth and lungs.

**Debris Flows:** Rain storms and melting snow can trigger small debris flows in gullies and stream channels on the volcano.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER VOLCANIC HAZARDS?

### **DON'T PANIC!**

If you encounter ashfall or ballistics, seek cover and act quickly to protect your head, airway and eyes. Descend rapidly to below the crater rim and seek cover behind boulders or slope breaks. Protect your head with a helmet or hardhat. Cover your nose and mouth with a dust mask.

If you do not have recommended safety equipment, you can gain some protection by covering your head with your backpack and your face with a cloth. Remain in a protected position until the event subsides and hazards from falling rock and ash have subsided or ended, (usually lasts no longer than 30 minutes).

**If volcanic activity increases or if hazards on the climbing routes are forecast, climbing access will be suspended and the \$15 permit fee will be refunded.**

## WHAT TO BRING ON YOUR CLIMB

Mountain climbing is physically demanding. Prepare yourself for a long arduous day. Here is a partial list of items that may make your experience safer and more enjoyable:

- Climbing helmet or hardhat to protect your head in the event of volcanic ballistics or rock fall.
- Dust Mask (N95 type) to cover your mouth and nose in the event of ashfall or blowing dust.
- Goggles or sunglasses with side shields. Sun reflecting off of snow and ash is intense. Avoid contact lenses, as blowing ash and dust can be a problem.
- Ice axe, if you plan to travel on snow, and crampons, if icy conditions are anticipated.
- At least 3 quarts of drinking water per person. No water is available at Climbers Bivouac or on the climbing route.
- Layered clothing including full rain gear, gloves and hat. Layering allows you to adjust your clothing to different exertion levels and weather.
- Sturdy, comfortable hiking boots and gaiters to keep out snow and ash.
- First aid kit, sun screen, flashlight, compass and a topographic map.
- Lunch and extra snacks.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

EMERGENCY .....	911
Climbing permit sales .....	<a href="http://www.mshinstitute.org">www.mshinstitute.org</a>
Mount St. Helens Institute .....	360-449-7826
Mount St. Helens Monument Headquarters .....	360-449-7800
Climbing Information .....	<a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm">www.fs.fed.us/gpnf/mshnvm</a>
Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center .....	360-274-2114
USGS Eruption Updates .....	<a href="http://www.vulcan.wr.usgs.gov">www.vulcan.wr.usgs.gov</a>
National Weather Service (Washington) .....	360-694-6136
National Weather Service (Oregon) .....	503-261-9246
Avalanche information (Washington) .....	360-526-6677
Avalanche information (Oregon) .....	503-808-2400
Gifford Pinchot National Forest .....	<a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/gpnf">www.fs.fed.us/gpnf</a>
Lone Fir Resort .....	360-238-5210
PacifiCorp Camping .....	503-813-6666