

A black and white photograph of a rugged coastline. In the foreground, dark, jagged rock formations jettify into the ocean. Waves with white foam are crashing against the base of the rocks. A sandy beach is visible in the middle ground, nestled between the rocks. In the background, a forested hillside rises, with a small cluster of houses visible on the right side. The sky is overcast.

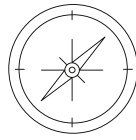
OFF-THE-BEATEN-PATH ADVENTURES

BACKROAD PACKERS

**OLYMPIC
PENINSULA**

**ROAD TRIP
ROUTE**

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OLYMPIC PENINSULA



This route takes you along stunning coastline, through quaint towns and vibrant, lush forests, through some of the rainiest areas in the world and even to a forgotten natural hot spring. This route should take about 3 days - though the more time you have means the more time you have to explore and adventure. Make sure to bring your camera, a rain jacket and some waterproof shoes, because this is one pretty stunning drive.

START: SEATTLE END: ABERDEEN

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ADVENTUROUS ROUTE THROUGH THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA

Seattle: a nice funky town with great food, awesome coffee shops, and lots of unique sites to see, Seattle is definitely worth spending a day or two in. Some great areas to explore are Fremont, Capitol Hill, and Ballard. And no Seattle trip is complete without stopping at Pike's Place Market.

Bainbridge Island: grab an early morning ferry to Bainbridge Island from the Seattle Ferry terminal (right downtown). Once you land, head into the cute downtown area for a coffee and maybe a quick breakfast. *an awesome little bakery worth checking out is Blackbird Bakery

Point No Point Lighthouse: the oldest continuously working lighthouse along Puget Sound, Point No Point Lighthouse offers tours - though the location itself (and views) are worth the drive alone

Port Gamble: head back down the road to Port Gamble, another historic town that was the starting point for the "Sawdust Saga" in the Northwest (aka logging operations). Today, Port Gamble is one of the nation's best-preserved western lumber towns with many well-preserved buildings along the main street.

Hood Canal Floating Bridge: while it might not seem like much when driving across it, the Hood Canal Floating Bridge is actually quite special. In fact, it is the fourth-longest floating bridge in the world and the longest in a saltwater tidal basin.

Fort Flagler Historical State Park: another slightly out of the way destination, but completely worth the drive, is Fort Flagler, a historic military fort built in the late 1890s to guard the entrance to the Hood Canal. It has since been manned during WWI, WWII, and the Korean War. Today it offers tours, hikes and camping.



Port Townsend: possibly one of the cutest coastal towns along the Pacific, Port Townsend is popular for its many Victorian buildings remaining from its late 19th-century heyday, water views, and quaint, historic feeling. *you can take a ferry from Port Townsend to Coupeville on Whidby Island - home to many beautiful state parks

Sequim: pronounced "squim", this unassuming town along Hwy 101 is actually really unique (and like we've said before, worth stopping to see). Known as the Lavender Capital of North America, this is a great place to eat local seafood, meander down backcountry roads, and best of all, not get soaked by rain (it only rains 65 days a year there).

Dungeness: just north of Sequim, this tiny town is special due to its location along the Strait of Juan de Fuca. More specifically, the Dungeness Spit - a long sand bar. It is also home to the oldest shellfish fishery on the North Pacific Coast and where the delicious crab got their name.

Port Angeles: a couple of miles down Hwy 101 from Sequim, Port Angeles is a quasi-hub of the entire Olympic Peninsula. Here you will find the main Olympic National Park Visitor Center, the road to the amazing (and popular) Hurricane Ridge, and even a ferry over to Victoria, British Columbia (aka Canada).

Olympic Hot Springs: a true hidden gem in Olympic National Park, these natural hot springs are definitely an adventure to get to - but 100% worth it in the end. Start at the end of Olympic Hot Springs Road and either plan to hike up the now-closed road (it got washed out in 2016) or grab some bikes. Head up the road, along a dirt trail, and then 8 miles until you get to the actual trailhead. Then hike 2 miles to the hot springs (like we said, it's an adventure). There are four natural hot springs tucked away in the forest. Honestly, one of the best hot springs we have EVER been to!

*read about our adventure to it [here](#).

Lake Crescent: a massive and picturesque lake right along the highway, this is an awesome place for a picnic, a quick dip or even to watch sunset. We took a quick swim and even though it is in the mountains, the water was a nice temperature and crystal clear. If you are looking to do some boating or kayaking, this is THE place to do it (fishing is also supposed to be amazing).

Cape Flattery: the northwesternmost point of the contiguous United States, Cape Flattery is way out on the tip of the entire Olympic Peninsula - but trust us, it is possibly one of the prettiest drives in the whole state. Once there you can take a short hike to see the Cape Flattery Lighthouse, which sits on a small island. *interestingly, Cape Flattery is almost even with the westernmost point in the US (Cape Alava, a wonderful hike), depending on the tides.

Rialto Beach and La Push: you've probably heard of La Push - the hometown of the werewolves from a little book called Twilight. In reality, it is a picturesque area that is worth a walk. Right next door is Rialto Beach, a nice sandy beach with massive driftwood, tidepools, and sharp-toothed rocks.

Forks: an even more famous town thanks to hundreds of teenagers' love for vampires, Forks is surprisingly not much of a town (though it does have a couple of good coffee drive-thrus). Stop for some caffeine, gas, and maybe to stock up at the grocery store and then head out to the next stop on the list.

Hoh Rainforest: less than an hour from Forks is one of the prettiest, most jaw-droppingly beautiful natural places in the whole state (United States? World?). The Hoh Rainforest is one of the wettest places in the USA, averaging 140 inches of precipitation a year. Take a hike around the short nature trails, especially the Hall of Mosses, or go even further along the Hoh River Trail. Either way, spend the day marveling at the lush green canopy and feel as if you are in a real-world Jurassic Park.

Lake Quinault: an hour and a half south of the Hoh Rainforest is another beautiful lake, as well as a nice trail that leads through a similarly stunning rainforest. This is a great spot to cool off, go for a swim, or have a picnic. There is also a campground here (and at the Hoh Rainforest).

*you can also hike to the world's largest Sitka spruce

Aberdeen: after Lake Quinault, you can sit back and relax (and take in the scenery). The drive between the lake and Aberdeen is about an hour and mostly through dense forest and logging plots (a weird juxtaposition). Once in Aberdeen you can grab some food, more coffee, and get ready to either keep heading south along the coast or back east towards Seattle.

*Aberdeen was once called the "The Hellhole of the Pacific", as well as "The Port of Missing Men" due to its high murder rate - don't worry, this was back in the 1800's.



TOP ADVENTURES ALONG THE WAY

- Olympic Hot Springs, 10-mile hike (or bike) out to natural hot springs in the woods
- Ozette Triangle Loop, 9.5 miles along the coast and in old-growth forests
- Hurricane Hill, a short but rewarding hike for stunning 360-degree views
- Royal Basin Falls and Lake, get a permit and explore the park without the people



WHERE TO REST YOUR HEAD

- Wild camping near Miller State Park
- Park near the trailhead for Olympic Hot Springs on a back road with views of the river
- Pull-off and campsite on Forest Service Road 2918 - plus views of the Sol Duc River
- Anywhere along the road out to the Hoh Rainforest (it is all National Forest land), but be aware - it can get muddy!

For more camping options, check out the iOverlander app.

HIDDEN GEMS ON THE ROUTE

- Washington Lavender Farm, location for the Washington Annual Lavender festival
- Pyramid Peak Aircraft Warning Service Lookout, built during WWII by NP employees to help spot planes
- World's Largest Spruce Tree, standing 191 feet tall
- Destruction Island Lighthouse, a decommissioned lighthouse on Destruction Island
- Humes Ranch Cabin, an old cabin in the woods that was used by videographers while filming a Disney movie called "Olympic Elk" (very early natural film)



WHERE TO FILL UP ON CAFFEINE TO KEEP ADVENTURING

- Blackbird Bakery in Bainbridge has amazing pastries and coffee (perfect for a quick walk around town)
- Seal Dog Coffee Bar in Port Townsend - another adorable coastal town with lots of history
- Rainshadow Cafe in Sequim
- The Great Northern Coffee Bar in Port Angeles
- NW Coffee Bros in Forks is a drive-through cafe (something we noticed a lot in the PNW)