

HIDDEN GEMS USA

VOLUME 03



Washington

Find your own kind of evergreen.

36 PLACES. SIX REGIONS. YOUR NEXT DETOUR.

An independent, thoughtfully researched travel companion.

FIRST EDITION / OCTOBER 4, 2026

A LITTLE OFF THE OBVIOUS PATH

Good places. Room to make them yours.

This guide is for the quiet coastal hour, the surprising woodland, and the landscape that makes you pull out the map again. It brings 36 Washington State destinations into six useful regional chapters, with enough practical context to help you choose your own trip.

Some of these places are well known; others may be new to you. "Hidden gems" is our editorial way of describing rewarding detours, not a promise of empty trails, exclusive access, or a secret nobody else knows.

What you get

36 destination entries, suggested visit windows, seasonal considerations, six trip-grouping chapters, official visitor links, map-search links, and notes on access and hazards.

How to use it

Choose a region, read the route chapter, then select one or two stops per day. Open the official pages before departure. Save this PDF and the maps you need while you have Wi-Fi.

Our research approach

Descriptions draw on park, land-manager, and visitor-organization sources checked for this October 4, 2026 edition. Timings, bases, and trip shapes are editorial suggestions, not measured journeys. We do not claim personal visits to every place.

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THE SMALL PRINT THAT MAKES A BETTER TRIP

Before you go.

Check the actual route

A park can be open while a particular trail, campground, building, or approach road is closed. Check official access and WSDOT road conditions at wsdot.com/Travel/Real-time/Map/. Island trips also need current ferry schedules and any vehicle reservation at wsdot.wa.gov/travel/washington-state-ferries. Map searches are discovery links, not verified navigation.

Treat dates as a snapshot

Access notes reflect sources consulted on October 4, 2026. A closure mentioned here may change; a place without a closure note is not guaranteed open. Recheck close to departure.

Plan for your group

Suggested visit windows include only a broad outing estimate, not driving from your home or lodging. Short trails may still have steps, uneven surfaces, or exposure. Check official accessibility information and your own capabilities.

Budget separately

Washington State Parks generally require a Discover Pass for vehicle day use; national parks and wildlife refuges use different entry systems. Winter sites may need a Sno-Park permit. Check the specific manager; passes are not interchangeable.

Prepare for the landscape

Coastal tides and cliffs, cold rivers, mountain snow, and heat in eastern Washington need different preparation. Carry water, layers, and an offline map. Check wildfire smoke and burn restrictions; never cross unsafe water or enter a closed area.

Leave a place worth returning to

Stay on designated trails and roads. Do not touch wildlife, collect natural objects, climb fragile formations, or disturb cultural sites. Follow each place's rules for pets, food, drones, fires, and parking.

THE WASHINGTON STATE SHORTLIST

Six regions. Thirty-six possibilities.

01 / Olympic Peninsula & Coast

- 01 Cape Disappointment State Park
- 02 Leadbetter Point State Park
- 03 Bogachiel State Park
- 04 Lake Crescent
- 05 Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge
- 06 Fort Worden Historical State Park

02 / Salish Sea & Islands

- 07 Deception Pass State Park
- 08 Fort Casey Historical State Park
- 09 Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve
- 10 Moran State Park
- 11 Lime Kiln Point State Park
- 12 Larrabee State Park

03 / Cascades & Foothills

- 13 Wallace Falls State Park
- 14 Rasar State Park
- 15 Rockport State Park
- 16 Lake Wenatchee State Park
- 17 Peshastin Pinnacles State Park
- 18 Olallie State Park

THE WASHINGTON STATE SHORTLIST

Six regions. Thirty-six possibilities.

04 / Southwest & Columbia Gorge

- 19 Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
- 20 Seaquest State Park
- 21 Ike Kinswa State Park
- 22 Columbia Hills Historical State Park
- 23 Beacon Rock State Park
- 24 Maryhill State Park

05 / Columbia Basin

- 25 Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park
- 26 Sun Lakes-Dry Falls State Park
- 27 Steamboat Rock State Park
- 28 Potholes State Park
- 29 Lake Lenore Caves Heritage Site
- 30 Daroga State Park

06 / Eastern Washington

- 31 Palouse Falls State Park Heritage Site
- 32 Lyons Ferry State Park
- 33 Sacajawea Historical State Park
- 34 Fields Spring State Park
- 35 Mount Spokane State Park
- 36 Riverside State Park

REGION 1 / OLYMPIC PENINSULA & COAST

Coast and peninsula, slowly



North Head Lighthouse, Cape Disappointment | Bjorn | CC BY-SA 2.0

TRIP SHAPE

Two separate 2-3 day breaks | Suggested bases: Long Beach / Ilwaco; Forks / Port Angeles; Port Townsend

Keep the Long Beach Peninsula pair together: Cape Disappointment and Leadbetter Point. On a separate Olympic Peninsula trip, use Forks for Bogachiel, then move toward Port Angeles for Lake Crescent and Sequim for Dungeness. Fort Worden works from Port Townsend. These are regional options, not six stops for one weekend. Check US 101 travel and any ferry crossing before choosing your bases.

Choose from this chapter

01 / Cape Disappointment State Park

02 / Leadbetter Point State Park

03 / Bogachiel State Park

04 / Lake Crescent

05 / Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge

06 / Fort Worden Historical State Park

01 / OLYMPIC PENINSULA & COAST

Cape Disappointment State Park

Ilwaco | Coast | Suggested visit: 2-4 hours

Season: Spring through fall; choose a calm day

Forested headlands, lighthouses, and the meeting of the Columbia River and Pacific make this a rewarding coastal anchor. Start with the landscape and interpretation rather than trying to fit every beach and trail into one visit.

Make a plan. Choose an open headland walk and the North Head Lighthouse area. Check lighthouse and interpretive-center hours separately, and keep Ilwaco or Long Beach as your nearby base.

Check before you go. October 2026 paving affects campground access and closes the boat launch. Expect delays; stay back from cliffs and powerful surf.

[OFFICIAL VISITOR INFORMATION](#)

[OPEN A MAP SEARCH](#)

02 / OLYMPIC PENINSULA & COAST

Leadbetter Point State Park

Near Ocean Park | Wetlands | Suggested visit: 1-3 hours

Season: Spring and fall; check nesting restrictions

At the northern end of the Long Beach Peninsula, dunes, forest, and Willapa Bay give a coastal trip a quieter rhythm. The pleasure is noticing birds and the transition between sheltered estuary and exposed ocean.

Make a plan. Use the park trail map and choose a short forest or bay-side walk. Bring binoculars and leave time for the drive back down the peninsula.

Check before you go. Seasonal wildlife closures protect nesting birds. Trails may flood; follow posted boundaries and do not cross dunes to bypass a closure.

[OFFICIAL VISITOR INFORMATION](#)

[OPEN A MAP SEARCH](#)

REAL PLACES. REAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

Credit where it belongs.

These are real photographs of the named places. They may predate this edition and do not prove current access or conditions. Not every destination has a photograph. Images were resized, compressed, and cropped for layout; scene content was not altered.

North Head Lighthouse, Cape Disappointment

File:North Head Lighthouse (5061241880).jpg

Photo: Bjorn

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Lake Wenatchee State Park

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Beacon Rock

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Dry Falls

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Palouse Falls

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