Olympic

Olympic National Park

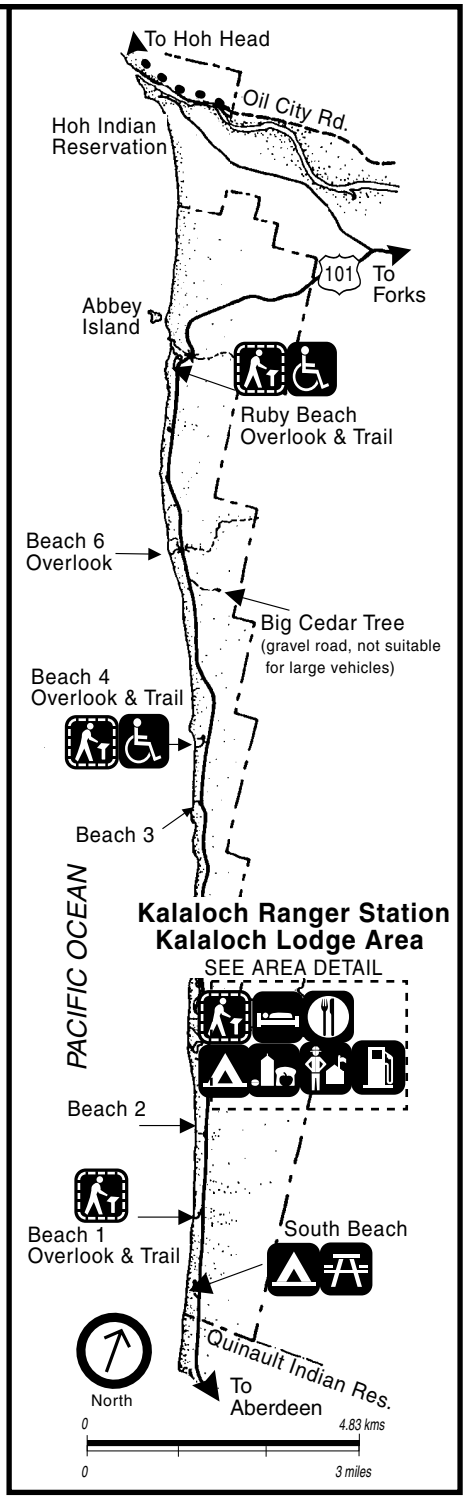
Kalaloch Area

Safe Harbor

The Kalaloch area offers a sampler of the variety of coastal habitat protected in Olympic National Park, from sandy beaches to rocky headlands. For millennia, these beaches likely offered a safe landing place for ancestors of area tribes. For thousands of sea creatures, these waters are still a safe haven.

Olympic National Park includes 65 miles of wild coastline. Fortunately, the safe haven extends beyond the water's edge. The marine environment and off-shore islands are protected in partnership with three national wildlife refuges and the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The refuges manage the islands visible above high tide. Colonies of birds like common murres and tufted puffins rely on these rocky outposts for safe nesting habitat.

The marine sanctuary extends 20-40 miles offshore and 135 miles north to south. Sanctuary waters encompass nearshore kelp beds, subtidal reefs, rocky and sandy intertidal zones, submarine canyons and plankton-rich upwelling zones. Olympic National Park works with the sanctuary and refuges to preserve the rich diversity of life in these coastal waters. Life is not limited to tidepools, but spreads outward in all directions—a great, swarming sea of forms and processes whose nature we are only just beginning to understand.



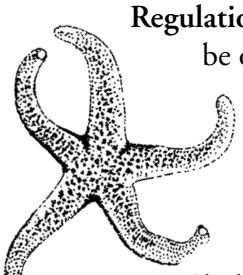
Kalaloch Area Information

Facilities: Kalaloch Ranger Station open daily in summer only. Information, exhibits, sales items.

Concessions: Kalaloch Lodge (360) 962-2271. Open year round. Cabins, lodge rooms, restaurant, gift shop, camp store, gasoline, group campsite.

Camping: **Kalaloch:** 168 sites (four accessible), fire pits with grates, picnic tables, potable water, accessible restrooms, animal-proof food storage, RV dump station (fee). Open year round. Reservations in summer (or www.recreation.gov or (877) 444-6777). **South Beach** (open summer only): 80 sites, tables and fire pits, dirt road, animal-proof food storage, flush toilets, BUT NO WATER (water available at Kalaloch campground dump station).

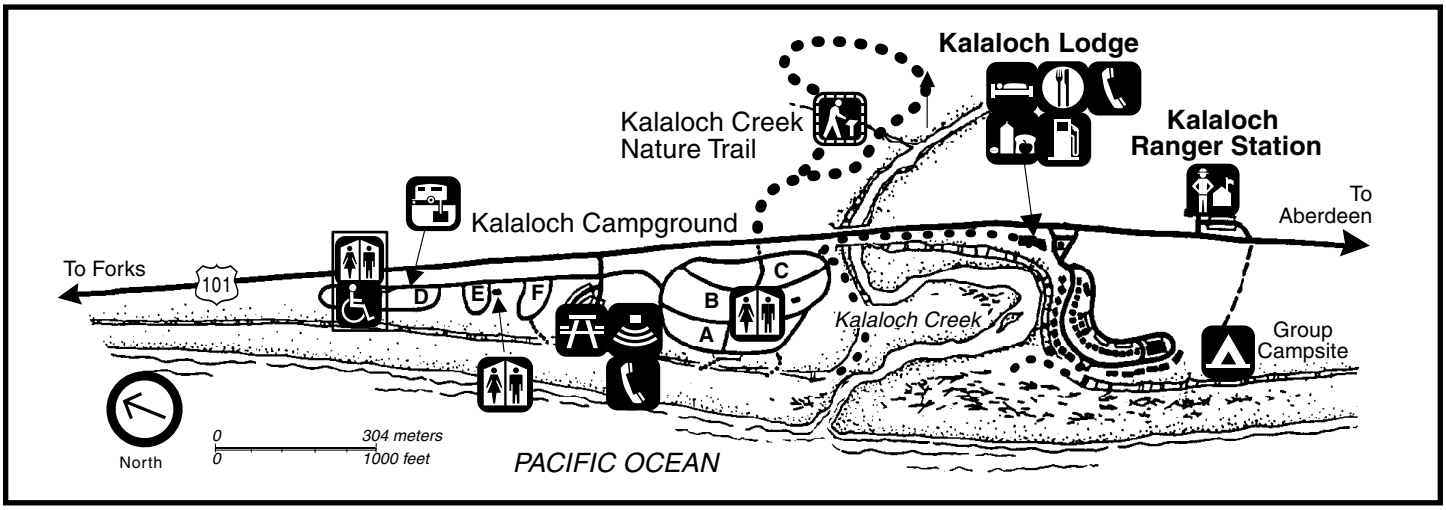
Regulations: Pets are allowed on Kalaloch area beaches. They must be on a leash at all times. For fishing and shellfish harvest, refer to state and park regulations.



Blood star

Beach Logs and Riptides Kill!

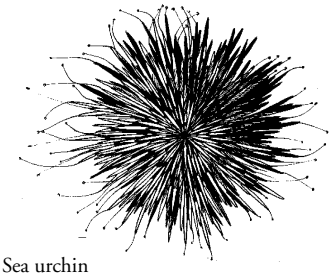
Powerful waves can roll and tumble logs. Do not play on beach logs, especially when the tide is high. Riptides are also dangerous. Swim at your own risk.



Day Hikes Around Kalaloch

Kalaloch Nature Trail: 1.0 mile easy loop through coastal forest, with stairs and elevation change less than 40 feet.

Beach Trails: Seven trails lead to the ocean from Highway 101. Ruby Beach and Beach Trail #4 have accessible viewpoints and accessible vault toilets. Beach One features fascinating spruce burls.


Sea urchin

Otters on the Rebound

Marine mammals are a special sight along Olympic National Park's coastal strip. Whales and dolphins are occasionally seen, but harbor seals and sea otters, the smallest marine mammal, are fairly common.

Sea otters have some of the softest fur in the world. Their hairs are packed very densely, making great insulation. This thick, warm coat replaces the layer of blubber that other marine mammals depend on to ward off the chill of our 40-50 degree water. But this lush coat also made its wearer vulnerable to the voracious apppetite of fur trappers from all over the globe. By 1911, close to one million had been killed from Alaska to California. A law was passed making hunting sea otters illegal, but by that time the hunt had stopped because otters were so hard to find. They were gone from the waters off Washington, Oregon and southern British Columbia, and only a tiny group survived in California.

In 1969 and 1970, sea otters from Alaska were re-introduced to sites along the northwest Pacific coast. Now over 1,000 live off Washington's coast. You might spot them from overlooks in Olympic National Park. Scan the offshore kelp forests for otters entwined in the fronds, their furry rounded heads camouflaged among the bobbing kelp floats. Sea otters depend on large marine algae like bull and giant kelp. Kelp forests not only help protect the coast by absorbing the power of waves, they are also breeding grounds and nurseries for many creatures, including sea urchins, the otters' main food. Studies show that otters help maintain a balance between kelp and urchin populations. Without their top predator, urchins multiply and devour the kelp.

Sea otters are cute and playful—they capture our hearts since they seem so human in their habits. By preserving the ocean otters live in, we also protect animals that are not so cute, but every bit as important to their ecosystem. Fish, birds, seastars, barnacles, and countless other creatures benefit from the sea otter's rebound.

If you see a sea otter on the beach, dead or alive, please report it to the ranger station.