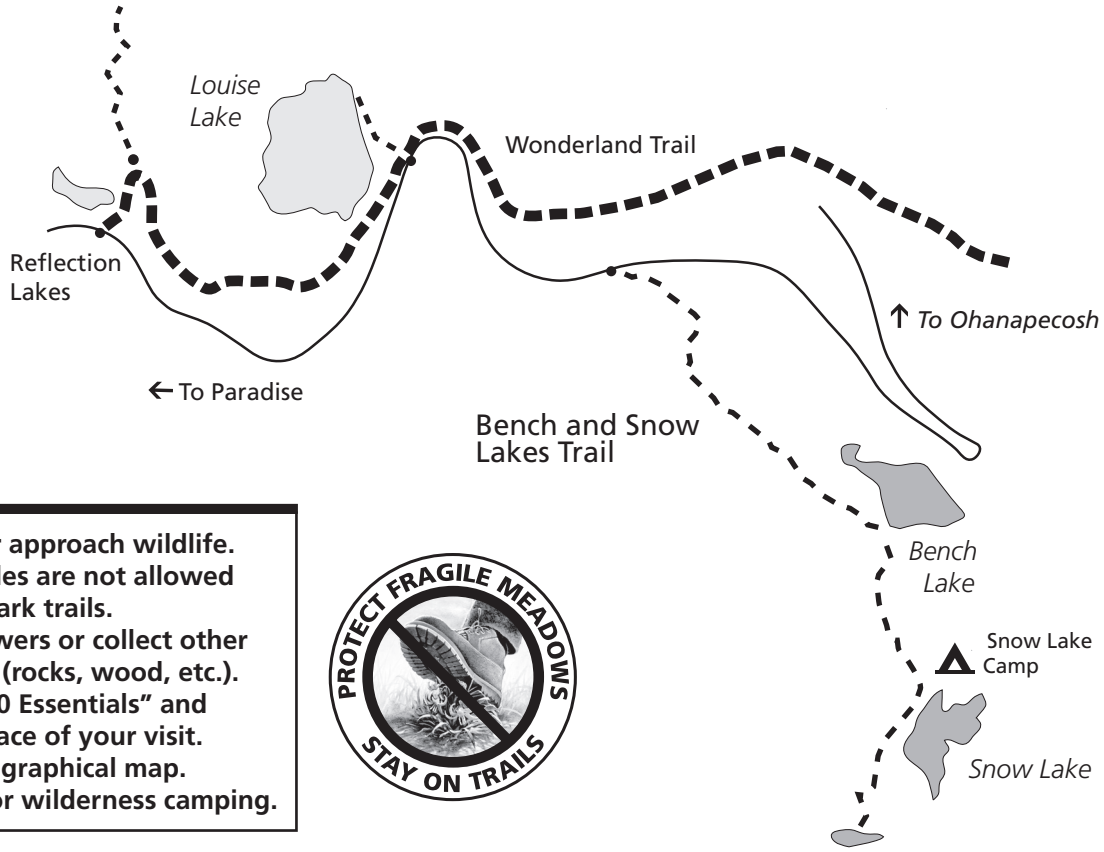
Bench and Snow Lakes

Bench Lake gets its name from the flat area around the lake called "the bench." Snow Lake may have been named because the cirque in which it lies fills with icy meltwater from the snowfields of the Tatoosh Range or because snow often rings the lake until late summer.

The wilderness camp at Snow Lake is a great place for first time backpackers and families with small children. However, it is often late in melting out and may be snow-covered until July.



Do not feed or approach wildlife.
Pets and bicycles are not allowed on park trails.
Do not pick flowers or collect other park resources (rocks, wood, etc.).
Carry the "10 Essentials" and Leave No Trace of your visit.
Use a topographical map.
Permit required for wilderness camping.

Trail Description

Round-trip Distance: 2.5 miles (4 km)
Elevation Gain: 700 feet (213 m)
Hiking Time Round-trip: 2 hours
Wilderness Camp: Snow Lake
Difficulty Level: Moderate

The trailhead is 1.5 miles (2.4 km) east of the Reflection Lakes parking area. The trail itself follows a succession of gradual ups and downs as it crosses a series of low ridges. You will reach Bench Lake after 0.7 mile (1.1 km). Continue another 0.5 mile (0.8 km) to reach Snow Lake.

In most years, these lakes do not melt out until late July; **use caution when walking on snow near the edges of the lakes**.

Along the Trail

In mid-summer, this area explodes with a variety of wildflowers and an abundance of beargrass. In the fall, mountain ash and huckleberries color the scene. Quite visible is a silver forest of trees which remain from a past forest fire. Expect good views of Mount Rainier if the weather is clear.