

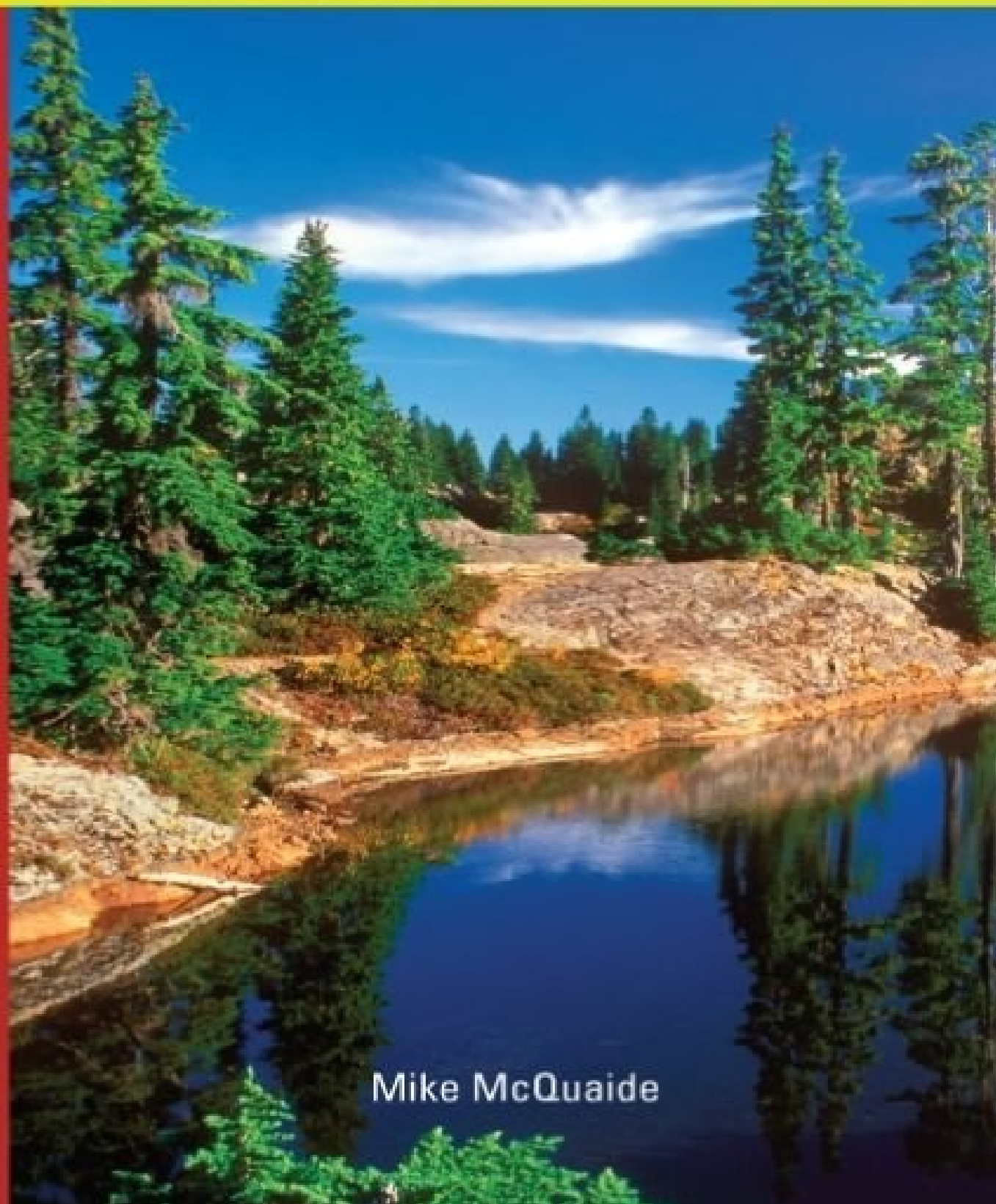
# Day Hike!



2nd Edition

THE BEST TRAILS YOU CAN HIKE IN A DAY

CENTRAL CASCADES



Mike McQuaide



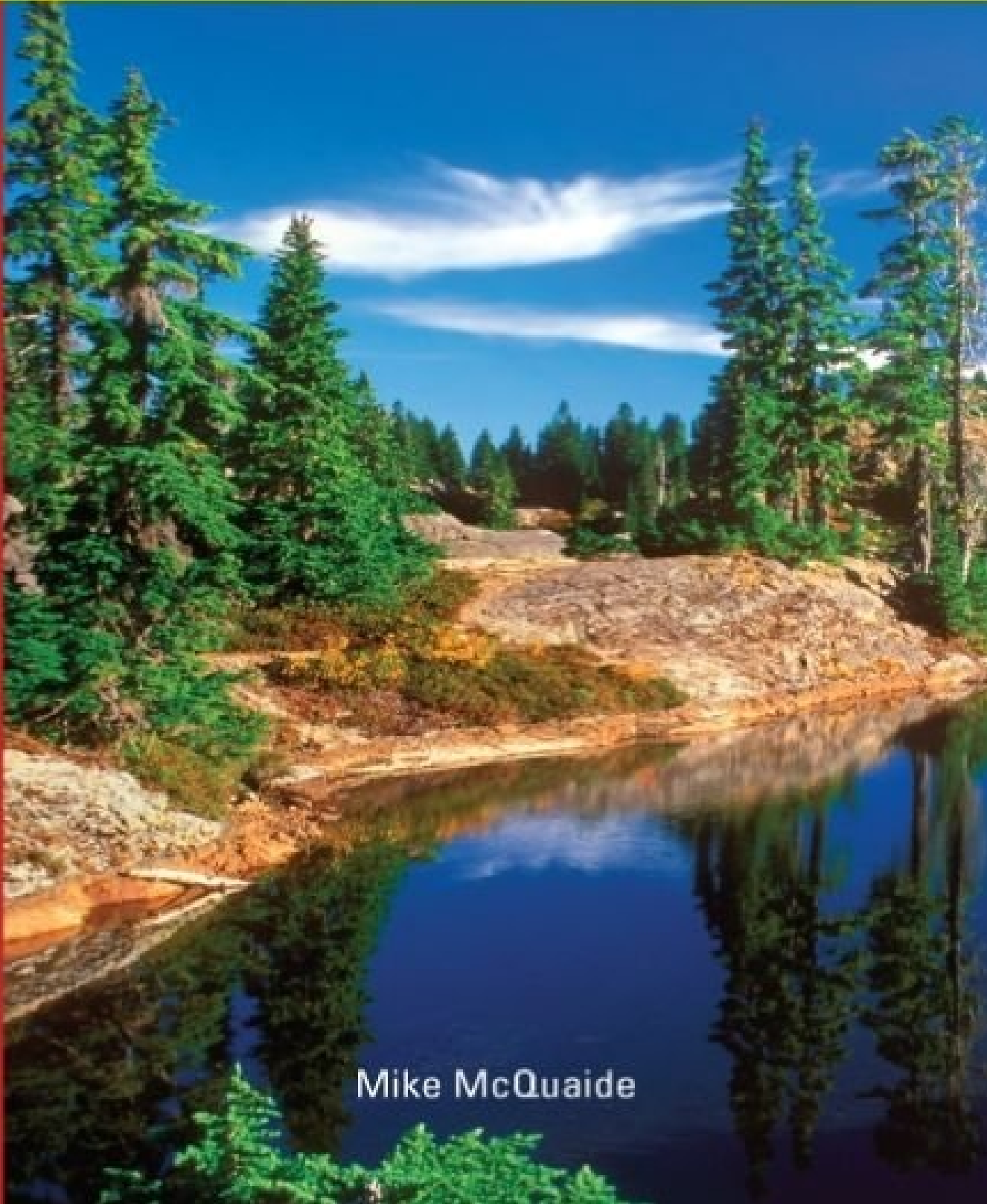
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# Day Hike!

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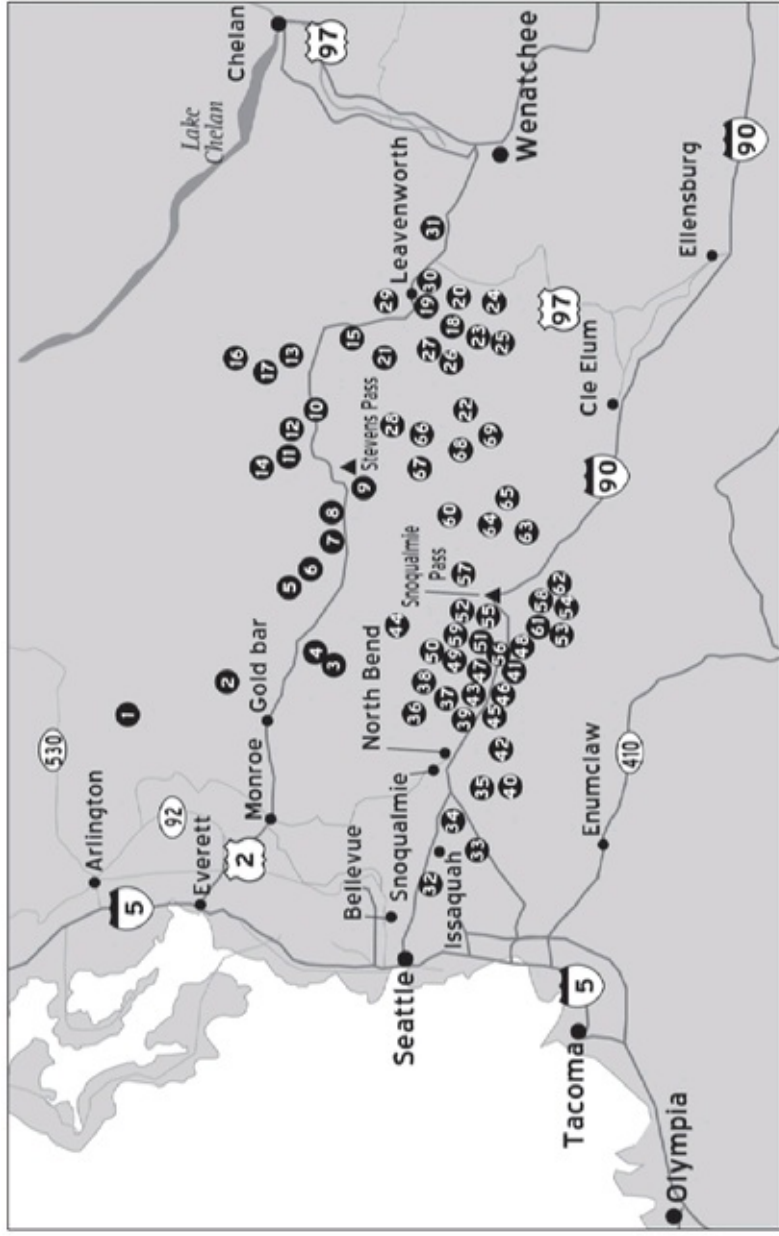
Mike McQuaide



SASQUATCH BOOKS  
SEATTLE







# HIKES AT A GLANCE

## EASY

NO.	HIKE NAME	RATING	BEST SEASON	KIDS	DOGS
6	Barclay Lake	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
7	Deception Falls Nature Trail	☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
8	Iron Goat Trail	☺☺☺☺	Spring, summer, fall	✓	✓
10	Bygone Byways Interpretive Trail	☺☺☺	Summer, fall	✓	✓
15	Penstock Trail	☺☺☺	Spring	✓	✓
17	Hidden Lake	☺☺☺	Spring, summer, fall	✓	✓
19	Leavenworth Fish Hatchery	☺☺	Spring, summer	✓	✓
28	Icicle Gorge Trail	☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
29	Ski Hill Loop	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
30	Blackbird Island–Waterfront Park	☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
36	Snoqualmie Falls	☺☺	Fall, winter, spring	✓	
41	John Wayne Pioneer Trail– Iron Horse State Park	☺☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
44	Middle Fork Snoqualmie River	☺☺☺	Fall, winter	✓	✓
45	Twin Falls	☺☺☺	Fall, winter	✓	✓
46	Weeks Falls	☺☺	Winter, spring	✓	✓
53	Asahel Curtis Nature Trail	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
56	Franklin Falls–Wagon Road Loop	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
61	Snoqualmie Tunnel	☺☺☺	Summer, fall	✓	✓
63	Gold Creek Pond	☺☺	Late spring, fall	✓	✓

## MODERATE

NO.	HIKE NAME	RATING	BEST SEASON	KIDS	DOGS
4	Bridal Veil Falls	☺☺☺	Fall, winter, spring	✓	✓
5	Heybrook Lookout	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
9	Grace Lakes	☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
18	Icicle Ridge	☺☺☺	Spring, summer	✓	✓
26	Eightmile Lake	☺☺☺☺	Late spring, fall		
31	Peshastin Pinnacles	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
32	Cougar Mountain Wilderness Peak Loop	☺☺☺	Winter, spring	✓	✓
37	Little Si	☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
40	Rattlesnake Ledge	☺☺☺☺	Spring, fall	✓	✓
42	Cedar Butte	☺☺☺	Winter, spring	✓	✓
47	Dirty Harry's Balcony	☺☺☺	Spring, late fall		✓
51	Talapus–Olallie Lakes	☺☺☺	Fall	✓	✓
55	Denny Creek–Melakwa Lake	☺☺☺☺	Summer, fall	✓	✓
57	Snow Lake	☺☺☺☺	Summer, fall	✓	✓
58	Lodge Lake	☺☺☺	Summer, fall	✓	✓
62	Mount Catherine	☺☺☺	Fall	✓	✓

## MODERATELY DIFFICULT

NO.	HIKE NAME	RATING	BEST SEASON	KIDS	DOGS
2	Wallace Falls	★★★★	Fall, winter, spring	✓	✓
12	Merritt Lake	★★★★	Late spring, fall	✓	✓
22	Lake Stuart	★★★★	Summer, fall		
33	Squak Mountain Loop	★★★	Winter, spring	✓	✓
35	Rattlesnake Mountain (Snoqualmie Point to Grand Prospect)	★★★	Spring, fall	✓	✓
39	Talus Loop Trail	★★★	Fall, winter	✓	✓
54	Annette Lake	★★★★	Late spring, fall	✓	✓
59	Commonwealth Basin-Red Pass	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓
60	Kendall Katwalk	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
68	Longs Pass	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓

## DIFFICULT

NO.	HIKE NAME	RATING	BEST SEASON	KIDS	DOGS
1	Mount Pilchuck	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓
3	Lake Serene	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓
13	Round Mountain-Alpine Lookout	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓
14	Nason Ridge	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
16	Dirty Face Peak	★★★★	Late spring, fall		✓
20	Snow Lakes Trail	★★★★	Fall		
23	Colchuck Lake	★★★★	Summer, fall		
27	Lake Caroline-Windy Pass	★★★★	Summer, fall		
29	Ski Hill Loop	★★★	Spring, fall	✓	✓
34	West Tiger 3-2-1	★★★	Winter, spring		✓
38	Mount Si	★★★★	Spring, fall		✓
48	McClellan Butte	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
49	Ira Spring Trail	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
50	Mason Lake-Mount Defiance	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓
64	Rachel Lake	★★★★	Summer, fall	✓	✓
65	Rampart Ridge-Alta Mountain	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
66	Paddy-Go-Easy Pass	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
67	Cathedral Rock	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓
69	Ingalls Way Trail	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓

## EXTREME

NO.	HIKE NAME	RATING	BEST SEASON	KIDS	DOGS
11	Rock Mountain	★★★★	Late spring, fall		✓
21	Fourth of July	★★★★	Late spring, fall		✓
24	Little Annapurna	★★★★	Summer, fall		
25	The Enchantments	★★★★	Summer, fall		
43	Mailbox Peak	★★★★	Spring, fall		✓
52	Granite Mountain	★★★★	Summer, fall		✓



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First up, no-brainer thanks to my songbird wife, Jennifer, and climbing-monkey son, Baker, life's two greatest hits as far as I'm concerned. Their patience and support throughout have been invaluable. A huge thank you also to preschool teacher par excellence, Nancy Lawrence, whose help was invaluable in finishing this book. The kindness, good cheer, and guidance you showed toward our son are things that we will cherish throughout our lives. Nancy, you're one of a kind. And while we're at it, a shout out to all the parents and children of the South Park Schoolhouse, which sadly closed in fall 2004. You are in our hearts forever.

I also want to thank the following individuals and organizations for offering their support, expertise, and/or friendship: Jim Kuresman ([www.kuresman.com](http://www.kuresman.com)), Doug McKeever, Tim Schultz, Frank Schultz, Bud Hardwick, Paul Ricci, Rick Lingbloom, the Steeles, Margaret Gerard, Montra Ultimate Direction, Smartwool, and the people at Sasquatch Books.

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# THE CENTRAL CASCADES

The Cascade Mountains stretch all the way from the Fraser River in lower British Columbia south to northern California. For the purposes of this book, the Central Cascades are defined as that section of the range easily accessed from Highway 2 and Interstate 90. Basically, the corridors from Everett to Leavenworth, and Seattle to Cle Elum. Also included is Mount Pilchuk, because of its prominence and proximity to Everett.

From soaking wet, deep valley rain forests to high and dry alpine wonderlands, the Central Cascades offer the gamut of hiking experiences. There are short, riverside walks to places such as Twin Falls, where the Snoqualmie River plunges 150 feet in a misty explosion below, as well as mountaintop vistas more than a mile-and-a-half high such as Little Annapurna where, on clear days you'll swear you can see the four corners of Washington State—and everything in between. (Take Rachel Lake and Rampart Ridge, for instance; they've got a bit of both.)

Though both Highway 2 and Interstate 90 trend toward the south a bit, they run west to east, more or less. Thus, as you drive either across the state, you can watch as the terrain undergoes incredible and awe-inspiring changes—from the deep evergreen fir and cedar forests, lingering mountain snow, and buckets of rain on the west side to the east side's sunny days, dry pine forests, and penchant for trip-digit temperatures. That east-west diversity is especially dramatic along Highway 2, because it runs farther north and climbs higher than Interstate 90; Stevens Pass tops out at 4,061 feet, Snoqualmie Pass at 3,022 feet. As such, both highways are springboards for a smorgasbord of wildly diverse hiking experiences.

The west side is known for the wet face it tends to put on things. Clouds rolling in from the west tend to dump most of their moisture on the west side of the Cascade crest—elevation, about 3,000 to 5,000 feet—before they ever make it to the east side. From November to April, at elevations above 3,000 feet or so, this usually means snow.

The rest of the year those clouds offer much in the way of rain, showers, drizzle, fog, and precipitation. (From mid-July to the end of August, they do give it a rest.) Because of the heavy precip, you'll come across more snow on the west side. Not surprisingly, waterfalls—that's why they're called the Cascade Mountains after all—and water, in general, are more plentiful on the west side, too.

With the clouds mostly rained and snowed out by the time they cross the crest, the east side enjoys less snow and rain than the west, and more sunny days. Most years, mountain trails on the east sides of Snoqualmie and Stevens Passes are clear of snow weeks earlier than those on the west.

Common trees in the Central Cascades include Western red cedar, Western hemlock, Douglas fir, and Pacific Silver fir, with the east side of the Cascades boasting Ponderosa pine, Engelmann spruce, and Subalpine and Western larch. The Enchantment Lakes is worldfamous for its larch, which in fall turns a brilliant yellow-gold.

Being a day-hiking guide, this book won't pretend to be a comprehensive guide to Northwest flora and fauna; critter-wise and plant-wise, the species are too numerous to catalogue, but some of the common folk worth a mention include bald eagle, osprey, black bear, Roosevelt elk, mountain lion, hoary marmot, pika, mountain goat, American dipper, raven, and, on the east side, the occasional rattlesnake. Among the plants you're likely to see are trillium, Indian paintbrush, subalpine lupine, mountain heather, columbine, devil's club, huckleberry, blueberry, and countless varieties of fungi.

and algae.

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## Alpine Lakes Wilderness

Most of the hiking trails in this book are on land in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie or Wenatchee National forests. Although not national park land, many trails are in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, a spectacular 394,000-acre mountain and forest wonderland sprinkled with nearly 700 lakes, which is co-managed by both forest agencies. Created in 1976, the wilderness is easily accessed at numerous points along Interstate 90 and Highway 2, and about half the state's population lives within an hour of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. As such, privacy on some trails is not something that's always easy to find. But weekday visits dramatically improve your chances. Day permits are required for hiking the Alpine Lakes Wilderness; they're free and are available at trailheads.

Alpine Lakes Wilderness trails range from easy west-side jaunts to places such as Denny Creek near Snoqualmie Pass to otherworldly moonscapes such as the hard-to-get-to, high-elevation Enchantment Lakes Basin, just outside Leavenworth.

Speaking of Leavenworth, this Bavarian-themed town makes an excellent not-too-far-away, eastside getaway that's right on the edge of some spectacular hiking. Icicle Road, mere minutes from your favorite espresso joint, offers what seems like dozens of worldclass hiking opportunities—Icicle Ridge, Lake Caroline-Windy Pass, Little Annapurna, the Enchantments, Lake Stuart, and more. When it comes to hiking, Leavenworth is seriously the bomb.

## Fees

Hiking is free on national forest trails, but parking isn't. To park at most of the trailheads in this book (unless the description says otherwise), day hikers need a Northwest Forest Pass. Forest passes cost \$5 for a daily pass, and \$30 for an annual pass, and they're available at National Forest Ranger stations, REI stores, and various retail outlets throughout the Puget Sound region. They're also available online at [www.naturenw.org](http://www.naturenw.org) or [www.wta.org](http://www.wta.org).

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## USING THIS GUIDE

The beginning of each trail description is intended to give you quick information that can help you decide whether the specific day hike is one that interests you. Here's what you'll find:

### Trail Number & Name

Trails are numbered in this guide following a geographical order; see the Trail Overview Map on page vii for general location. Trail names usually reflect those names used by the national forest service and/or other land managers.

### Overall Rating

Since it's so subjective, assigning an overall rating to a hike can be a difficult task because of the different-strokes-for-different-folks phenomenon. That said, because I hiked all the trails and have opinions about which ones I liked, which ones I liked a lot, which ones I loved, and which ones I loved and never wanted to leave, assigning ratings wasn't that hard.

In order for the ratings to make sense to you, it'd probably be of some help if I explained what kinds of things turn my trekking poles up to 11 and, thus, were likely to make me rate a particular trail higher than another.

In general, trails in dense forest with no mountain vistas rate lower than those with mountain views. I love the dense Northwest forests as much as anyone, but because this is a book about the Central Cascade Mountains, the trails with the mountain vistas are the ones that rate the highest. Water features, whether rushing rivers, cascading waterfalls, or peaceful alpine lakes, raise a trail's rating, as do wildflower meadows. Lack of crowds is a plus, too.

Trails that rate the highest are those that fire on all cylinders. For example, you might pass through dense woods, cross meadows splashed with Indian paintbrush and myriad wildflowers, climb to an alpine environment where you're surrounded by mountains, ridges, and glaciers, and, finally, after a short rock scramble, you reach an old fire lookout from which the views are out of this world. Granite Mountain (see hike #52 in this guide) is a good example. With the above in mind, trails are rated from 1 to 5, with 5 reserved for the most spectacular trails. (Truthfully, though, I don't think I included any 1's; a 1 rating of anything seems a bit pathetic.)



This hike is worth taking, even with your in-laws.



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