



Mountain Loop Conservancy Fact Sheet:

Mount Pilchuck

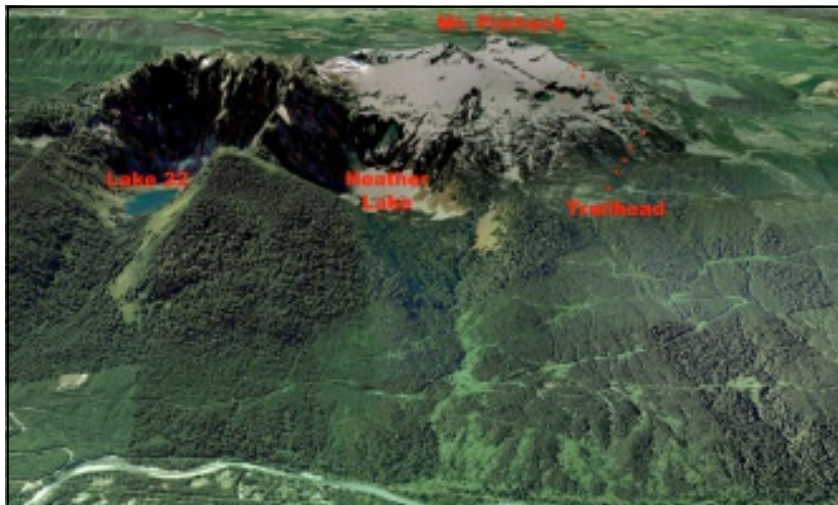
A local jewel

Mount Pilchuck, in Snohomish County, just an hour and half north of Seattle, is a gorgeous mountain, even more impressive because it stands alone out to the west of the other Cascade peaks. Only a few miles up the Mountain Loop Highway, it is one of the closest, easiest-to-climb, and thus popular hikes in the Cascade Range. On a nice summer day you'll share the trail with many people.

What a sight you will find at the top! A panoramic view of the Cascade range from Mt. Rainier down south to Mt. Baker up north, with Three Fingers, Glacier Peak, Sloan, Vesper, Dickerman and Sperry in-between. The Puget Sound with its myriad islands and inlets, crowned by the Olympic Mountains, catches the last sun to the west, and the lights of Seattle and Everett glow below on a clear night.

Mount Pilchuck State Park

The mountain is located in Mount Pilchuck State Park; the forest surrounding the mountain, including the trailhead, is within the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and hiking the trail requires a United States Forest Service (USFS) trailhead parking pass. The USFS maintains the trail and trailhead to the summit. The Everett Mountaineers and Washington State Parks maintain the fire lookout building. Various volunteer groups also work on the well-maintained trail. The trail is approx 6 miles (10 km) round trip, with an elevation gain of 2,166 ft. (660 m). It is slightly steep in some parts, but an overall moderate grade. Caution: Following the trail can be very difficult in foggy weather.



Aerial photograph of Mt. Pilchuck and vicinity

The trail begins in mature forest of western hemlock and cedar, and then skirts the edge of an old clear-cut and switchbacks across the top of an abandoned ski slope (more about this below). The trail rounds the base of Little Pilchuck and climbs to a saddle at 1.5 miles (2.4 km), elevation 4,600 ft. (1402 m). In late spring you will find wildflowers, with heather all seasons, and amazing rolling slopes of gardens. It gets steep if you follow the ridge on a scramble route to the summit where you will find a wonderful lookout cabin, elevation 5,324 ft. (1623 m). The main trail traverses half a mile up the southwest slopes to the summit.

In 1918, the USFS built a lookout at the top of Mount Pilchuck to watch for fires in the area. There were people working in the building until the 1960s. In 1977 the Everett Mountaineers renovated the building. It is now a museum with historical pictures on display of trail and lookout construction and maps that help you name the surrounding peaks. The lookout is on the National Historic Building register.

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Skiing on Mount Pilchuck

As mentioned above, there was a small ski area on the mountain. The Mt. Pilchuck Ski Club, after obtaining permits from Washington State Parks and the USFS. John Colter and his mother opened the area in 1956 with one rope tow. The next year the Fankhauser family was the operator; they built a small parking lot, lodge, and ticket booth at 3000 feet (914 m). The following year, the snowfall amount was so low that there was only one day of skiing. A warming room was added and skiers were charged up to \$2/day. A run was cleared and the area expanded in the early 1960's when Dick and Pilchuck Park Lifts became the operators. They added two

more rope tows and soon a chair lift, up to 4,300 ft. (1,310 m) The ticket price was raised to \$3.50 just in time for a big snow year! 1963-64 brought 52 feet (16 m) of snow to the top of the mountain. One more chair lift was installed, and a rental shop was built. Franz Gobi and Dick Moberg took over in 1970, followed by Heather Recreation. Several residents of Verlot, including the Munz family and Rick Handy, worked there for many years.

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However, that climbing skins years The locking the gate head until late adding 12 miles

was not the end of skiing! Today many people use on their skis to climb up in winter and spring. In recent Forest Service has been at the Heather Lake trail spring or early summer, (round trip) of road to

Mount Pilchuck Ski area. Photo courtesy of Granite Falls Historical Museum.



walk or bike, so check before you head up for skiing or snowshoeing.

Interesting Fact: The ski run on Mount Pilchuck. 28,000 visitors a Photo courtesy of Granite Falls Historical Museum.

Sources:
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission – Park Information. *Mt. Pilchuck*. www.parks.wa.gov/parks

Prepared by Sonia Thompson and Jim Dockery for the Mountain Loop Conservancy March 2011 ©

Photos courtesy of Granite Falls Historical Museum and Jim Dockery. This fact sheet was made possible by a grant from The Mountaineers Foundation, Seattle, WA.