

Featured Landscape » Rialto Beach



Strolling Rialto Beach to the Hole-in-the-Wall

At this time of the year, with summer long gone and autumn a fading memory, I often turn my sights to the low-elevation wonderlands of Olympic National Park's wilderness coast, a hiking mecca for north-country hikers. This year, with epic snowpack leading to an egregiously abbreviated hiking season in the alpine heights, the coast offers a particularly welcome opportunity to keep getting out, to slow down and take the time to stop and smell the seaweed.

On this remarkable strip of dramatic seashore, there is no shortage of superb destinations. Over the years, when my window of getaway time is small, I find myself returning again and again to Rialto Beach and the Hole-in-the-Wall to recharge my psychic batteries and fill my lungs with the sweet smell of the sea. The hike is short—and exceedingly sweet.

From the parking area at Rialto Beach, make your way through the jumble of beach logs and head north beside the glittering sea. If possible, plan your journey in concert with a retreating tide so you'll enjoy easy walking and have lots of newly arrived flotsam and jetsam to examine as you make your way up the beach. In a half mile, you'll encounter Ellen Creek. Passage across this creek can usually be managed on logs, and then it's smooth sailing for another mile past momentous sea stacks to Hole-in-the-Wall. This graceful stone arch serves as a picturesque doorway through which the tides pass twice a day.

Campsites are plentiful above the beach to the south of the Hole-in-the-Wall, tucked into the first gnarled and weather-beaten trees. Position yourself at sunset between the two prominent sea stacks south of "the Hole" to watch the last rays of the sun shine through them like a hallelujah chorus. ♦

HIKE IT>>

Rialto Beach to Hole-in-the-Wall

Distance: 4 miles
round trip

Map(s): Green Trails
Ozette 130S, Custom
Correct North
Olympic Coast

More Info/Permits:
Olympic National
Park, Wilderness
Information Center