

# **2018 Chemeketan Outing Guide**

## **Mount Baker**

### **Washington's North Cascades**

**87th Annual Outing**  
**July 28 to August 11, 2018**



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Introduction and Camp Guide by  
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# Introduction and Camp Guide

The Chemeketan Outing is intended to provide a maximum of vacation pleasure at a minimum of cost and camp chores. This year's Outing is at Mount Baker in Washington's North Cascades. There are many hiking trails rated from mild to strenuous within an easy drive of camp. The area is renowned for its stunning mountain vistas, picturesque lakes and colorful wildflowers. The Outing employs cooks and pot and pan washers to do the most time-consuming chores. All other duties are shared by participants. This guide should answer most of your questions. There will be a pre-Outing meeting at 7pm on July 9 at a location to be announced.

**Campsite:** The 2018 Outing site will be at Excelsior Group Campground (elev. 1300 ft.) on Mt. Baker Hwy. The campsite is wooded and bordered by the swift, cold North Fork Nooksack River. Attendance will be limited to 95 campers/week so apply early. This campsite does not have electricity or water. Water for cooking and dishwashing will be transported. Plan to supply your own shower and drinking water from nearby sources.

The drive from Salem, 350 miles, takes about 6 hours. Proceed north on I-5 to Bellingham. Take Exit 255 and proceed east on State 542 (Mt. Baker Highway) for about 41 miles. You will pass through or by the towns of Kendall, Maple Falls and Glacier. Excelsior Group Campground is on the right about 6 miles past Glacier and 2 miles past Nooksack Campground.

**Campsite Weather:** During August, the average high temperature is 77 F and the average low is 52 F. The average rainfall for August is 0.8 in.

**Truck Loading and Unloading:** Campers who live in the Salem area are expected to help with the loading and/or unloading of the truck. Bring work gloves. Loading will begin at 6:00 pm on Thursday, July 26 and unloading at 6:00 pm on Sunday, August 12 at Bridges Storage, 4370 Silverton Rd. NE, just east of Lancaster Rd.

**Hiking:** The main activity of the Outing is hiking. See the Hiking Guide section for specifics. There will be a number of hikes every day. Attendees may sign up at the activity pavilion to join or lead hikes. Feel free to organize a hike. During the Outing, leaders are not expected to have intimate knowledge of the trail. All hikers are responsible for their own safety and for knowing where they are on the trail. Hikers should wear appropriate footwear and carry or wear appropriate clothing including rain gear. Hikers should carry the essentials. Hiking groups should have a minimum of three hikers. Hikers usually car pool to save gas and always reimburse the driver. (The suggested rate is 9 cents/mile.)

All groups are to sign out for hikes and other activities and sign back in after completion so the hike coordinator may take appropriate action in case any group fails to return.

**Services:** The nearest community, Glacier (pop 211), has few services. Maple Falls (14 mi. West on Hwy 542) has several eateries, grocery stores and gas stations. Pay showers are available 20 miles from camp at Silver Lake County Park.

**Non-Hiking Activities:**

White water rafting on the Nooksack River.

(Contact Wild and Scenic River Tours at 360-599-3115 or 800-413-6840)

Groups are to log out in the General Sign Out Registry when leaving for any non-hiking activity and log back in upon return.

**Travel to Canada:** The Canadian border crossing is 28 miles from camp at Sumas, WA. It is the gateway to Abbotsford, Chilliwack and the Fraser River. Remember to bring your passport.

**Phone Service:** There is no cell phone service at camp but Verizon and AT&T should be available 15-20 miles to the west.

**Emergencies:**

Whatcom County Search & Rescue Ambulance, 360-384-6344

Washington State Police, Bellingham, 360-738-6215

Camp Governor - responsible for the smooth operation of the camp

**Meals:** Hot breakfasts, dinners and brown bag lunches, including vegetarian entrees, will be provided from dinner the first Saturday (July 28) through lunch the last Saturday (August 11). Dishes and silverware are provided. Backpackers are responsible for their own food while away from camp. No reduction in rates is made for campers who substitute their own meals or food for Outing meals or for meals not taken. You may return for seconds after all have been served, including the kitchen workers. (Please do not enter the kitchen if not working or on legitimate business.)

Breakfast is served at 7:00 am. Coffee and cocoa will be available earlier in the dining area. Enter the dining tent and pick up your tray, silverware, etc. and proceed through the serving line. Servers will fill your tray per your request.

After eating, go to the dishwashing area outside. (Be considerate of the dishwashers; take your dishes to the wash area soon after finishing.) Dump waste into the garbage cans and scrape your tray as clean as possible using the provided scrapers and your napkin. Wash and rinse your dishes and utensils. The dishwashing crew will sterilize, dry and return them for reuse. You may wash personal items but should not send them through the sterilizer.

Dinner is served at 6:00 pm. The procedure is identical to breakfast. If you will be late for dinner, consider a restaurant or make other arrangements. If you will miss dinner, please let the cooks know.

Lunch is self-prepared from a variety of foods set out on tables near the dining tent. Lunch food will be in place at 6:15 and removed at 6:45 am. Lunch workers make their own lunches prior to opening the line. You are welcome to take whatever you need, but please take only what you will eat. Chemeketans practice conservation by reusing baggies and paper sacks as practical. Campers are encouraged to bring reusable lunch containers. Parents are requested to make lunches for or supervise small children.

To prevent contamination and food related illnesses, wash your hands carefully with soap prior to entering the food tent or making lunch. Ensure that children's hands are washed. Use the provided utensils when taking food; do not put fingers in containers. Hand washing stations will be conveniently located. Water from the hand washing stations should not be used for drinking. It is not potable.

**Campfire Meetings:** Each evening at 7:30 the Camp Governor will ring the bell calling the campfire meeting to order. (The fire may be dispensed with if conditions dictate.) The purpose of this meeting is to pass on important information and report on hikes and activities. Attendance is advised. On occasion, entertainment, informational presentations or sing-alongs will be offered. The meeting ends with the singing of Taps.

**Camp Set-up and Take-down:** First week campers should arrive on Saturday, July 28 early enough to help set up camp. Set up will start by 9 am. The site will be available on Friday, July 27 for those who wish to arrive early.

Second week campers may arrive after breakfast on Saturday, August 4. Camp take-down will start Friday evening after dinner, August 10 and continue with truck loading on Saturday morning. All second week campers are expected to remain in camp on the last day to help with camp take-down until the truck is loaded and ready for departure, which is normally completed before noon.

**Pets:** Dogs or other family pets are not allowed at the Outing.

**Suggested Equipment List:**

Tent	Day Pack/essentials & First aid kit	Juice bottle
Sleeping bag	Insect repellent	Water bottles
Air mattress	Sunglasses	Toiletries
Pillow	Sunblock lotion	Soap, towel
Alarm Clock	Coffee cup	Buckets for washing clothes
Appropriate clothes	Flash light/batteries	Clothesline, pins
Hiking boots	Camera	Binoculars
Rain gear	Maps/compass	Camp chair
Swim suit	Lunch container	
Solar shower bag	Water container, 3-5 gal.	

**Camp Duties:** The Outing is a cooperative enterprise. Participants share duties such as dishwashing, food serving, lunch prep and sanitation. It is essential to the smooth operation of the camp that all campers fulfill their duties and help erect and dismantle the camp. Camp duty assignments will be posted on the duty board in the activity pavilion. Please check your assigned duties shortly after arriving in camp, because your duties may start on day 1. Duties are assigned prior to camp. If you are going to arrive late or leave early, be sure to so indicate on your registration form or notify the Outing Chair or Governor so your duties can be assigned accordingly. If you have questions, ask the Governor. Camp duties are described below.

**Campfire** - make sure enough wood is by the fire ring for the evening campfire. Have two

buckets of water and a shovel nearby. Light the fire and keep it going. Extinguish the fire after the group has disbanded. Campfire may be dispensed with depending on weather conditions or local restrictions.

**Dishwashers** - Dishwashers go to the front of the serving line and be on duty as soon as people finish eating. Six people are normally assigned to this duty. Wear long pants, closed-toe shoes and use the provided water-proof gloves and aprons as appropriate. An experienced person (the first person on the duty roster) is designated as leader. The lead dishwasher will be responsible for organizing the shift and ensuring that the job is properly completed. Fill the washing and rinsing pans with hot water. Put soap in the washing pan. Change the wash and rinse water when they become too dirty or cool. To do this, dispose of the prewash water, wash water is poured into the prewash basin, first rinse water into the wash basin (add soap), second rinse becomes first rinse and last rinse is filled with clean hot water from the boiler. Freshly washed dishes are stacked in the sterilizer basket, immersed in the sterilizer boiler for one minute and emptied onto the drying table. After the dishes have air dried, pack them into the plastic storage bins and return them to the dining area. The utensils are rinsed in a bucket and sorted into their carriers, handles up. The carriers are then placed in the sterilizer for one minute, removed to air dry and returned to the dining area. When all dishes have been washed, empty the dish and rinse water into the designated area, rinse the basins and place them upside down on the dishwashing tables. Staff will tend to the boilers and sterilizers.

**Pots and Pans** - Pot and pan washers go the head of the serving line and after eating report to the staff for directions. (Thirty minutes before each meal, pots and pans staff will fill the sterilizer basins and light the boiler and sterilizer burners.)

**Janitor Duty** - The two persons assigned to janitor duty will clean and restock the toilets and hand wash stations. They are to keep a supply of tissue in each toilet and keep them clean and free of litter. They shall sweep the floor, wipe the seats with disinfectant wipes and empty the trash as needed, preferably when demand is low.

**Servers** - Breakfast and dinner servers should report for duty half an hour before the meal. They are to wipe down tables and place napkins, condiments and other necessary items on the tables. They shall assist the cooks as needed and serve the food, listening to campers' requests so as not to waste food. Servers eat after serving the campers. After eating, wipe down the tables, clean containers and help put away food.

**Evening Lunch Prep** - Go to the head of the dinner serving line. After eating report to the lunch truck to prepare food for the following day's lunch. Follow the lunch supervisor's directions. Directions are also posted on the wall of the truck. Take all dirty dishes and utensils to the pot and pan washers.

**Morning Lunch Prep** - Report to the lunch truck at 6:00 AM. Wipe down the lunch tables. Follow the lunch supervisor's directions for stocking the tables with food, drinks and supplies. Morning lunch prep personnel are to make their own lunches prior to opening the line. Watch the tables and keep them replenished. Combine remaining food onto one table when the lunch line begins to thin out. At 6:45 remove the remaining food from the tables and store it properly

in the truck. Take all dirty dishes to the pot and pan washers and wipe down the tables.

**Garbage and Recycling** - This is both a morning and evening operation. Empty the garbage cans in the kitchen, dining and wash areas, twist the bags closed and transport them to the dumpster. Place fresh bags in the garbage cans. Break down cardboard boxes, remove bottoms from and flatten cans and place them in the recycle area. Check with the cook for additional duties.

**Questions:** Contact Outing Co-Chairs:

Ken Ash	<a href="mailto:mrkenash@comcast.net">mrkenash@comcast.net</a>	503-507-7844
Wayne Wallace	<a href="mailto:waynekw@comcast.net">waynekw@comcast.net</a>	503-999-2612
or Treasurer		
Susan DeLaune	<a href="mailto:sdeLaune@comcast.net">sdeLaune@comcast.net</a>	503-378-1456

Other Outing Committee members:

Dave Adelman, Food Coordinator	Janet Adkins
Blanka Trunekova, Lunch	Rick Cooper
Mary Coleman, Lunch	Nancy Rockwell
Roz Shirack, Hiking guide	Sharon Wright
George Adkins	

## Have a great Outing

### Taps

Day is done  
Gone the sun  
From the Lakes  
From the hills  
From the sky.  
All is well,  
Safely rest.  
God is nigh.



# Hiking Guide

The purpose of this Hiking Guide is to provide a brief description of the best hikes in the area and driving directions to trailheads. **It does not replace the need for a map and compass to navigate the trails.**

## Hike Sign-Up Sheets

Hikes planned for each day are listed on sign-up sheets at the Activity Pavilion. Hikers are welcome to sign-up for any hike that they are able to complete. If you have questions, check with the hike leader.

Each trip should have a designated trip leader and a minimum of three people total (for safety). Describe the trip in enough detail so we can find you in the event you don't show up for dinner. If you know you will return late, please note that on the sign-up sheet. Hike leaders: please leave some space on your sign-up sheet for new hikers. When a group returns from a hike, remember that it is each person's responsibility to **sign back in**.

There will be maps and guidebooks at the Activity Pavilion for reference to help you plan your trip. Please leave these reference materials at the table. Tip: take photos of the guidebook narrative and/or maps to use during your hike.

Some of the hikes listed here enter the Mt. Baker Wilderness. Hikes in the Wilderness are limited to 12 people. Self-issue free permits are available at the trailheads. Please register for all your hikes. It helps the Forest Service manage the public land and it helps us find you if you go missing.

A Federal Northwest Forest Pass or Senior Pass (for ages 62 and over) is required to park at the trailheads listed in this Guide.

For trail and road conditions, maps, and parking passes check with the Forest Service at:

Glacier Public Service Center-Mt. Baker Ranger District  
10091 Mt. Baker Hwy (State Route 542), Glacier, WA 98224.

Phone 360-599-2714

[www.fs.usda.gov/mbs](http://www.fs.usda.gov/mbs).

This office is about 6 miles west of our Excelsior Camp.

For other visitor information about the North Cascades area go to:

Mt. Baker Visitor Center  
7509 Mt. Baker Hwy (State Route 542), Maple Falls, WA 98266

Phone 360-599-1518

[info@mtbakerchamber.org](mailto:info@mtbakerchamber.org)

This office is about 15 miles west of our Excelsior Camp.



**What to Take:** Hikers should wear footwear appropriate to the trail conditions. Waterproof boots are advised for hiking across snow and low streams. Wear or carry appropriate clothing including a warm jacket, rain gear, hat and gloves. Carry food, water, a map, compass, flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries, lighter or matches in a waterproof container, solar blanket and/or ground insulation, insect repellent, head net, sunscreen, first aid kit, pocket knife, and whistle.

**References:** Craig Romano, Day Hiking North Cascades, 2014  
Mike McQuaide, Day Hike! North Cascades, 2014  
Erik Molvar, Hiking the North Cascades, 2009  
Erik Molvar, Best Easy Day Hikes North Cascades, 2009

**Maps:** Trails Illustrated North Cascades National Park  
Trails Illustrated Mt. Baker, Boulder River Wilderness Areas

Free USGS Quad maps and topo maps are available for printing at:  
[http://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/rastergateway/states-regions/regions\\_zoom.php?regionID=r6](http://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/rastergateway/states-regions/regions_zoom.php?regionID=r6) and  
[www.digital-topo-maps.com](http://www.digital-topo-maps.com)

**Hike Descriptions:** Hikes are organized in two sections. First is the Mt. Baker Area, which includes hikes closest to camp on the north side of Mt. Baker. Most of these trailheads are accessed on or near the Mt. Baker Hwy, State Route 542.

Second is the North Cascades Area, which includes hikes south of Mt. Baker or in the North Cascades National Park. Most of these trailheads are accessed on or near North Cascades Hwy, State Route 20.

Hikes are described as easy, medium, or hard, generally defined as:

**Easy:** Up to 5 miles roundtrip and up to 1,000 feet of elevation gain.

**Medium:** 6 to 10 miles roundtrip and 1,000 to 2,000 feet of elevation gain.

**Hard:** Over 10 miles roundtrip and over 2,000 feet of elevation gain.

Many trails offer a range of hikes from easy to hard, depending on how far you want to go. Even if you want an easy hike, read the descriptions of the harder hikes to see if there is a nice lake, meadow or other point of interest along the way that can be reached on an easier hike.

Most of the hikes are described as out and back hikes or loops. There are many more options for longer loops, shuttles, or cross-key hikes you can plan by checking your map.

Driving directions to trailheads start at the Excelsior Camp entrance on Mt. Baker Hwy 542. Driving distance is an estimate and is reported as one way.

# **Mt. Baker Area**

## **1. Horseshoe Bend**

**Easy**

Hiking Distance: 2.4 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 250 feet

Driving Distance: 4 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west on Hwy 542 for 4 miles to the Douglas Fir Campground. Turn left to the trailhead across the highway from the campground entrance. Look for the trail at the southeast corner of the bridge over the North Fork Nooksack River (980 ft).

This is a pleasant hike along the very wild North Fork Nooksack River. The river is thunderous loud as it tumbles over rapids and through chasms. This interpretive trail describes the river and old growth timber environments. After 1 mile the good path climbs to an old road. Continue another .2 mile to trail's end above the river at Horseshoe Bend. You may be entertained along the way by dippers, a diving bird; and by whitewater kayakers.

## **2. Church Mountain**

**Hard**

Hiking Distance: 8.5 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 3,750 feet

Driving Distance: 3.2 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west on Hwy 542 for .5 mile. Turn right (north) onto East Church Mt. Rd (FS 3040) for 2 miles to a ford across Fossil Creek, then another .7 mile to the trailhead at road's end (2,350 ft). If your vehicle is too low to cross the creek, there is room to park at the crossing.

This is a long, hard climb to a former lookout site, but it rewards the faithful hiker with wildflower meadows enroute and spectacular 360° views of surrounding peaks from the 6,100-foot lookout site just below the spire summit.

This trail starts off blessedly gentle for the first .5 mile. The trail switchbacks steeply up through forest for the next 2 miles. After 3 miles the trail enters an open basin of wildflower meadows, including an orchid garden at Deer Horn creek. Views of Church Mountain greet you straight ahead and remain for most of the way up. The trail climbs out of this large basin across steep slopes of heather. Next the trail enters a small, rocky basin where snow may linger. The trail turns west and angles under and over some rocky sections before reaching its end at the small knoll. It's best to limit your hike to 8 persons, because not many more would fit on this pinnacle. The actual summit of Church Mountain is to the northwest. There are mountains to see in every direction: Mt Baker, Shuksan, Skyline Divide, the Twin Sisters and Rainier to the south; the High Divide to the east; Canyon Ridge and Canadian mountains to the north, plus Kidney Lakes straight below; and the San Juan Islands to the west.

### **3. Welcome Pass and High Divide Hard**

Hiking Distance: 8 miles RT  
Elevation Gain: 3,400 feet  
Driving Distance: 7.2 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 6.5 miles to rough FS Rd 3060 (between milepost 45 and 46). Turn left (north) and drive .7 mile to the trailhead at road's end (2,450 ft).

This is a harder access to the delightful ridge walk along the High Divide compared to the shuttle option in Hike #7.

The first mile is easy; the next 1.5 miles are brutal gaining over 2,300 feet to reach Welcome Pass. At least this first 2.5 miles of trail is under old growth canopy to keep you cool as you climb up the 67 switchbacks. The trail enters expansive wildflower meadows at Welcome Pass (5,200 ft.) and mountain views abound, especially of close-by Baker and Shuksan. Turn left onto the High Divide trail to enjoy more meadows and views. Since this eastern end of the High Divide trail is harder to reach, you may have more solitude to explore it compared to the western half. Hike 1.5 miles west to reach Peak 5850, which makes a turnaround spot for this 8-mile roundtrip hike. Or continue west another 3 miles to Excelsior Pass (see Hike #7).

### **4. Heliotrope Ridge Medium**

Hiking Distance: 5.5 miles RT  
Elevation Gain: 1,800 feet  
Driving Distance: 13.3 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west on Hwy 542 for 5 miles. Turn left onto narrow, mostly paved Glacier Creek Rd (FS 39). Drive 8 miles and keep left at a junction and continue another .3 mile to the trailhead with a large parking area (3,750 ft). Outhouse is available.

This trail takes you into the rock, ice, and snow world of Mt. Baker. It provides the closest view of the mountain as well as close-up views of the Coleman Glacier and huge lateral moraines. There are 5 unbridged glacier-fed streams to cross so be prepared.

This trail soon crosses Grouse Creek on a bridge and enters Mt. Baker Wilderness. The trail crosses three more streams that do not have bridges, the second of which is the most difficult. This is a very popular trail and climbing route to Mt. Baker best done on a weekday. The trail begins to climb more steeply along Kulshan Creek, then reaches a junction in a little more than 2 miles. Turn left to stay on the main trail (the right one is a climbers' route). Mt. Baker soon looms into sight straight ahead. The trail soon crosses two braided arms of Heliotrope Creek, both of which can be challenging. Plan on higher water for your return crossings. The trail then crosses alpine meadows (watch for marmots) to the lateral moraine of Coleman Glacier. Below is the massive glacier itself, covered with crevasses and blue pools. There is a small path that

climbs up the moraine along the glacier to a 5,550-foot knoll. Do not hike on the glacier or adjacent snowfields. Watch for mountain goats on Bastile Ridge to the left across the glacier.

## **5. Skyline Divide**

### **Medium to Hard**

Hiking Distance: 9 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 2,500 feet

Driving Distance: 18 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 5 miles. Turn left onto Glacier Creek Rd (FS 39) for just 100 yards. Turn left onto FS 37 (signed for Skyline Trail) for 12.8 miles to the trailhead at road's end (4,300 ft). Outhouse is available.

This trail follows a ridgetop on the north side of Mt. Baker and provides one of the best ridge walks in the area with wildflowers at your feet and views from the snowy peaks of Canada to Puget Sound. It brings you face-to-face with Mt. Baker, with many lesser peaks vying for attention.

It takes 2 miles of steep hiking through nice forest to gain the ridgetop, but the rest of the hike is glorious. Once on the open ridgetop the trail crosses wildflower meadows and rolls up and down over minor knolls, getting ever closer to Mt. Baker. The trail reaches an unmarked junction at 3.5 miles in a small saddle (6,000 ft). This is a nice turnaround point for a medium hike. Otherwise stay to the right (the left trail drops down into a basin) to continue 1 more mile on a now rougher trail that climbs nearly 600 feet through heather meadows to a 6,563 knoll at trail's end. This perch provides 360° views of nearly continuous mountains and high ridges. Besides the North Cascade peaks in the US and Canada to the north, south, and east, you can also see the Olympic and San Juan Island mountains to the west. You may also see some mountain goats.

## **6. Canyon Ridge**

### **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 6 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 1,300 feet

Driving Distance: 19 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west on Hwy 542 for 4 miles. Turn right (north) onto Canyon Creek Rd (FR 31) for 9.9 miles. Bear left to stay on Canyon Creek Rd, and left again at 14.5 miles. Continue another .5 mile to the trailhead at road's end (4,250 ft). Outhouse is available.

This is a nice ridge hike through wildflower meadows with many mountain views, including Canadian peaks. It shares the trailhead with two other popular trails, but after the first .7 mile, it turns off to provide a more solitary experience.

After .7 mile, turn left at the signed junction. In another .4 mile you reach a second junction with the Boundary Way Trail. Keep to the left on the Canyon Ridge Trail as it alternates between

forest and large meadows with views all around. After 3 miles you reach a 5,400-foot knoll that offers grand views and a good spot for lunch. Canadian border peaks are just 1.5 miles to the north. To the south and east are Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan. Also note Excelsior Peak and High Divide, which you may also want to hike another day.

The trail continues for more miles, but is faint and not maintained. Instead, turn around here and return to the Boundary Way junction you passed coming up the trail. For a nice side trip (and more miles and elevation), turn onto the Boundary Way for 1 mile to a 5,300-ft ridge. Look for a well-defined path to the left that goes .5 mile to the summit of Cowap Peak (5,650 ft) for even more mountain views.

## **7. Excelsior Peak**

### **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 6.5 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 1,500 feet

Driving Distance: 19 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west on Hwy 542 for 4 miles. Turn right (north) onto Canyon Creek Rd (FR 31) for 9.9 miles. Bear left to stay on Canyon Creek Rd, and left again at 14.5 miles. Continue another .5 mile to the trailhead at road's end (4,250 ft). Outhouse is available. This is the same trailhead as for Hike #6.

This trail provides a lovely ridge walk with wildflower meadows and mountain views on its way to a former lookout site.

This trail begins as in Hike #6, but at .7 miles turn right. The trail descends .2 miles to little Damfino Lakes. These are little ponds that don't have much to recommend them, except if the huckleberries are ripe. Continue past the lakes into more forest. After 2 miles the trail crosses large wildflower meadows and views begin to open up. In 2.8 miles the trail reaches Excelsior Pass (5,375 ft) with great views and a trail junction. Stay to the left on the High Divide Trail for another .3 mile, then look for the short spur trail on the left to the summit of Excelsior Peak (5,700 ft). The peak is on the western boundary of the Mt. Baker Wilderness. Mt. Baker fills the view to the south across the steep North Fork Nooksack Valley directly below. Views of Mt. Shuksan and lesser peaks abound. If you are not ready to turn around, continue another 2 miles along the High Divide to an even higher knoll (5,930 ft) and more good views.

Option: If you love ridge walks, plan to do a one-way through-hike to continue on the High Divide Trail for 4.5 miles between Excelsior Pass and Welcome Pass, and then down the steep Welcome Pass Trail for 2.8 miles to its trailhead on FS Rd 3060, just 7 miles from camp. This one-way option is 10 miles with only 1,800 feet of gain. You can set up a car shuttle or arrange for a pick-up at the exit trailhead.

## 8. Yellow Aster Butte

### Medium

Hiking Distance: 7.5 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 2,550 feet

Driving Distance: 11.5 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 7 miles. Turn left (north) onto Twin Lakes Rd (FS 3065) and immediately turn left again to stay on FS 3065 for 4.5 miles to the trailhead (3,600 ft) where the road makes a sharp right turn. Parking is tight along the road. Outhouse is available.

This is another great ridge walk with wildflower meadows, huckleberries, and mountain views galore. The trail climbs steeply through forest for the first 1.4 miles with several view-breaks as it crosses avalanche slopes. Turn left at the junction with the Tomyhoi Lake Trail. The trail contours around a basin and soon Mt. Shuksan and Mt. Baker come into view. The trail ascends through a heather meadow, then drops 100 feet into a basin with wildflowers and some lingering snow patches. The trail then climbs more steeply along the south shoulder of Yellow Aster Butte with improving views. At 3.5 miles is a junction on a ledge overlooking the tarn-strewn plateau below. The trail left drops 200 feet down to the plateau. The trail right climbs 400 feet in .25 mile to Yellow Aster Butte's summit (6,150 ft). There views abound, especially of Tomyhoi Peak to the north. Yellow Aster Butte is a broad butte with two summits. The true summit lies .3 mile north on an unofficial trail along a narrow, exposed ridge.

## 9. Winchester Mountain

### Easy-Medium

Hiking Distance: 3.5 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 1,320 feet

Driving Distance: 14 miles one-way

Driving Directions: **The last 2.5 miles is very rough and requires 4-wheel drive and high clearance.** Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 7 miles. Turn left (north) onto Twin Lakes Rd (FS 3065) and immediately turn left again to stay on FS 3065 for 4.5 miles. Continue 2.5 rough miles to the trailhead at road's end between the Twin Lakes (5,200 ft). Outhouse is available.

This trail may not be everyone's idea of easy, because it is short, but STEEP (1,320 ft in 1.5 miles). This is a *relatively* easy way to gain access to alpine country for wonderful views of mountains, lakes, and steep green valleys. And there is a restored lookout on the 6,521-foot summit.

This is a beautiful trail from its very beginning between the Twin Lakes surrounded by steep mountains. In .25 mile the trail reaches a junction with the High Pass Trail. Turn left and cross meadows with wildflowers and marmots. At 1 mile the trail comes to a gully that may hold a steep snow field. If so, cross below the snow, if possible. If it appears unsafe, it is best to turn around and enjoy the Twin Lakes instead. The trail continues to traverse the steep slope of Winchester Mountain above the west Twin Lake. The trail soon turns upslope in a series of short

switchbacks to reach the lookout on the summit. The lookout was built in 1935 and later restored for use as a unique overnight rental. Enjoy the 360° views and try to decide which direction to face while you have lunch.

## **10. High Pass** **Easy-Medium**

Hiking Distance: 4 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 1,350 feet

Driving Distance: 14 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Same as Hike #9.

This trail is similar to the Winchester Mt. trail in terms of wildflowers and views, but it takes you high on the shoulder of Mt. Larrabee. It is longer and it has a heart-breaking drop of 300 feet in the middle that you have to regain, but it offers a quieter option than Winchester Mt.

The trail starts on the Winchester Mt. Trail. After .25 mile, turn right onto the High Pass Trail. You soon crest a small ridge and are greeted by great views of Mt. Larrabee and the Pleiades straight ahead. The trail drops 300 feet to skirt around cliffs and then crosses a steep wildflower meadow that may hold snow. Cross any steep snow field only if it looks safe. The trail crosses Winchester Creek and then climbs through tight switchbacks to a notch in Low Pass (5,600 ft). The trail continues climbing steeply through sparse forest and huckleberries to reach High Pass (5,950 ft). Mt. Larrabee looms high overhead. Mountain views abound and Tomyhoi Lake is seen below.

## **11. Nooksack Cirque** **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 7 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 600 feet

Driving Distance: 9.2 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 7 miles. Turn left (north) onto Hannegan Pass Rd (FS 32) just before a bridge over the North Fork Nooksack River. Drive 1.3 miles, then bear right onto FS 34 for .9 mile to the trailhead at road's end (2,200 ft).

This hike provides a stunning view into Nooksack Cirque on Mt. Shuksan. Sheer cliffs rise above the cirque and the North Fork Nooksack river comes roaring out of it.

The trail soon drops into the gravel bed of Ruth Creek and requires fording this cold, swift stream. Logs are often present to aid the crossing. On the other side of the creek look for the path up to the old logging road. The trail follows this former road through forest, then crosses a second creek on a log bridge. The trail then slightly descends and enters the Mt. Baker Wilderness and old growth forest at 3 miles out. The trail now works its way toward the North Fork Nooksack, then follows the river until it ends on a wide gravel bar. The view up the river to



the cirque and Icy Peak is stunning. If the river is not running too high, you can continue up the gravel bar toward the cirque.

## **12. Goat Mountain**

### **Hard**

Hiking Distance: 11 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 4,100 feet

Driving Distance: 9.4 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 7 miles. Turn left (north) onto Hannegan Pass Rd (FS 32) just before a bridge over the North Fork Nooksack River. Drive 2.4 miles to the trailhead (2,550 ft). More parking is available beyond the trailhead.

This is another high elevation view hike, but you have to earn the views, because the trailhead is so low. The views are just as good on “easier” Hannegan Peak (Hike # 13), but if you disdain crowds and crave a 4,000 + foot hike, this is your mountain.

The trail immediately climbs at a moderate grade on many switchbacks through nice forest. After 1.8 miles and shortly after entering the Mt. Baker Wilderness, ignore the unmarked trail to the right. The thick forest begins to thin into deciduous trees and views start opening up. At 3.75 miles the trail reaches a knoll with great views of Mt. Sefrit and Mt. Shuksan and their glaciers. Look for scenic Price Lake sitting in a cirque on Shuksan’s icy north face. The trail continues on the ridgecrest and ends at the base of large wildflower meadows on Goat Mt’s south face (5,600 ft). To reach the summit, follow the defined route across, then straight up those steep meadows and across several small flower-lined creeks. The trail turns right and follows the ridgeline for another .5 mile of stunning alpine views across the North Cascades to a high point of 6,650 feet. Note the small glacier directly below your perch that sits between the two summits of Goat Mt. The mountain’s true summit is north and 100 feet above this point, but requires crossing a dangerous snowfield and a scramble and is not recommended.

## **13. Hannegan Peak**

### **Hard**

Hiking Distance: 10.4 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 3,100 feet

Driving Distance: 12.3 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 7 miles. Turn left (north) onto Hannegan Pass Rd (FS 32) just before a bridge over the North Fork Nooksack River. Drive 5.3 miles to the trailhead at road’s end (3,100 ft). Outhouse is available.

This trail follows cascading Ruth Creek up a wide valley full of wildflowers toward glacier-draped Ruth Mt. before it veers off for a steep climb to the summit of Hannegan Peak. Great views of Mts. Ruth, Baker, and Shuksan dominate the summit.

This is a gorgeous trail along Ruth Creek fed by numerous streams falling down cliffs that define the valley. At .6 mile you cross the first of many creeks. If some still have snowbridges, test carefully before crossing. Snowy Ruth Mt soon comes into view and stays with you the rest of the hike. At 2.5 miles the trail climbs more steeply and reaches a ledge high above Ruth Creek. At 3 miles the trail crosses a creek below a cascade and soon enters thick forest. At 3.5 miles ignore the spur trail to the right (to campsites), unless you want to see the wildflower meadows. Turn left and continue through alternating forest and meadows to reach Hannegan Pass (5,050 ft.) and a 4-way junction at the 4-mile mark. Views here are obstructed by trees, so turn left for the final 1.2 miles and 1,100 vertical feet to the summit (6,187 ft). The 360° views include Goat Mt., the High Divide, and the sawtooth profile of Nooksack Ridge to the west; Canada's Slesse Mt. and the Silesia Creek valley to the north; Copper Ridge and Mt. Redoubt to the east; and Baker, Ruth, and Shuksan mountains close-by to the south.

#### **14. Chain Lakes Loop** **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 8 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 1,600 feet

Driving Distance: 16 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 16 miles. Turn right into the Heather Meadows parking area, signed for Bagley Lakes. Look for the Chain Lakes trailhead just after the Picture Lake Trail and before the Mt. Baker Ski Lodge (4,250 ft). Outhouse is available. **Check with Forest Service about road and trail conditions before attempting this hike. Road and trail often remain snowbound well into August.**

This is a premier hike that has it all: charming lakes, talus slopes and ridges, and wildflower meadows set below Table Mt. and between Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan. This hike is described as a loop around Table Mt., but there are many variations for shorter or longer hikes. See Hike #18 for many short hike options in Heather Meadows.

The trail first drops to Lower Bagley Lake. Turn right and cross its outlet stream, then walk along its shore. At .7 mile there is a junction at an arched stone bridge. Stay to the right and soon pass the shore of Upper Bagley Lake. Pause for a look at snowmelt cascading down the cliffs of Table Mt. ahead. The trail now climbs, steeply at times, across a rocky slope to Herman Saddle (5,400 ft) with stunning views of Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan. Mt. Herman is seen north of the saddle. The trail then drops 600 feet down a steep meadow that often has snow fields. At 3.5 miles you pass Iceberg Lake and its icebergs on your left. On the right is Hayes Lake and Arbuthnet Lake. Look for a side trail if you want to visit those smaller lakes. The trail continues through forest along Mazama Creek to little Mazama Lake set in a wildflower meadow. The trail climbs again to a pass (5,200 ft) between Table Mt. and Ptarmigan Ridge with great views. Stay left at the junction with the Ptarmigan Ridge Trail to continue the loop for another mile over open slopes with unending views of ridge after ridge into the distance. At 6.5 miles the trail reaches Artist Point (5,140 ft) and its huge parking lot. Go through the parking lot to find the Wild Goose Trail. Take this trail the remaining 1.5 miles north to complete the loop. This section

of trail drops 850 feet and is often covered with a steep snow field. If it is too dangerous to cross, walk on the Mt. Baker Hwy back to your car.

Option: If you want to avoid walking on the highway, first drive to Artist Point to check the snow situation. If the trail is snowed in, you can hike from Artist Point clockwise around the trail as an out- and-back hike. Or drive back to the Chain Lakes Trailhead and do an out-and-back hike from there.

Whichever hike you do, plan to add the paved .5-mile Picture Lake Loop—a must hike for photographers.

### **15. Table Mountain** **Easy**

Hiking Distance: 3 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 560 feet

Driving Distance: 19 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 19 miles to Artist Point at road's end (5,140 ft). Outhouse is available. **Check with Forest Service about road and trail conditions before attempting this hike. Road and trail often remain snowbound well into August.**

Start hiking west on the Chain Lakes Trail for .2 mile. Turn right onto the Table Mt. Trail. The trail works its way up the nearly vertical east wall on rock steps and ledges. But after just 500 feet of gain you reach the mesa-like top of Table Mt., which is often windy. The trail continues across the plateau past sparse trees and tarns. Mt. Baker and Mt. Shuksan dominate the views, but many other snowy peaks are visible, also, as are the lakes below. The trail ends at the west end of the plateau overlooking Ptarmigan Ridge.

### **16. Ptarmigan Ridge** **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 10 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 1,300 feet

Driving Distance: 19 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 19 miles to Artist Point at road's end (5,140 ft). Outhouse is available. **Check with Forest Service about road and trail conditions before attempting this hike. Road and trail often remain snowbound well into August.**

If this trail is not locked in snow and ice, it provides an amazing alpine experience. This ridge walk features not wildflowers, but rather snow, ice, rock, and tundra high on the shoulder of Mt. Baker. The trail is rough and sketchy in places.

Start on the Chain Lakes Trail heading west toward Table Mt. After .2 mile stay left at the Table Mt. trail junction. Continue for a mile across Table Mt.'s south slope. At 1.2 miles stay straight

to pick up the Ptarmigan Ridge Trail. The trail climbs to the ridgecrest, possibly on a steep snowfield. If the snowfield is extensive, it is best to turn around. Once on the ridgecrest, head straight toward Mt. Baker. Watch for mountain goats on the rocky slopes and ptarmigan on the tundra. The trail skirts around several high knolls as it climbs up the ridgeline. At 5 miles the trail reaches a flat area called Camp Kiser near the base of Rainbow Glacier.

### **17. Lake Ann Medium**

Hiking Distance: 8.2 miles RT  
Elevation Gain: 1,900 feet cumulative gain  
Driving Distance: 17 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 17 miles to Austin Pass. The trailhead is on the left (4,700 ft). Outhouse is available. **Check with Forest Service about road and trail conditions before attempting this hike. Road and trail often remain snowbound well into August.**

Lake Ann is a beautiful, deep alpine lake set against snowy Mt. Shuksan. It often holds snow and ice patches through the summer. The only downside to this beautiful trail is the 900-foot drop in the trail about half way in, which you need to regain going in and out.

The trail begins in forest and gradually descends for 2.3 miles into the Swift Creek valley. The trail reaches its low point (3,900 ft) in a wildflower meadow. Turn left at the junction. The trail then climbs 1,000 feet at an even grade with switchbacks. It passes through forest, meadows, and rock, often with snow patches, to a saddle. Mt. Shuksan dominates the view to the east. Look down into the snowy basin ahead to see Lake Ann before descending 100 feet to the Lake. Glacier-draped Mt. Shuksan provides a dramatic backdrop to the lake. The path continues .75 mile beyond Lake Ann toward the base of Lower Curtis Glacier. But remember you have a 900-foot climb back to trailhead.

### **18. Heather Meadows Scenic Trails Easy**

Hiking Distance: Optional  
Elevation Gain: Optional  
Driving Distance: 19 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn east onto Hwy 542 for 17 miles to the Visitor Center by Austin Pass..

This is a collection of short, scenic trails in Heather Meadows, nestled between the Mt. Baker Wilderness and the North Cascades National Park. Do all or a few as you enjoy a day of sightseeing in these alpine meadows studded with lakes and surrounded by snowy peaks. Stop at the Visitor Center by Austin Pass to learn about the area, get oriented, and pick up some maps.

**Artist Point**-this is the best of the shorts, an interpretive trail with 360° views of snow and glacier-covered mountains, plus several tarns along the way (1 mile RT; 300 ft. gain). Trailhead is at the end of Hwy 542 past the Visitor Center.

**Fire & Ice Loop**-an interpretive trail by the Visitor Center that explains the volcanic and glacier features in the area (.5 mile; 150 ft. gain).

**Panorama Dome**-a high knoll at 5,000 feet that overlooks the Heather Meadows area with good views of mountains to the north (3 miles RT; 800 ft. gain). The trailhead starts in the ski area between the two parking lots.

**Picture Lake**-a beautiful alpine lake reflecting surrounding peaks (.5 mile with no elevation gain). Park at the trailhead on the right fork of the one-way loop road around the Lake.

**Bagley Lakes & Lower Wild Goose Loop**-start as in Hike #14. At the arched stone bridge turn left to return on the Lower Wild Goose Trail (1.5 miles; 250 ft. gain).

## North Cascades Area

### 19. Park Butte Lookout Medium to Hard

Hiking Distance: 7.5 miles RT  
Elevation Gain: 2,200 feet gain  
Driving Distance: 84 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 16.2 miles. Turn left onto Baker Lake Rd for 12.2 miles. Turn left onto FS 12 for 3.5 miles. Turn right onto FS 13 (signed for Mt. Baker National Recreation Area) for 5.2 miles to the parking area at road's end (3,300 ft). Outhouse is available.

This may be the most spectacular hike and best view of Mt. Baker in the North Cascades, and the most popular. It features wildflower meadows, a great ridge walk, close-up views of Mt. Baker and glaciers, and a historical lookout.

The trail soon comes to a junction with the Scott Paul Trail. Keep left and soon cross Sulfur Creek on a bridge. The first mile plus is easy walking through a large wet meadow to braided Rocky Creek. The trail then climbs more steeply up a forested ridge. At 2 miles you reach the upper junction with the Scott Paul Trail, which is an optional return for a longer hike. The trail soon breaks out into beautiful Moritz Meadow full of heather and huckleberries. At 2.4 miles is another junction. Turn left and Park Butte soon comes into view to the west, then Mt. Baker dominates the view to the north. The trail crosses more meadows dotted with tarns that reflect Mt. Baker. Stay left again at the next junction for a wonderful ridge walk for 1 mile to Park Butte

and its 1933 lookout (5,450 ft). The lookout is open to the public. Mt. Baker still dominates the view, but views west are also stunning.

Option: On your return consider taking the Scott Paul Trail to make a longer loop back to the trailhead for a total hike of 11.5 miles RT with 2,900 feet of gain. Look for the upper junction of the Scott Paul Trail (4,500 ft) about 1.75 miles after leaving the lookout. Turn left on this trail and soon skirt the lateral moraine left by Easton Glacier. The trail crosses Rocky Creek on a seasonal suspension bridge (check with Forest Service to be sure it is in place). The trail climbs up Metcalfe Moraine with views of Easton Glacier and then crosses into meadows. After reaching the high point of 5,200 feet, the next 2 miles are a delight as the trail contours high on the south shoulder of Mt. Baker just below its glaciers. It crosses moraines, meadows, rock gardens, and parklands. Other snowy peaks are visible to the south. The trail then loses elevation and comes to a saddle in a meadow with the last of the outstanding views. The last 2.5 miles are an easy descent to the trailhead.

## **20. Dock Butte**

### **Easy**

Hiking Distance: 3.5 miles RT  
Elevation Gain: 1,300 feet gain  
Driving Distance: 86 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 16.2 miles. Turn left onto Baker Lake Rd for 12.2 miles. Turn left onto FS 12 for 7 miles. Turn left onto FS 1230 for 3.8 miles to the trailhead at road's end (3,900 ft).

This is a much easier hike for comparable views of Mt. Baker and the alpine experience of Park Butte. You don't get the historic lookout, or the crowds of Park Butte.

The trail soon enters old growth forest and a junction at .25 mile. The left trail goes .5 mile to Blue Lake, which you may want to check on your way out. Keep right for Dock Butte. The trail climbs up to a ridge top above Blue Lake. Mt. Baker fills the north viewshed. Continue up the ridge through heather and wildflower meadows with great views. At 1.4 miles is a junction. Ignore the decommissioned route to the right. Keep straight on the more obvious (and safer) path up the ridge to the summit (5,210 ft). Enjoy the views of a dozen major peaks on a quiet alpine Butte.

## **21. Lookout Mountain**

### **Hard**

Hiking Distance: 9.4 miles RT  
Elevation Gain: 4,470 feet gain  
Driving Distance: 93 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Continue straight (do not turn left onto SR 20) on Cascade River Rd for another 7 miles to the small parking area on the south side of the road (1,250 ft). Cross the road to the north to find the trailhead.

This is a very hard climb to the summit of Lookout Mt., then you can climb up the lookout steps to the balcony for fantastic views over the North Cascades.

The trail begins climbing right away through many switchbacks. Fortunately, the first several miles are through thick forest for shade. At 2.8 miles and shortly after a nice creek, you reach a junction. Turn left and continuing climbing. After another .5 mile the trail makes a traverse across a steep wildflower slope to the lookout at the top (5,719 ft.). If you think the views will be better, you can climb the several dozen steps to the lookout balcony.

Option: When you reach the junction after 2.8 miles, if it is hot and you would rather jump in a lake, turn right to go to Monogram Lake. You have to hike a little further and climb a little higher to reach the lake (9.8 miles RT; 4,675 ft gain). This trail enters the North Cascades National Park. In 1.3 miles you reach the ridgcrest with good views, including the view *down* into the dramatic cirque where Monogram Lake lies. You need to drop down 500 feet in .7 mile to reach the lake (4,873 ft).

## **22. Hidden Lake Lookout Hard**

Hiking Distance: 9 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 3,290 feet gain

Driving Distance: 100.4 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Continue straight (do not turn left onto SR 20) on Cascade River Rd for another 9.7 miles then turn left onto rough FS 1540 (Sibley Creek Rd) for 4.7 miles to the trailhead at road's end (3,600 ft).

This is a stunning hike that also leads to an historic lookout. It was a favorite at the 2004 North Cascades Outing—a real alpine experience. If you have time for only one hard hike to a lookout, make it this one, **if the steep snowfield at the 3-mile point is passable. Check trail conditions with the Forest Service before attempting it.**

The trail starts in a clear cut, but soon enters nice forest for about 1 mile. The trail crosses East Fork Sibley Creek, climbs a steep side-slope, then re-crosses the same creek and turns south at 2.5 miles. Mt Baker is visible to the northwest. The trail now gets prettier and provides better views as it crosses heather meadows and big granite slabs. Watch for ptarmigan, marmots, and mountain goats. At 3 miles a steep slope may hold a snowfield that may be dangerous to cross without an ice ax. If there is a snow-free route across, proceed through wildflower meadows.



Keep an eye out ahead and up for the lookout, which comes into view long before you reach it. You may feel like Frodo approaching Mt. Doom, but the trail is not as bad as it looks. At 4.2 miles the trail reaches a saddle at the North Cascades National Park boundary (6,600 ft). Below is Hidden Lake backed by a number of North Cascades peaks. To the right is a higher knoll and the lookout. Hidden Lake Peaks is to the left of the saddle. Turn right for .3 mile over a rocky trail. Enjoy views of Mt. Baker, Rainier and waves of ridges and peaks in between. The 1931 lookout is open to the public.

### **23. Cascade Pass and Sahale Arm**

#### **Hard**

Hiking Distance: 12 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 3,600 feet gain

Driving Distance: 109 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Continue straight on Cascade River Rd (do not turn left onto SR 20) for another 23 miles to the trailhead at road's end within the North Cascades National Park (3,600 ft). Outhouse is available.

This very hard hike remains one of the most popular in the area because it takes the hiker into beautiful alpine meadows and provides great views from the trailhead all the way up to the toe of Sahale glacier.

The trail starts climbing through switchbacks up the steep valley wall of the North Fork Cascade River. After 2 miles the grade eases on a long traverse to Cascade Pass. More peaks become visible along this delightful traverse through meadows and talus. At 3.7 miles you reach the heather meadows of Cascade Pass (5,400 ft) with Doubtful Lake below. This makes a fine viewpoint and turnaround point if you want a medium hike. Otherwise, go a short way east of the Pass to find the trail going northwest. The trail climbs steeply for 1 mile to a junction. Turn left onto the Sahale Arm Trail. The trail now heads straight toward Mt. Sahale and its glacier for 1.3 miles as it crosses more rolling wildflower meadows and tundra with birds and marmots and snowy peaks all around. Hike up to the toe of the glacier at 7,200 feet, unless blocked earlier by snowfields. Look back south to the sheer cliffs of Johannesburg Mt. and other peaks; east down the steep Stehekin Valley to Doubtful Lake and McGregor Mt.; and west to Hidden Lake Peaks, Eldorado Peak, and Mt. Torment.

### **24. Thornton Lakes**

#### **Hard**

Hiking Distance: 10.2 miles RT

Elevation Gain: 2,900 feet cumulative gain

Driving Distance: 102 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 11 miles. Turn left (after milepost 117) onto gravel Thornton Lakes Rd for 5 miles to the trailhead at road's end (2,600 ft).

This is a trail to the largest of three Thornton Lakes set in deep cirques in North Cascades National Park.

The trail starts on an old logging road in a grown over clearcut. After 2.3 miles of easy hiking, the trail leaves the old road and begins climbing up a steep, thickly forested slope. At 4 miles the trail enters the North Cascades National Park and continues climbing through many switchbacks to a saddle and junction at 4.5 miles (5,000 ft). Turn left and drop 500 feet into the lakes basin for .6 mile to the outlet stream of the first lake (4,500 ft). Mt. Triumph and Trappers Peak stand above the lakes. There is no trail to the other two lakes and there may be only a fishers' trail along the lake shore.

## **25. Maple Pass**

### **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 7.2 miles loop

Elevation Gain: 2,000 feet gain

Driving Distance: 137 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 51 miles to Rainy Pass. Turn **right** into the picnic area to find the trailhead, which initially shares the PCT (4,850 ft). Water and outhouse is available.

The only thing Chemeketans like better than a loop hike is dinner. This gorgeous trail has it all: old growth forests, colorful wildflower meadows, open ridge walks, stunning mountain views at two passes, and it even loops around an alpine lake. The long drive is definitely worth it.

The loop is described counterclockwise for a gentle ascent and steeper descent. The trail heads south on paved Rainy Lake Trail (also the PCT), but immediately veers right onto a regular trail. The trail climbs through an old growth mixed forest with huckleberry bushes and wildflowers. At 1.3 miles is a junction with a trail to Lake Ann (not the same lake as in Hike #17). If you want to extend your hike, veer left onto the 1-mile round trip detour to this pretty alpine lake set in an open cirque with towering rock walls. For the loop stay right at the junction to gently climb out of the thick forest and into alpine meadows with increasing views. The trail curves around on top of the cirque that holds Lake Ann below. In 2.3 miles you reach Heather pass (6,200 ft) with Lake Ann 1,000 feet below. Ignore the social trail to the right and stay left through meadows and rock gardens holding an amazing variety of wildflowers. The trail continues on the cirque rim for over a mile, reaching Maple Pass (6,600 ft) at 3.5 miles. The trail gently climbs another mile on the shoulder of Frisco Mt to reach the high point of the loop (6,850 ft) with great views all

around. The trail now drops down steeply through more wildflower meadows and soon provides views of Rainy Lake far below. After passing through thick forest turn left onto paved Rainy Lake Trail for .5 mile back to the trailhead.

## **26. Cutthroat Pass**

### **Medium**

Hiking Distance: 10 miles

Elevation Gain: 2,000 feet gain

Driving Distance: 137.3 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 51 miles to Rainy Pass. Turn **left** onto the spur road for .3 mile to the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) parking (4,800 ft). Outhouse is available.

This hike follows the PCT north as far as Cutthroat Pass, one of the most open, scenic passes in the North Cascades. It provides sweeping views of the major snowy peaks and seemingly unending jagged ridges far into the distance.

The trail climbs gently through thick forest and crosses Porcupine Creek at 1.5 miles. It follows the creek awhile and climbs more steeply out of the forest with increasing views. The real reward comes at the pass (6,800 ft) with views all around. Also watch for mountain goats and marmots. Stroll around the wide and open pass to enjoy this alpine wonderland. If you want to extend your hike, continue on the PCT another 1.25 miles with minimal elevation change to Granite Pass. It's hard to convince yourself to turn around.

## **27. Blue Lake**

### **Easy**

Hiking Distance: 4.4 miles

Elevation Gain: 1,050 feet gain

Driving Distance: 140 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 54 miles to the trailhead on the right (5,200 ft). Outhouse is available.

This is a pretty trail that starts high and in just a few miles takes you into alpine country and to an azure lake set beneath towering granite walls. If you are planning a scenic drive to Mazama, this makes a handy, short hike to break up the drive.

The trail starts in dense forest and gently climbs away from the highway. In 1 mile it passes through an avalanche clearing that provides some views out. In 1.5 mile it enters a beautiful

wildflower meadow with Liberty Bell Mt. towering above. Ignore the rough climbers' trail to the left. At 2 miles you cross the shallow outlet stream of Blue Lake and soon enter the Blue Lake basin formed by Liberty Bell and Early Winter Spires. Watch for mountain goats, marmots, and rock climbers.

## **28. Cedar Falls**

### **Easy**

Hiking Distance: 3.5 miles

Elevation Gain: 500 feet gain

Driving Distance: 157 miles one-way

Driving Directions: Turn west onto Hwy 542 for 25 miles to Deming, WA. Turn left onto SR 9 for 22 miles to Sedro-Woolly, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (Moore St./Cascade River Rd) for 39 miles to Marblemount, WA. Turn left onto SR 20 (North Cascades Hwy) for 70 miles. Turn right onto FS 200 (signed for Cedar Creek) for 1 mile to the trailhead at road's end (3,000 ft).

Outhouse is available.

The trail starts in a gravel pit, but soon enters forest and follows roaring Cedar Creek tumbling below. Ignore the social trail to the right soon after the trailhead. Continue straight paralleling the creek. In .6 mile look through the forest across the creek's steep valley at a cascade tumbling down Sandy Butte. At 1.75 miles is Cedar Falls, crashing over granite ledges in two separate falls. After its fall, the creek squeezes through a steep, narrow chasm. If you have time, the Cedar Creek Trail continues for miles. If you are planning a scenic drive to Mazama, this makes a handy, short hike to break up the drive.