

## FAQs About Discovery Park

### What are the park hours?

Park hours are 4 a.m.-11 p.m. The environmental learning center is open for visitors Tuesday-Sunday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

### What is there to do here?

A variety of **nature programs** are offered throughout the year for organized groups as well as families, adults, and children. Trained volunteer naturalists offer seasonal interpretive stations in the meadow and beach on weekends.

There are more than seven miles of **hiking trails** in the park. The most popular trail is the 2.8 mile Loop Trail which circles the park passing through forests, meadows, and sand dunes. Off the Loop Trail are three different trails that take you down to the beaches and to Puget Sound – the South Beach Trail, the Hidden Valley Trail, and the North Beach Trail. Off the north parking lot is a ¼ mile loop called the Wolf Tree Nature Trail where you'll find our largest collection of native plants.

Miles of beach stretch along the park's western shore. The rocky north beach and sandy south beach are distinctly different habitats allowing for a variety of **tide pool explorations**.

There is an **historic lighthouse** on the westernmost point in the park – West Point. It was built in 1881 and in 2004 it became part of Seattle Parks and Recreation. The grounds are open to the public during regular park hours.

Discovery Park is one of the best places in Seattle to do some **birdwatching**. A wide variety of habitats provide shelter for more than 230 resident and migratory birds. Guided bird walks are offered at peak migration periods during the spring and fall.

**Bicycling** is encouraged on all the paved surfaces in the park. Since this used to be a fort, there are **more than five miles of paved roads** that are closed to motorized vehicles and available for bicycles.

**Picnic tables** are available close to parking lots and on the lighthouse grounds. They are first-come, first-served. There are no barbeques or covered shelters in the park. Due to limited picnic space, large groups are accommodated at other parks. Please contact the Event Scheduling Office at 206-684-4076 for more information on picnic areas for large groups.

There are a **children's playground, tennis courts, and a basketball court** a brief walk from the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center, located to the left as you enter the park from West Government Way.

### How do I get to the beach?

It is a 1.5 mile walk to the beach from any of the three parking lots in Discovery Park. Walk on the Loop Trail until you reach one of three trails that lead you to the beach - the South Beach Trail, the Hidden Valley Trail, or the North Beach Trail.

For those who are physically not able to walk to the beach, permits are available from the environmental learning center to park in a small parking area (eight spaces) down at the beach. Please know this parking area is for those with a City of Seattle permit only. If you park there without a permit, you may receive a parking ticket from the Seattle Police Department. The permits are available on a first-come, first-served basis and are good for three hours.

On certain weekends during the summer, the Discovery Park Advisory Council offers a shuttle bus to take visitors from the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center parking lot down to the lighthouse and back.

## **How far is it to the beach?**

From the three parking lots and from the environmental learning center, it is 1.5 miles one way to the beach.

## **Can I park at the beach?**

If you have a permit from the City of Seattle to park down at the beach, you can park there. Permits are available on a first-come, first-served basis through the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center for those who otherwise would not be able to get down to the beach – families with children under 8, people over 62, and others who are not physically able to walk to the beach due to an injury, illness, or some other physical condition. If you do not have a permit, you may receive a ticket from the Seattle Police Department if you are parked at the beach.

## **How do I get a permit to park at the beach?**

Permits for beach parking are available on a first-come, first-served basis at the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center Tuesday-Sunday from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Permits are good for three hours and must be returned to the environmental learning center after use. Permits are only for those who otherwise would not be able to get to the beach – families with children under 8, people over 62, and others who are not physically able to walk to the beach due to an injury, illness, or some other physical condition.

## **Can I take home rocks or shells from the beach?**

Discovery Park beaches are part of the City of Seattle's marine reserve system and collecting of any kind is not permitted.

## **Is there a place to look at tide pools here?**

Yes, we have amazing tide pools here at Discovery Park. On the north beach is a rocky shore that is exposed during low tides that are -1 or lower. Due to the slippery rocks, this beach is encouraged for visitors 6 years and older.

The south beach is a wide, sandy stretch with some large rocks that are exposed during any low tide. This is a great beach for families with small children to explore.

## **How do I get to the West Point Lighthouse?**

West Point lighthouse is on the beach at Discovery Park. To hike to the lighthouse, get on the Loop trail and take it to the South Beach Trail or the Hidden Valley Trail. These trails connect with Discovery Park Blvd. right above the beach. Once you reach this road, walk on the sidewalk downhill until you see the beach and the lighthouse.

In order to drive to the lighthouse, you must obtain a permit to drive down the road and park in the small parking lot at the beach. Permits are available at the Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center Tuesday through Sunday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The only people allowed permits to drive and park at the beach are those who otherwise would not be able to get there – families with children under age 8, people over 62 and others with some physical condition that does not allow them to walk long distances.

## **Where is the playground?**

There is one playground in the east part of the park, very close to the environmental learning center. Park in the east parking lot and travel the paved path that heads south from the environmental learning center. After you pass the tennis courts, look for the playground nestled in the trees.

## **What is the large golf ball/soccer ball like thing in the middle of the park?**

This is a FAA radar dome that is a backup for Sea-Tac Airport for planes traveling from the north. It was built in 1959 for the former Fort Lawton. The adjacent radar building was torn down in 2008.

## **Where is the Daybreak Star Cultural Center?**

Daybreak Star is located in the northwest corner of Discovery Park. If you are attending an event at the center, there is a small parking lot next to the building. Take Bernie Whitebear Drive off the north entrance to Discovery Park to get there. Otherwise, park in the north parking lot and head west from the lot down the blocked off paved road adjacent to the large lawn area. Walk for about two blocks and then look for the rainbow sign indicating the center just to the north of the road.

## **Where can I take my dog?**

Dogs on leashes are allowed in the park everywhere EXCEPT on the beach and on the Wolf Tree Nature Trail.

## **Is there an off-leash area at Discovery Park?**

There is no off-leash area at Discovery Park.

## **Where can I ride my bicycle in the park?**

Bicycles are allowed encouraged? on any paved surface in the park. There are paved roads closed to motorized vehicles in all areas of the park except the south meadow/south bluff area. Bicycles are also allowed on any sidewalk in the park.

## **Can I pick flowers, berries, mushrooms, etc?**

Collecting of any type is prohibited in all city parks. Flowers, sticks, mushrooms, leaves, and other natural objects are an integral part of the environment.

## **How big is the park?**

Discovery Park is approximately 550 acres.

## **Where can I drive my car in the park?**

The purpose of Discovery Park is to provide an open space of quiet and tranquility for the citizens of this region – a sanctuary where they might escape the turmoil of the city and enjoy the rejuvenation which quiet, solitude and intimate contact with nature can bring. To this end, cars are very limited in the interior of Discovery Park. There is one road from the east parking lot to the north parking lot that cars can drive on. Then there is a third parking lot in the south section of the park that is accessed by traveling on city streets outside of the park and entering the south gate located off W Emerson.

## **Is camping allowed in Discovery Park?**

No, this is only a day use park. The park hours are 4 a.m.-11 p.m.

## Can I bring my barbecue grill to the park or the beach?

No barbecue grills are allowed in the park or beach.

## Are fires allowed in Discovery Park?

No, for any Seattle park, fires are only allowed in designated fire rings and barbecues. There are no fire rings or barbecues in Discovery Park.

## What are all the buildings in Discovery Park?

The peninsula on which Discovery Park sits is shared among several agencies. At the beach is the **King County Sewage Treatment Plant** and the **West Point Lighthouse**. The lighthouse is now part of Seattle Parks and Recreation. The **U.S. Coast Guard**, however, still maintains the actual working light and the radar system that is on the property. In addition, the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** maintains a weather station on the lighthouse property.

In the north part of the park, the **United Indians of All Tribes Foundation** leases property from the city and runs the **Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center**. This building is available for rental and holds a huge pow-wow in the summer as part of Seafair. Contact the center by calling 206-285-4425.

In the central area of the park, the **Federal Aviation Administration** has a large radar facility that is a backup system for Sea-Tac Airport. The radar looks like a large golf ball or soccer ball.

Since Discovery Park used to be Fort Lawton, there are nine historic buildings in the middle that stand as a living monument to when the park was a fort. Most of these buildings were built at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and are vacant. The chapel on the hill was built in the 1930s and is also empty. There is also a large mowed area adjacent to these buildings that is called the parade ground. It is part of the historic landscape. This entire area is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The houses to the east of the parade ground and the brick houses north of this area across Discovery Park Blvd. are also on the National Register of Historic Places. They were built at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of Fort Lawton. Currently, they are owned by a private developer and rented out to military families. These two housing areas are private property and no trespassing is allowed.

## How do I get more information?

There are many ways to obtain information about Discovery Park, its history, and the plants and animals that live here.

- Call the environmental learning center at 206-386-4236.
- Buy a map of Discovery Park at the environmental learning center. Most of the answers to these questions come from the map, which is a small brochure that unfolds to reveal a detailed, way-finding map of the park complete with topo lines.
- Visit the environmental learning center located at 3801 Discovery Park Blvd. It is open Tuesday through Sunday, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. There is professional naturalist staff available to answer questions and exhibits to browse. This building is also available for rental.
- Send your child to Nature Kids Preschool that is located at the environmental learning center and uses Discovery Park as the classroom. Contact the environmental learning center for more information.
- Send your child to Discovery Park Nature Day Camp in the summer. Camps are week-long adventures in the park for 4-11 year olds. Contact the environmental learning center for more information.
- Volunteer at Discovery Park. We have a variety of opportunities from the Junior Naturalist program for middle and high school-aged folk, to the volunteer naturalist program for adults, to the Discovery Park Advisory Council. Contact the environmental learning center for more information.

- Attend a nature program to learn about any of the plants or animals or habitats you encounter in the Puget Sound region. Contact the environmental learning center for more information.
- Receive our newsletter in your email by signing up on this website.