

Gifford Pinchot National Forest News

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Mount St. Helens Welcomes Fall Visitors

VANCOUVER, WA – Johnston Ridge Observatory (JRO) will close for the winter season at 6:00 p.m., Oct. 30, 2011. However, there is still time to enjoy fine fall weather and colors while experiencing Ranger-led activities, along with everything new and exciting at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, part of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Two new movies are the center of a wide array of updates and upgrades to the experience at Mount St. Helens. Johnston Ridge Observatory plays these two new movies regularly throughout the day, enthralling visitors on new dual-projector and surround-sound systems in the auditorium. New interactive displays tell the story of the 1980 eruption and recovery of devastated ecosystems in engaging and exciting ways.

New signs throughout the monument share the story and foster interest in new and repeat visitors alike. Ranger-led interpretive talks entertain and educate visitors at JRO and along the south and east sides at places like Ape Cave and Windy Ridge.

Time is limited, though, to take advantage of these unique and enlightening opportunities this year. Lead Ranger, Cory Wall said this weekend, Sept. 23-25, will be the last opportunity to take part in regular Ranger talks on the south and east sides of the Monument.

“Fall is one of the best times to visit Mount St. Helens. Although Ranger programs and services are limited this time of year, it is an excellent time for the local and returning visitors to take in the extremely dynamic landscape,” said Wall.

Rangers will be at Ape Cave and Windy Ridge on Friday, Sept. 23 and Saturday, Sept. 24 speaking with visitors about geologic and ecologic happenings on the Volcano. September 25, 2011 will be the last day for interpretive presentations on the South and East sides of the Monument.

After this weekend, Wall will be the only Ranger available for interpretation on the south and east sides. He said he will be out a couple days a week speaking with interested visitors on Forest Roads 90, 25 and 99 as weather allows.

Pine Creek Information Station will close for the season after this weekend as well. The last day of operations for 2011 at Pine Creek will be Sept. 25. Mount St. Helens Visitor Center, run by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, will remain open 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. all winter, closed holidays.

Operations and presentations at Johnston Ridge Observatory will continue through Oct. 30. The last day for visitation at this visitor center will be Oct. 30, 2011. Until this date, all are invited to come out and see all your Monument staff is doing to make the experience fresh and unique.

Guided hikes and Ranger presentations will continue through October at JRO, though they will depend on weather conditions.

“Elk are in the rut, trees and shrubs begin to change and there are very few people; just you and the monument,” advised Ranger Wall. “On nice days you may still find a roving ranger happy to share with you the stories of the landscape, point out some elk and answer every question; perhaps even one on one.”

“Fall really is a great time at Mount St. Helens.”

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Pictures available upon request