



Olympic National Park

Tide Guide

Editor's Note

One of the best things to do in Olympic National Park is tide pooling. At low tide, the beaches are exposed, leaving tide pools that are ripe for exploring. The pools of water are home to giant green anemone, mussels, barnacles, limpets, hermit crabs, and purple and orange sea stars.

To see them, you need to be there at the right time. This guide to the tides - and tide pooling - at Olympic National Park is here to help you understand the tides and adjust your itinerary around them.

James

James Ian
Founder



Parks Collecting



OLYMPIC TIDE GUIDE

The thing that makes planning an itinerary in Olympic National Park more complicated than other national parks is the tides.

The beaches are all mostly under water at high tide. Even more importantly, the tide pools are only exposed at low tides. So, to walk on the beaches and to explore the tide pools, you have to visit at low tide.

The best time is to **get to the beach 1 - 1.5 hours before low tide**. This gives you time to explore the beach and the tide pools before the tide comes back in.

The Tide Chart

The most accurate tide chart is the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Tides and Currents Chart](#).

When you click on this page, it automatically takes you to today's tide chart (see screen shot on the next page). You'll see a squiggly line and some numbers. The line charts the tides throughout the days. The numbers at the high and low points on the chart are the sea levels for each high tide and each low tide. The times of the day are plotted on the x axis (at the bottom of the chart). Note that the chart is for two days.

The tides swing between high tide and low tide every 5-7 hours. There are typically two low tides (roughly 10-14 hours apart) and two high tides per day, though this can vary.

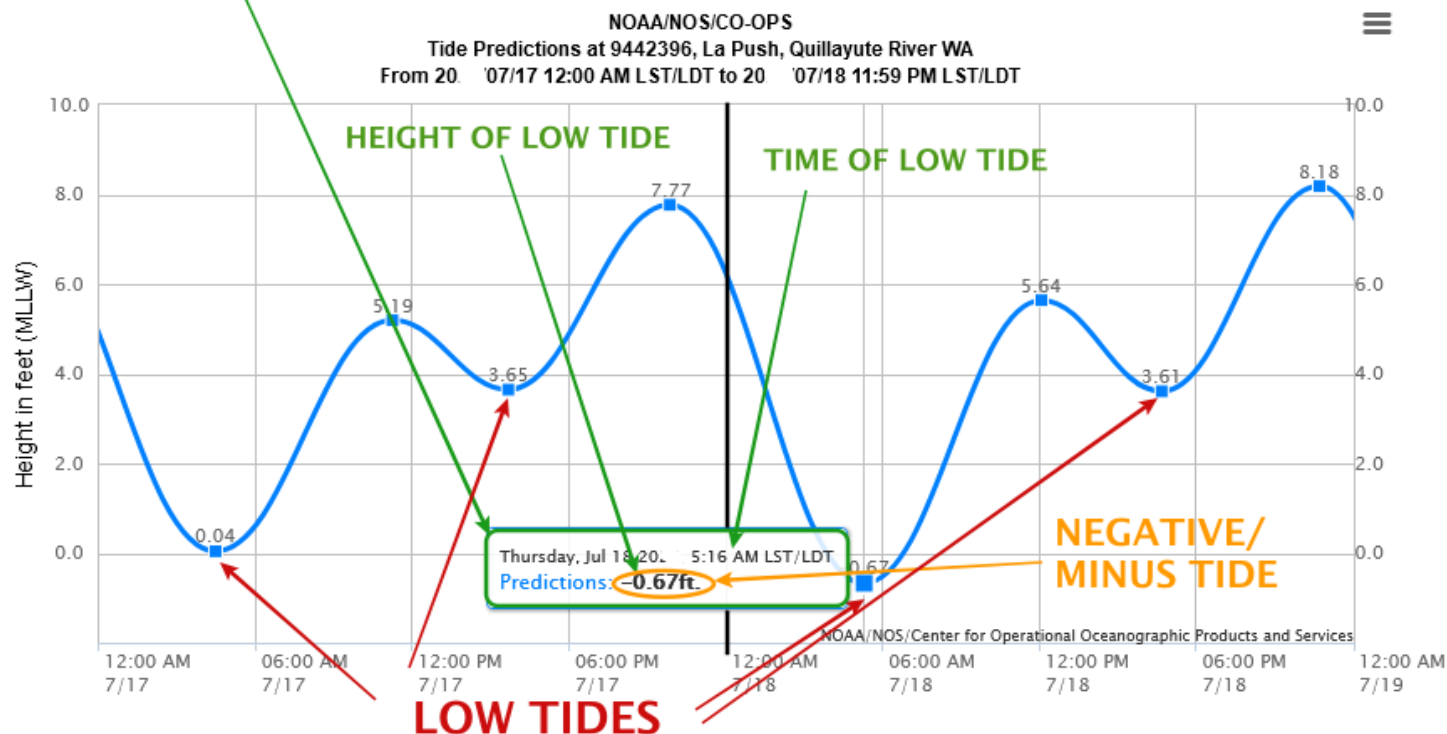
You may notice that the low tides sometimes have a negative number next to the level. These are called **negative (or minus) tides**. A minus tide is one where the water level falls below the average sea level. You can visit the Olympic beaches at any low tide, but because minus tides are so low, they are even better for exploring the tide pools. If you have a choice between a regular low tide and a minus low tide, go with the minus tide. However, don't get too caught up on this - any low tide is fine.

Hover your mouse over the numbers (the sea level at low tide), and a box pops up. This includes the **exact time of the low tide** in addition to the **sea level** at that time (see chart screenshot on the next page).



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BOX APPEARS WHEN YOU HOVER



You can see in our example here that:

- there are two low tides on the first day July 17 (7/17): 0.04 feet and 3.65 feet
- there are two low tides on the second day July 18 (7/18): -0.67 feet and 3.61 feet.

Let's look at the tides for July 18 in more detail:

When we hover over the -0.67 (which is a minus tide because the sea level is going to be below the average sea level), we learn that the exact time of the tide is 5:16AM on July 18.

This is a negative tide, so that's good, BUT it's too early in the morning (remember, you want to be there about 1-1.5 hours before the low tide, which would be around 4:00AM). So, in this case, **for July 18, the best low tide is the 3.61 feet low tide.** When I hover over this, I learn that the tide is **at 4:39PM** (so we want to be there about 3:10-3:30PM = 1 - 1.5 hours earlier)



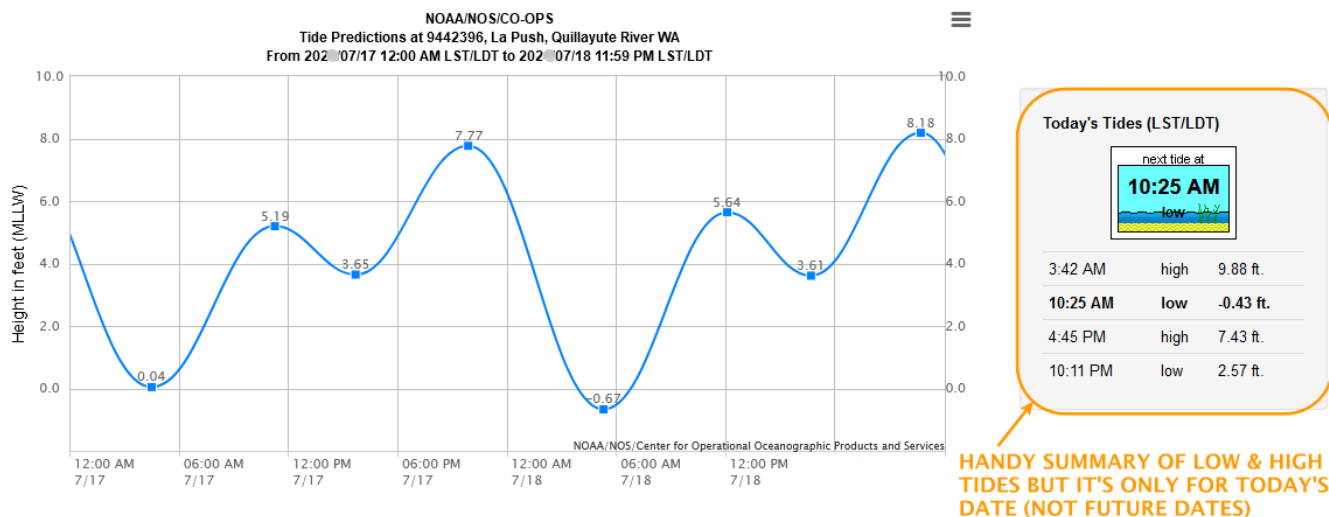
OLYMPIC TIDE GUIDE

Changing the dates for the dates of your trip

[Back to Station Listing](#) | [Help](#)

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Options for
9442396 La Push, Quillayute ...

From:
Jul 17 2020

To:
Jul 18 2020

Note: The maximum range is 31 days.

Units
Feet

Timezone
LST/LDT

Datum
MLLW

12 Hour/24 Hour Clock
12 Hour

Data Interval
High/Low

Shift Dates
Back 1 Day Forward 1 Day

Threshold Direction
>=

Threshold Value
[]

Update
Plot Daily Plot Calendar Data Only

CHANGE DATES TO SEE THE CHART FOR THE DATES OF YOUR TRIP

CLICK TO UPDATE CHART FOR YOUR NEW DATES

When you first open the website, it will have the chart for today's date. This is not helpful when you are planning your trip - you need to see the chart for the dates that you'll be in Olympic National Park. So, near the bottom of the page, below the chart, **change the dates to the dates of your trip** (you need to change both the *From* and the *To* dates), then click the "Plot Daily" button. This will update the chart for the dates of your trip.

Note that the handy summary box with the low and high tide details is only for Today's Date and does not update for future dates.



OLYMPIC TIDE GUIDE

Adjusting your schedule for the tides during your trip

So, you now know how to read the chart and you've got the tide details for the dates of your trip. **The last step is to tweak the itinerary based on the tide times.** Remember that the best time is to get to the beach 1 - 1.5 hours before low tide.

Example

In our previous example for July 18, we learned that the low tides were at 5:16AM and 4:39PM and we'd already decided that 5:16AM was too early, so we would aim for the 4:39PM low tide.

Let's imagine we are using the 1-Day itinerary. This is basically:

Leave 7:00AM

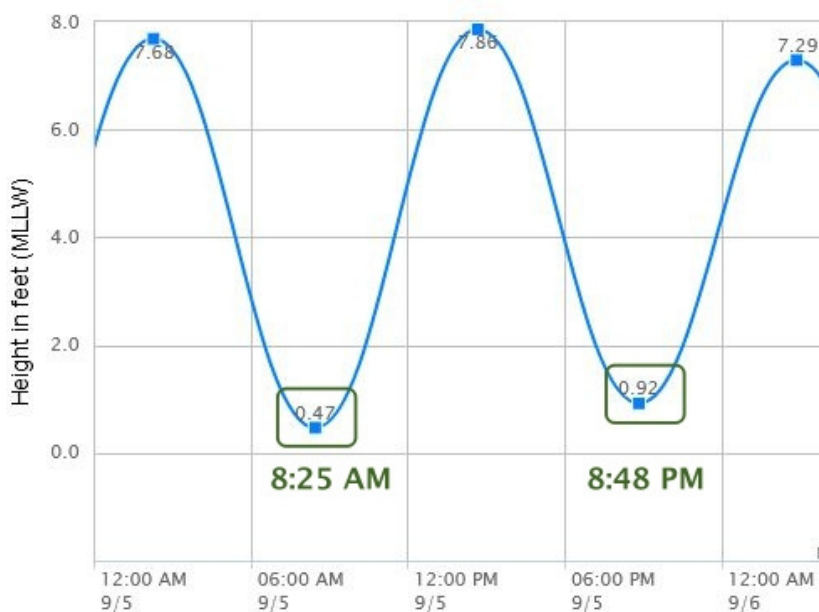
8:00AM Hoh Rainforest

3:20PM Rialto Beach

In this example, we don't need to change anything, because 3:20PM is within 1-1.5 hours before the low tide!

Unfortunately, the tides don't always work out like this, though.

Let's look at a different example. Let's change the dates to September 5 and 6.





OLYMPIC TIDE GUIDE

Example of adjusting your schedule for the tides during your trip

The low tides are at 8:25 AM and 8:48 PM.

Now, remember our original 1-Day itinerary was:

Leave 7:00AM

8:00AM Hoh Rainforest

3:20PM Rialto Beach

This is not when low tide is, so we will need to change the itinerary.

If we swap the morning and afternoon, we now have:

Leave 7:00AM

7:30AM Rialto Beach

10:30AM Drive to Hoh Rainforest *

12:00PM Picnic Lunch at Hoh Rainforest

6:00PM Head back to Forks

This timing now works for Rialto Beach, because you'll arrive at the beach about an hour before low tide. To give yourself more time at the beach, you could leave half an hour earlier.

* The downside to this is that you will now be entering the Hoh Rainforest area at the peak time, and you will almost certainly have to wait to get in (which is why the original itinerary has you entering Hoh Rainforest early in the day to avoid this wait). If you wanted to avoid this line, you could have a longer break in the middle of the day (have lunch in Forks), then go to Hoh Rainforest later in the day and skip one of the shorter hikes.



OLYMPIC TIDE GUIDE

How to adjust your schedule for the tides during your trip

Here is a **general summary** of tweaks to make (but you will need to fine tune with the exact tide times during your visit).

1-Day Itinerary

If the tides are best to visit the beaches in the morning, swap afternoon and morning.

For option A, go to Second Beach after Rialto Beach if you still have some low tide. Go to Hoh Rainforest as late as possible to try to avoid waiting to get in.

2-Day Itinerary

DAY 2

If the tides are best to visit the beaches in the morning, swap afternoon and morning.

For option A, go to Second Beach after Rialto Beach if you still have some low tide. Go to Hoh Rainforest as late as possible to try to avoid waiting to get in.

3-Day Itinerary

DAY 2

If the low tide is later in the day, push back the time you go to Rialto Beach to a little later (check sunset times).

If the low tide is earlier in the day, take a casual picnic lunch with you, skip a lunch in Forks and head to Rialto Beach sooner and have lunch on the beach.

If the low tide is much earlier in the day, flip the morning and afternoon. If you're planning to go to the Hot Springs (Options A1 and B), [check their website](#) for the session times.

DAY 3

If there are two available low tides in early morning and early evening instead of one in the middle of the day, go to Beach 4/ Kalaloch campground Beach first tide, try to get to Hoh Rainforest as early as possible after or wait until late afternoon if possible. Then go to Ruby Beach for the second low tide.



OLYMPIC TIDE GUIDE

How to adjust your schedule for the tides during your trip

4-Day Itinerary

DAY 3

If the tides are best to visit the beaches in the morning, swap afternoon and morning.

For option A, go to Second Beach after Rialto Beach if you still have some low tide. Otherwise, go to Second Beach in the second low tide of the day.

Go to Hoh Rainforest as late as possible to try to avoid waiting to get in.

DAY 4

If you need to flip the morning and afternoon itineraries, you can, but it will mean some backtracking.

If the low tide is in the middle of the day, push back the morning beach trips (but go as soon as the water is low enough), have a quick picnic lunch near or on the beach, then go to Quinault as soon as you can. You may finish a little later, but can also skip the Kestner Homestead hike if you need to shave off some time.