The Flyin' Solo VanLife on the Highways and Byways of North America
RICK'S ROADS
Ride Along and Enjoy the People, Places, and Who Knows What

BLOG POST: 2026.07.15

Hoh Rain Forest, Olympic National Park, Washington



A sunny day in a rain forest. I had been here once before, in 2006, I believe, and it was a delightfully sunny day then, as well. I'm glad it was, don't get me wrong, but it might have been more appropriate to see it in the rain, with the mosses and ferns all dripping, and the trunks a deep dark brown, with no shadows, and with the shades of green all deep and rich instead of vibrant and bright. So, more appropriate, yes, but more enjoyable, no way! Give me sunshine, any time!

The Hoh Rain Forest lies within an extended arm of Olympic National Park. It's a temperate rain forest, with deciduous and coniferous trees, so it's vastly different than the tropical rain forests that some people picture when they come here.



It's not the Amazon; it's a PacNW forest that averages 140 inches (almost 12 FEET) of rain per year, with most falling between October and June. The same moisture phenomenon that swept across Second Beach this morning, and which can cloak the PNW coast in fog for days, ramps it up even more during winter and spring.

The tall Olympic Mountains block that moisture and the sky dumps rain, rain and more rain on this area, creating one of the lushest forests in America.

Ferns carpet much of the forest floor, and moss clings to trunks and limbs, sometimes drooping heavily downward.

There are three major trails that head out from the Visitor Center. The Hoh River Trail is an 18.5-mile out-and-back (37 miles round-trip) trek. The Spruce Nature Trail is a 1.2-mile loop. The most popular trail by far, though, is the Hall of Mosses Trail (HMT), which is just 0.8 miles long and has an elevation gain of only 50 feet.

HMT is the most family-friendly, and offers the most dramatic displays of mosses (hence the name). Thus, it is also the most *crowded.* Do not expect to bathe your mind in silence and solitude on this trail. You might get a minute or two to yourself, but more people, with their chattering kiddoes, will be coming up that trail behind you, and people will linger in your way at the corral-style fence in the HOM taking selfie after selfie.

I do my best to ignore them, or at least tolerate them, because they have as much right as I have to be here, but that does not mean that I'm happy to share my precious space with them.









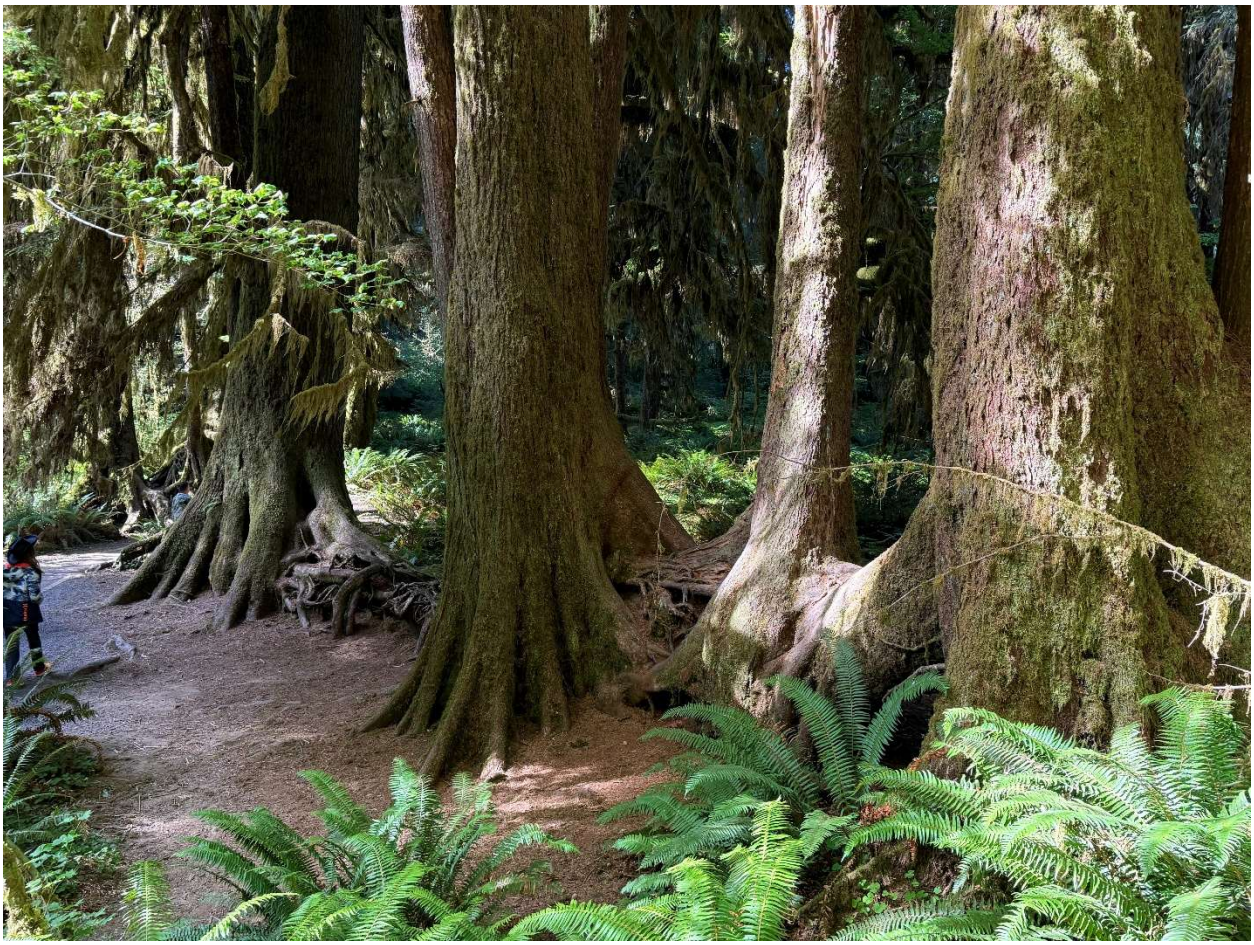


All that said, the Hall of Mosses itself was really cool. The photos do this place no justice at all. That seems to ring true of almost any forest. The redwoods from last year were far more impressive in person. The atmosphere in “The Percy” (The Enoch Percy French Grove on the Avenue of the Giants in Humboldt Redwoods State Park in California) was overpowering when I stood in the midst of it, but was shruggable in photos.

Likewise here. Try as I might to get prime angles and light – I did both a late-afternoon and an early-next-morning hike – it’s just not the same as the full 360˚-in-all-planes immersion.

One info placard stuck with me from two decades prior: The Nursery Logs. Tall trees topple and crash to the forest floor. They soon begin to decay. Seeds and spores drift down from above and take root in the nutrition-rich fallen trunk. And they grow, and grow, and grow. The trunks become “tree nurseries,” feeding new growth.

In the photo on the next page, you can see four huge trees have grown out of what is left of a long trunk lying under them. There is not much left of that log. It probably fell before I was born and has been pretty much sucked dry.



It's a nice ride to get here. From WA-101, the park gate is a 12-mile ride. It went quite smoothly for 10.5 of those miles, but then things ground to a halt. The road curved, so I could not see how far ahead the hold-up was, but I had a hunch it was not merely a wildlife sighting.

And I was right. We crawled and sat, crawled and sat, crawled and sat all the way to the gate house. It was about a 45-minute wait. Go figure: sunny day at a rain forest, you know? These things happen.

It was nice waking up here the next morning and not haviong to deal with any of that. I did another tour of the Hall of Mosses, but could not stay long. I had a target place and time northwest of here.







