LOCATION GUIDE

Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Housing, BAH, schools, gates, contacts and Pacific Northwest know-how for Lewis Main and McChord Field.

SERIES

CONUS

PCS

FROM	TO	GUIDE
Your current duty station	JBLM, WA	Location
BRANCHES	**AIRPORT**	**AREAS**
Army · Air Force	Sea-Tac (SEA)	Lewis Main · McChord

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

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WELCOME

JBLM at a glance

JBLM joined the Army's Fort Lewis and the Air Force's McChord Field in 2010. It sits on I-5 between Tacoma and Olympia, with Mount Rainier on the horizon and no state income tax.

FACT	DETAIL
Location	Pierce County, WA, between Tacoma (about 10 mi) and Olympia (about 20 mi)
Seattle	About 40 miles north on I-5
Major units	I Corps, 7th Infantry Division, 1st Special Forces Group, 62nd Airlift Wing
Size	More than 86,000 acres; over 45,000 active duty service members
Areas	Lewis Main, Lewis North, McChord Field and the Yakima Training Center
BAH housing area	Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA
Hospital	Madigan Army Medical Center

Getting here

OPTION	DETAIL
Seattle-Tacoma Intl (SEA)	About 35–45 minutes without traffic; much longer at rush hour
By car	I-5 runs right past the base — exits for DuPont, Lewis Main and McChord Field
Visitor centers	Lewis Main, 5901 41st Division Drive, and McChord Field on Fairway Road

I-5 shapes everything

The stretch of I-5 between Tacoma and DuPont is one of the most congested in the state. Ask your sponsor which gate you'll use before you choose a town.

COUNTDOWN

Before you arrive

JBLM is large and busy, but on-post housing often moves faster here than at other big bases. Get on the list, line up a sponsor and know which side of I-5 you'll work on.

As soon as you have orders 90+ DAYS OUT

- [ ] Apply for on-post family housing
- [ ] Request a sponsor (Army sponsorship desk or your CSS)
- [ ] Ask whether you'll work on Lewis Main, Lewis North or McChord
- [ ] Call the School Liaison Office about zones
- [ ] In EFMP? Contact EFMP before you house-hunt
- [ ] Look up your BAH for JBLM, WA
- [ ] Request child care on MilitaryChildCare.com
- [ ] Join local military spouse groups

Book the move 60 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Schedule household goods or plan your PPM
- [ ] Reserve on-post lodging early in summer
- [ ] Start the off-post rental or home search
- [ ] Gather school, shot and IEP/504 records
- [ ] Pack rain gear and layers in the car

Final prep 30 DAYS OUT

- [ ] Email the Reception Center your arrival plan
- [ ] Gather orders, leave form and family documents for housing
- [ ] Book a DEERS/ID card appointment if needed
- [ ] Set up a Good To Go toll account if you'll cross the Narrows Bridge

Mountain passes in winter

If you're driving in from the east, Snoqualmie Pass on I-90 can require chains or close in snow. Check the pass report before you leave.

DAY ONE

Reception and in-processing

Soldiers sign in at the Installation Reception Center, which runs 24/7. Airmen report to their unit's Commander Support Staff instead.

1

Army: Installation Reception Center

Building 2021, Lewis Main. Open 24/7. Call (253) 967-7004 or email JBLMIRCQA@army.mil before you arrive.

2

Air Force: Team McChord

Report to your unit CSS. No CSS? Go to MPF Customer Service in the Building 100 Customer Service Mall.

Bring with you

- Orders, amendments and your leave form
- Your most recent LES
- Airmen: sealed PCS envelope from your last base
- Marriage and birth certificates or a DEERS printout
- Power of attorney, if a spouse will handle housing
- Airmen: register for the monthly Newcomers briefing

Key stops

OFFICE	WHERE
Waller Hall (Army personnel)	Building 2140, Liggett Ave; weekdays 9 AM to 3:30 PM
Housing Services Office	Pendleton Ave, Lewis Main; briefs Mondays at noon
Lewis Main Visitor Control Center	5901 41st Division Drive; daily 5 AM to 10 PM
McChord Visitor Control Center	Fairway Road

Sponsorship desk

No sponsor yet? Call the JBLM sponsorship desk at (253) 968-6771, weekdays 9 AM to 3 PM.

WHERE TO LIVE

On-post and off-post housing

Family housing covers more than 20 neighborhoods across Lewis Main and McChord Field. About one in five families lives on post.

On post LIBERTY MILITARY HOUSING

- 2- to 4-bedroom homes; BAH covers rent, utilities, maintenance and lawn care
- On-post elementary schools sit inside the neighborhoods
- Waits are often 30–90 days, depending on rank and home size
- Apply as soon as you have orders: (253) 912-2112

Off post TYPICAL 3-BEDROOM RENT

TOWN	FEEL	COMMUTE	RENT
DuPont	Planned community next to Lewis North	5–10 min	$1,800–$2,400
Lakewood	Close and affordable	Short, but I-5 backs up	$1,600–$2,200
Steilacoom	Small historic town on the Sound	About 10 min	Limited inventory
Lacey / Olympia	South of base; avoids Tacoma traffic	25–35 min	$1,700–$2,300
Puyallup / Spanaway	More space and newer homes	20–30+ min	Varies
Tacoma / Gig Harbor	City life or waterfront	20–40 min	Varies

Rental Partnership Program

Ask the Housing Services Office about partner landlords who offer rent discounts, waived deposits and no credit-check fees.

THE NUMBERS

2026 BAH and rent vs. buy

BAH is set by the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA housing area. Monthly rates below from the official JBLM chart; confirm yours with the DoD calculator.

GRADE	WITH DEPS	WITHOUT	GRADE	WITH DEPS	WITHOUT
E-1 to E-4	$2,370	$2,034	W-5	$3,297	$3,009
E-5	$2,556	$2,121	O-1	$2,607	$2,178
E-6	$2,919	$2,199	O-2	$2,916	$2,496
E-7	$2,994	$2,376	O-3	$3,123	$2,784
E-8	$3,072	$2,634	O-4	$3,324	$2,991
E-9	$3,180	$2,736	O-5	$3,471	$3,030
W-1	$2,940	$2,313	O-6	$3,501	$3,102
W-2	$3,024	$2,631	O-1E	$3,006	$2,553
W-3	$3,126	$2,751	O-2E	$3,108	$2,712
W-4	$3,201	$2,931	O-3E	$3,216	$2,913

Source: JBLM 2026 BAH chart

Double-check your rate before you budget — BAH changes every January: travel.dod.mil/Allowances/Basic-Allowance-for-Housing/BAH-Rate-Lookup/

Some high-cost areas also pay CONUS COLA: travel.dod.mil/Allowances/CONUS-Cost-of-Living-Allowance/

Rent or buy?

- Home prices in the South Sound are well above the national average; many families rent
- Washington has no state income tax, but sales tax runs about 10% in Pierce County
- Buying can work on a long tour or if you expect to come back — JBLM rentals stay in demand
- Budget for a dehumidifier, gutters and moss — rain is part of home ownership here

Questions about BAH?

The JBLM Housing Services Office at (253) 967-3581 can answer BAH and housing allowance questions.

KIDS

Schools and child care

Clover Park School District runs the elementary schools inside JBLM's neighborhoods. Off post, your address decides the district.

SCHOOL OR DISTRICT	NOTES
On-post elementary	Beachwood, Carter Lake, Evergreen, Hillside, Meriwether and Rainier (Clover Park SD)
Middle and high school	Clover Park SD campuses off post, depending on your zone
Steilacoom Historical	Steilacoom, DuPont and Anderson Island
North Thurston	Lacey
Bethel	Spanaway and Graham
Puyallup	Puyallup and South Hill

School Liaison Office

Call (253) 967-7195 for zone maps, enrollment help and IEP or 504 transitions.

Military Interstate Compact

Helps with records, placement and graduation rules when you move mid-year.

Washington in-state tuition

Military families stationed in Washington can qualify for resident tuition.

Child care

- Request Child Development Center care through MilitaryChildCare.com as soon as you have orders
- School-age and youth programs run on Lewis Main and McChord
- Family Child Care homes on post can fill gaps and odd hours
- Pierce College has a campus on JBLM for spouses and teens

Ratings vary school to school

On-post elementary schools perform differently on state tests. Look up each school, not just the district, before you choose a neighborhood.

FAMILY LIFE

Spouse, family and Washington rules

Spouse support

- ACS Employment Readiness and the McChord Military and Family Readiness Center help with job searches
- Washington offers expedited and temporary licenses for many professions to military spouses
- A large job market in Tacoma, Olympia and Seattle
- MyCAA can fund certificates for eligible spouses

Family programs

- EFMP through ACS and the M&FRC
- New parent support and family advocacy programs
- On-call chaplain, 24/7: (253) 448-4744
- MWR rentals for camping, skiing and boating

Washington rules for military families

TOPIC	WHAT TO KNOW
State income tax	None in Washington
Driver's license	Service members and dependents with a valid home-state license can keep it
Vehicle registration	Nonresident service members can keep home-state registration
Emissions testing	Washington no longer requires emissions checks
Tolls	The Tacoma Narrows Bridge and some Seattle-area lanes use Good To Go tolling
Sales tax	About 10% in much of Pierce County

Gray-season blues are real

Short, cloudy winter days hit many newcomers. Get outside on dry days, use a daylight lamp and lean on MWR and family programs.

OFF DUTY

Living here

You'll want a car, though Sound Transit buses and the Sounder train help with trips toward Tacoma and Seattle. Plan errands around I-5 rush hours.

Climate

Mild and damp. Gray, drizzly October through April; dry, sunny summers. Late summer can bring wildfire smoke.

Shopping

Commissaries and exchanges on Lewis Main and McChord. Tacoma Mall and Lakewood Towne Center are close.

On base

American Lake recreation, golf, fitness centers and an outdoor rec center with ski and camping gear.

Day trips

DESTINATION	DRIVE	WHY GO
Point Defiance Park and Zoo	~25 min	Tacoma's zoo, aquarium and waterfront trails
Mount Rainier National Park	~1.5 hr	Wildflowers, glaciers and Paradise
Olympia	~25 min	State Capitol and farmers market
Seattle	~45 min–1.5 hr	Pike Place, the Space Needle, pro sports
Crystal Mountain	~1.75 hr	Skiing and summer gondola rides
Olympic Peninsula	~2–3 hr	Rainforest, Hurricane Ridge, tide pools
Ocean Shores / Long Beach	~2 hr	Pacific beaches and kite flying
Leavenworth	~3 hr	Bavarian-style mountain town
Portland, OR	~2.5 hr	Food, gardens and tax-free shopping

KEEP THIS HANDY

Key contacts

Phone numbers change — call ahead to confirm hours before you drive over.

OFFICE	PHONE
Installation Reception Center	(253) 967-7004
Sponsorship desk	(253) 968-6771
Housing Services Office	(253) 967-3581
Family housing (Liberty)	(253) 912-2112
School Liaison Office	(253) 967-7195
Lewis Main Visitor Center	(253) 967-4794
McChord Visitor Center	(253) 982-2119

OFFICE	PHONE
Madigan appointments	(800) 404-4504
Madigan Patient Advocacy	(253) 968-1145
TRICARE Nurse Advice Line	(800) 874-2273
On-call chaplain (24/7)	(253) 448-4744
SHARP hotline (24/7)	(253) 389-8469
Waller Hall (Army personnel)	(928) 998-9229

Links

JBLM home page · JBLM MWR · Liberty Military Housing · Madigan · DoD BAH calculator · Plan My Move

Sources: JBLM in-processing page; JBLM 2026 BAH chart; PCS Pay It Forward JBLM base guide; Madigan in-processing; MilitaryINSTALLATIONS.

READY FOR THE FULL PLAYBOOK?

Go step by step with the kits.

Worksheets, trackers and a complete binder setup for every stage of your move.

pcslikeapro.org

hello@pcslikeapro.org

WORKSHEET

Plan your landing

My housing budget

ITEM	AMOUNT
My monthly BAH	$
Rent or mortgage	$
Utilities (winter heating estimate)	$
Tolls and commute costs	$
Left over (BAH minus costs)	$

Neighborhood comparison

AREA / ADDRESS	RENT OR PRICE	RUSH-HOUR COMMUTE	SCHOOL ZONE	NOTES

First-week checklist

- [ ] Sign in (IRC for Army, CSS for Air Force)
- [ ] Update DEERS; get dependent IDs
- [ ] Turn in travel and moving paperwork
- [ ] Register with Child and Youth Services
- [ ] Attend the housing brief
- [ ] Enroll in TRICARE at Madigan or McChord
- [ ] Enroll kids in school
- [ ] Get a Good To Go pass if needed