

THINGS TO DO IN AND AROUND SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

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Dec 7, 2010 | By elizabethk

Photo Credit Seagull at Alki Beach Pier image by jwhitemedia from Fotolia.com

Picturesque Seattle, Washington, features a remarkable urban life amid beautiful natural surroundings of the Puget Sound and Cascade Mountains. Outdoor enthusiasts will find a variety of land and water activities to stay active and healthy. From walking to scuba diving, there are recreational opportunities for all fitness levels and interests. When you pack, remember that Seattle keeps moving, rain or shine.

WALKING

Scenic Seattle is best seen on foot. Starting at the famous Pike Place Market, you can travel south along First Avenue to view the downtown skyscrapers and experience the historic Pioneer Square. In the opposite direction, follow First Avenue north to discover the Olympic Sculpture Park, with its stunning view of Elliot Bay, and then continue through the Queen Anne neighborhood.

SCUBA DIVING

Although the chilly Puget Sound does not offer tropical reefs and fish, it is "home to the eight foot octupi and sixgill shark," according to the Visit Seattle website. Novice or experienced divers can explore the Puget Sound floor, finding a diverse ecosystem of aquatic life. Girl Diver Seattle offers scuba tours for all skills levels, as well as scuba courses for divers who want to obtain a PADI certified license.

KAYAKING

Kayaking Seattle waters is best during the sunny summer months. You can explore Elliot Bay or the inland Lake Union or Lake Washington. There are numerous kayak rental companies around the curving Lake Union toward Union Bay. Find a guided tour, day trip or sea kayaking class at the Northwest Outdoor Center. You also can bring your own kayak or canoe to paddle the Seattle waters.

HIKING

Seattle's trails lead hikers through various terrains. Trek forests, beaches or meadows at the 500-acre Discovery Park, located northwest of the central business district near the Magnolia neighborhood. For a more serene wilderness hike, drive approximately 30 minutes east on I-90 to Snoqualmie Pass, where there are many trails through the deep forests, glaciers, mountain summits and lakes. You need a Northwest Forest Pass to park at the trailheads; you can buy one at any Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Ranger Station or Visitor Center.

TOURING

No Seattle experience is complete without taste-testing Seattle's coffee. Take Seattle by Foot's Seattle Coffee Crawl. Voted a "Must Do" by the Seattle Magazine, this tour leads to various cafes around the latte-loving city, which is unofficially known as the Coffee Capital of the World. The Coffee Crawl provides visitors with history, culture, architecture and, of course, coffee.

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