

Escapes: Northwest's Best Kept Secrets



Hideaways close to home

By Elizabeth Kovar

Photo at right: Photographer scopes out the view from Garfield Peak, at Crater Lake, Ore. Photo by Christian Heeb, courtesy of Travel Oregon

Whether you've lived in the Northwest for a month or a lifetime, there are always more secret places to be discovered.

Add an element of surprise to your next travel adventure with hidden waterfalls or ancient mysteries. No matter who you are traveling with, there is something for every person of every age to do across Oregon, Washington, Idaho and British Columbia.

The best secret of all is that most of these remote locations are calm and peaceful. That beats standing in long lines at traditional tourist locations, eh?



*A well-known sight in Lynden is a 72-foot high windmill featuring moving blades.
Courtesy of Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism*

Berries and Windmills and Hot Tubs, Oh My!

Get out and play in small-town Lynden, Wash., a few miles south of the Canada-US border.

BelleWood Distilling, a local “farm-to-glass” distillery, offers year-round tours to guests who want to learn more about how apples and berries become hand-crafted spirits.

In the summer, start the morning at the Bjornstad Farms U-Pick for blueberries, strawberries and raspberries.

Picnic with your fruit in Berthusen Park—a historically registered, preserved Homestead Park.

Spend the night in your tent or RV at the Hidden Village RV Park.

Don't like sleeping outdoors? No problem. Experience Dutch living in a cozy windmill hotel. The Dutch Village Inn, a 72-foot windmill, features the best of Dutch decor and includes traditional bouquets of tulips.

For a romantic evening for two, stay in room two or three to sip some bubbly in either room's two-person hot tub.

www.lynden.org



Bear searches for Salmon at Thornton Creek Hatchery in B.C. Photo by Elizabeth Kovar

Get Up-Close with Wildlife

Ucluelet, a district on the western edge of Vancouver Island, B.C., features an abundance of wildlife.

Stay in one of the many coastal bed-and-breakfasts to watch eagles soar above treetops in your front yard, and keep your eyes peeled for whale blows and seals on the shoreline.

See black bears hunt salmon at the Thornton Creek Hatchery about 10 miles from Ucluelet. Bears are visible from a viewing deck along a section of the creek.

www.ucluelet.ca

Or, if you'd prefer to channel your inner wildlife and run through the forest, you could sign up for the Edge to Edge Marathon on June 8, 2014. The course begins and ends in Ucluelet and includes a unique mix of paved roads, bike paths and portions of the Wild Pacific Trail, known for its shoreline views.

www.edgetoedgemarathon.com

Explore Ancient Mysteries

Around 5677 B.C., Mt. Mazama in Oregon experienced a massive eruption and collapsed to become Crater Lake — the deepest lake in the U.S. at 1,943 feet deep. This lake has been long known as a sacred site to the Klamath Tribe. It is said that Crater Lake was an important part of the tribe's vision questions and that they witnessed its momentous creation.

Locals and visitors alike enjoy cycling the road around Crater Lake in the warmer months, and snowshoeing and Nordic skiing at the national park in the winter.



The 56-foot Heceta Head Lighthouse near the Hobbit Beach Trail, Ore., has been illuminated since 1894. Photo by Christian Heeb, courtesy of Travel Oregon

Real-life Hobbit Paradise

Hobbit Beach Trail, located on the Oregon coast, leads to a pristine, secluded beach at the base of Heceta Head. The easy-to-miss trailhead is located about two miles from Washburne on the east side of Highway 101. The one-mile hike weaves through wild tree structures and deep forests that are reminiscent of a hobbit paradise.

web.oregon.com/hiking/heceta_head.cfm

Your Secret Island

Located between Vancouver Island, B.C., and Bellingham, Wash., in Canadian waters, the Pender Islands are the least visited of the Gulf Islands.

With no town center, visitors are welcomed by unspoiled lands — from woods to wildflowers — and many opportunities to enjoy outdoor recreation.

The densely forested islands also attract ample wildlife. Have your camera in hand as you never know when an eagle will fly overhead. This is the perfect destination to escape the crowds and chaos of mainstream tourist destinations.

www.hellobc.com/pender-islands.aspx

Take a New Bike for a Spin

On your next trip to Boise, Idaho, stop at the Sierra Trading Post Outlet to purchase some of the best brands in the outdoor world. Get up to 70-percent off on running, hiking, biking and camping gear. Choose from big names like Leki, Columbia and New Balance.

www.sierratadingpost.com/lp2/boise-outlet-store

If you're in the market for a new bike, make sure you take it for a spin on the Boise River Greenbelt Trail, which begins in downtown Boise. Pedal the 25-mile waterfront trail to view the best of nature and abundant wildlife, including birds, foxes, turtles and fish.

parks.cityofboise.org/parks-locations/parks/greenbelt



Water cascades over rocks off the beaten path of the Goat Lake Trail. Photo by Elizabeth Kovar

Waterfalls off the Beaten Path

Goat Lake Trail in Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Wash., features several glorious waterfalls, including McIntosh Falls. While many hikers only trek to the first view of the lake, more daring adventures are rewarded with spectacular photo ops if they continue along the eastern semi-paved path over tree roots, rocks and branches to the base of the falls.

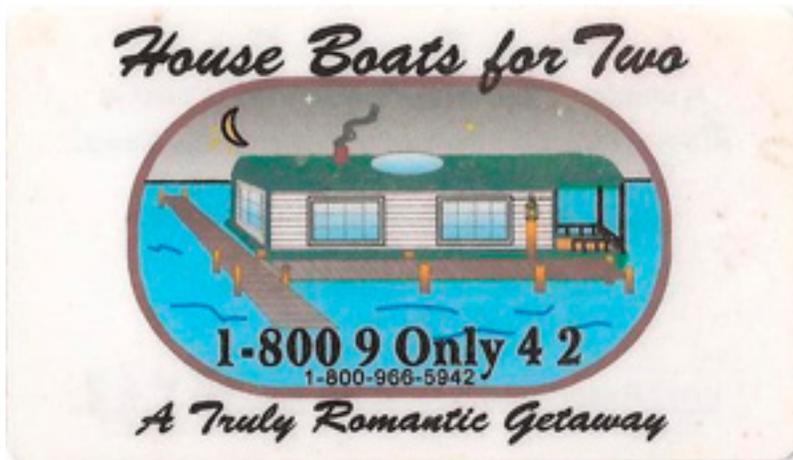
The trailhead is located off Mountain Loop Highway on Forest Road 4080, about 20 miles southeast from Darrington, Wash. Use the Green Trails 111 Sloan Peak map for reference, and remember to pick up your Northwest Forest Pass.

www.fs.usda.gov/mbs

Water Escapes for Two

Get your "Sleepless in Seattle" experience while avoiding the masses. Head over to Brinnon, Wash. This small town is located off Highway 101, on the east side of the Olympic Peninsula, and is about 59 miles southeast of Port Angeles, Wash.

Stay in the marina's Houseboats for Two, where you'll want to keep an eye out for eagles and seals. Bring your bathing suit to enjoy the houseboat's indoor hot tub. Bring your kayak or SUP board, or rent one from Pleasant Harbor Paddle, to experience the calm waters of Northern Hood Canal.



Once you've had a chance to dry off, take a short drive to the easy-to-access (and stunning) Rocky Brook Falls.

www.emeraldtowns.com

Glamping at its Finest

Glamorous + Camping = Glamping. This pastime is popular with people who like to explore nature with a touch of class. Experience the art of luxury camping with Pampered Wilderness, located in Millersylvania State Park in Olympia, Wash.

Lavish sheets, toasty fire pits and coffeemakers are a few of the magnificent luxuries. Your canopy tent is footsteps away from 842 acres of old-growth cedars, hiking trails and Deep Lake shorelines.

www.parks.wa.gov



Wildflowers adorn the Mt. Sauk Trail. Photo by Elizabeth Kovar

The Trail Less Traveled

The 4.2-mile (round-trip) Sauk Mountain Trail is located in Washington's North

Cascades. Head to the trail on the Mountain Loop Highway and take Forest Road 1030. The 7.5-mile potholed road may take a while to maneuver but the destination is well worth the wait.

In the summer, this area features a wealth of vibrant wildflowers. At any time of year, switchbacks lead to striking views of the Skagit and Sauk valleys, as well as Orcas Island's Mt. Constitution. This trail-less-traveled is intense for beginners and those with vertigo, but no need to worry — the trail is safe and well-maintained. And, it offers rarely matched serenity for those who prefer less crowded paths.

www.fs.usda.gov/wps

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