

Spokane

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Jess Walter and other local writers dish about life in Spokane!

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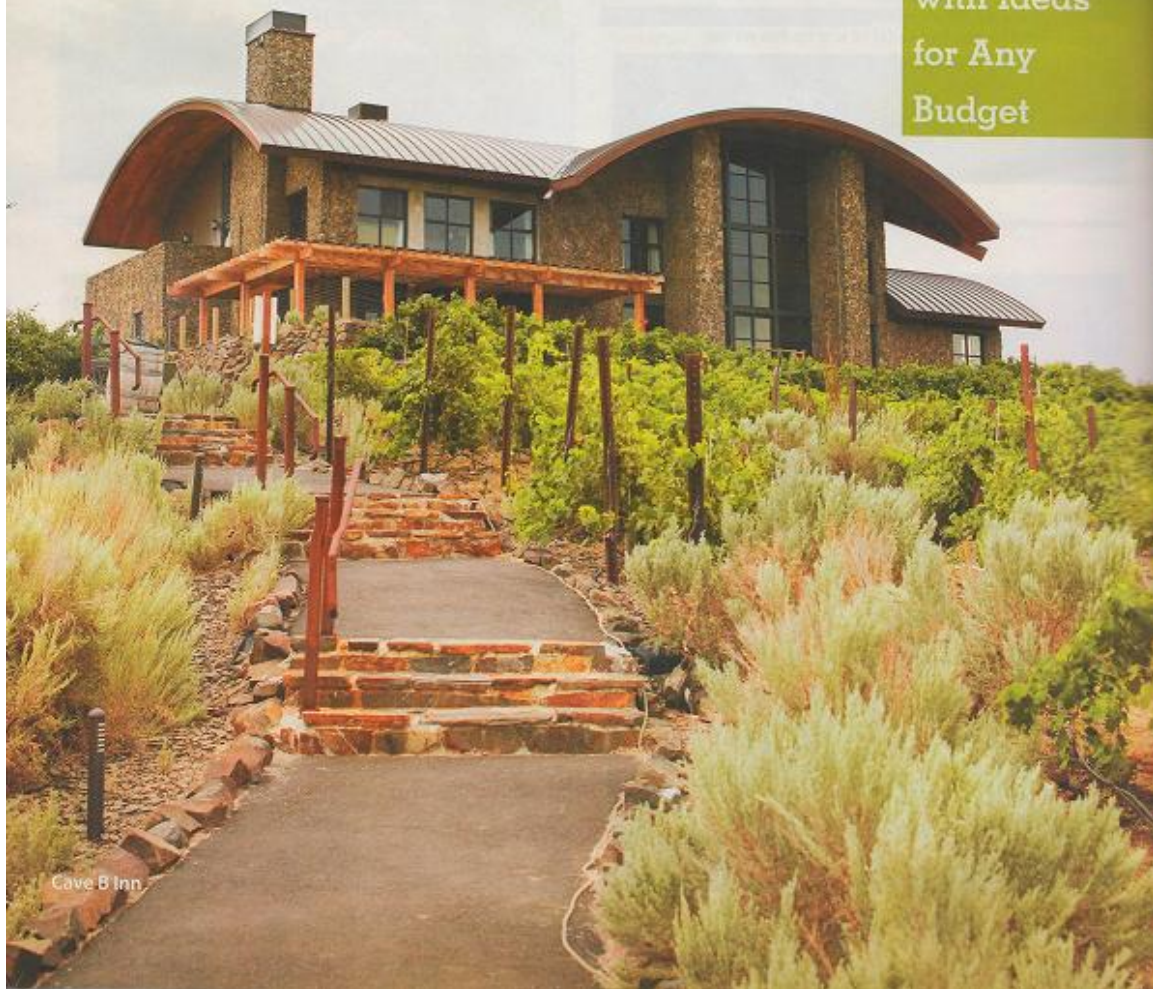
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Local Cuisine

Washington State by Thru

by Kevin Finch

Off-
The-
Beaten-
Path
Travel
and Food
Destinations,
with Ideas
for Any
Budget



Cave B Inn

MOST OF US LOVE THE FAMILIAR. WE SLEEP ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE BED, ORDER THE SAME dish at our favorite restaurant and take the same route home from work. Given this, it is not a surprise that we are nearly as predictable when we travel. We find places we love and return year after year.

There is the only problem with this: around almost every corner in the Northwest is a discovery. "Glamping" sites with spacious canvas tents set up with queen-size beds and hotel room amenities on San Juan Island, as well as a sailboat waiting for a lesson. Towering columns of basalt that draw climbers from around the world. A Woodinville lodge with ancient beams, elegant rooms and a friendly dog, is located near 70 winery tasting rooms. A hiking trail through a petrified forest at Vantage only a few miles from an elegant inn perched on the cliffs overlooking the Columbia. Add in the increasing number of outstanding wineries and great restaurants statewide, and an entire trip could be planned simply around where you will drink and where you will eat.

This summer we'd like to help by doing a bit of advanced scouting. If you already have a favorite vacation spot, go there again like last year, but plan a day or two on one end to try some place new...possibly in a part of the state you've never explored before.

1 2 3. THREE POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS

The first destination we suggest you explore is the rapidly-developing **Woodinville Wine Country** just east of Seattle. The second is the **high desert expanses** just off I-90 and overlooking the Columbia River. Then the third—**San Juan Island**—offers the unique shift of perspective that comes with life on an island.

At each destination, we've identified things to match any budget. If you have money saved up, consider our **SPLURGE** choices. If you have some flexibility in your budget over the cost of gas, we can suggest something **WORTH IT** that won't break the bank. And if you are looking for fun that will cost you nothing or next to nothing, try our **BUDGET DELIGHTS**. Or you can mix and match and feel alternately pampered and thrifty.



1 WOODINVILLE WINE COUNTRY

Most of the tourist press for the Puget Sound is dominated by Seattle, but for a fruitful change of pace you might skip the Market and the Needle, the Ballpark and the Ferries, and slip up the 405 to Woodinville, instead. This would be particularly true if you love wine. Woodinville has become the west side's wine destination with over 70 wineries and tasting rooms – many of them within walking distance from each other.

THE SPLURGE: A night at Willows Lodge and dining on-property at the Barking Frog.

Willows Lodge combines elegance with a warm rustic Northwest welcome in a location along the Sammamish River that is walking distance from over 20 winery tasting rooms, the Red Hook Brewery and Chateau Ste. Michelle. The world-famous Herbfarm is on the property as well as the lodge's own acclaimed restaurant, the Barking Frog. Willows Lodge offers 84 pristine rooms and suites full of thoughtful pampering and decked out with deep Jacuzzi tubs, fireplaces and integrated audio-visual equipment. Many of the massive beams throughout the lodge were reclaimed from a Port of Portland building and the lodge buildings wrap around three separate courtyards. The

Local Cuisine

meticulous grounds and on-site spa make the property popular both for romantic weekends as well as weddings. Ruth, the lodge dog, will greet you in the lobby, and bikes are available both to provide tasting room transport and for use on a section of the Burke Gilman trail that runs along one edge of the lodge grounds. www.willowslodge.com

The Barking Frog is just steps from the front door of Willows Lodge and has become a destination restaurant in its own right under Chef Bobby Moore. The powerful wine list is dominated by local wines and has been cited in numerous industry awards. Order Moore's inventive tasting menus or pick and choose items off the regular menu like his roasted Apple and Chestnut Soup or Buttermilk Fried Quail and a Waffle to start, and Muscovy Duck Breast with Wild Mushrooms and Huckleberry Risotto or Oven Roasted Lamb Chops and Papardelle. www.willowslodge.com/wine_dine/barking_frog.html

WORTH IT: A concert at Chateau Ste. Michelle and an afternoon tasting Washington wines.

Since 1984, the Chateau Ste. Michelle has opened up their intimate amphitheatre for concerts from top jazz, rock, blues and contemporary artists. Each year the concerts sell out and those attending descend on the grounds for music with picnic baskets and, of course, wine. Tickets are sold at the Chateau Wine Shop or through Ticketmaster. www.ste-michelle.com

While many of the grapes in Washington's award winning wines are grown east of the Cascades, Woodinville has become the center of the wine universe on the western side of the state with many top wineries from across the state opening tasting rooms in "Woodinville Wine Country." Chateau Ste. Michelle opened first in 1976, and now new tasting rooms appear almost weekly. www.woodinvillewinecountry.com

BUDGET DELIGHTS: Five beers for a buck at Red Hook, a picnic and a walk, skate or ride on the Burke Gilman Trail.

At Red Hook's Woodinville Brewery, you can "ascend the stairway to beer heaven" for only a buck and enjoy humorous beer commentary and history along with

five Red Hook beers on tap. Sip and spit if you want, but know that the pail on the counter for dumping out what you don't drink is called the "bucket of shame". www.redhook.com

Bring your bikes, your skates or just a pair of walking shoes and hop on the paved trails in Woodinville that run all the way into Seattle as part of the Burke Gilman Trail system. Stuff picnic supplies into a backpack and pull off the trail when you get hungry. www.seattle.gov/parks/burke-gilman/bgtrail.htm



COLUMBIA GORGE

Little on Interstate 90 compels you to exit in the high desert above the Columbia River at Vantage, but you will be stunned by the scenery as well as several wonderful



stops just a few miles off the main road. In addition to the Gorge Amphitheatre as a concert destination, there is a remarkable inn and estate winery tasting room, a famous climbing area with towering pillars of basalt, and a trail through a petrified forest.

SPLURGE: A night at Cave B Inn and a visit to the spa before dinner as the sun sets at Tendrils, the Inn's restaurant.

The road down to the surprising Cave B Inn winds through apple and cherry trees as well as grape vines while the expansive cliffs cut by the Columbia spread out before you. The Inn itself consists of 15 elegant stand-alone Cliff Houses, 12

Cavern rooms cut out of the basalt cliffs, and three more traditional rooms in the central lodge that also house meeting rooms and Tendrils, an on-site restaurant.

Rumor has it that by summer the property will also boast a number of yurts tucked in spaces out in the vineyards that cover the property. Arrive early or stay several days and you can take advantage of the spa that offers locally inspired treatments like the Chardonnay Sugar Exfoliation Wrap and the Grape Seed Body Scrub. There are also marked trails running down to the river, a driving range and a pool cut out of side of the slope below the Cliff Houses. www.sagecliff.com/Inn.htm

While Tendrils is an integral part of any stay at the Cave B Inn, it also stands out as one of the finest places to dine in the center of the state. Guests regularly drive from Ellensburg, Moses Lake, Yakima and Wenatchee for dinner or Sunday brunch in the restaurant's main dining room or a meal out on the patio overlooking the gorge. Chef Joe Richie arrived this fall with a resume that includes a long stint as the sous chef at Woodinville's Herbfarm, and his food pairings with the remarkable wines produced on the property are nothing short of magical. The tasting menu on a recent visit was inspired and the regular offers include the likes of Warm Lobster with Brandy Cream and a Lemon Popover, as well as Carrot-Raviolis with Lemon, Favas, Shallot-Tarragon Crème-Fraiche and Carrot Chips. www.sagecliff.com/Culinary.htm

WORTH IT: Wine tasting at the Cave B Estate Winery and a concert at the Gorge Amphitheatre.

Even if you are not going for a concert or booked for the night at the Cave B Inn, don't miss the opportunity to take an hour and pull off I-90 to visit the Cave B Estate Winery for a tasting. It will set you back a mere \$6 and give you the chance to sample the remarkable line-up of wines made exclusively from grapes grown on the property. This property is uniquely varied with four distinct soil types and elevation changes so that both classic red

and white wine grapes thrive. Typically, tastings reveal a few clear winners at any given winery, but winemaker Freddy Arredondo has crafted a stunningly strong chorus of both wines: be sure to try the '09 SageCliffe 100 White, the '09 Saignée (a brilliant rosé), the '08 Riesling, and '06 Cabernet Sauvignon. www.sagecliffe.com/Cave_B_Winery.htm

Or you can join 20,000 of your closest friends for one of the massive concerts hosted at Live Nation's Gorge Amphitheatre to hear Tom Petty or the Dave Matthews Band. The setting is stunning with the Columbia gorge stretched out behind the stage, and camping sites for over 7,000 are available right next door. One warning on the refreshment end: just about anything you buy to eat or drink will set you back \$9. www.livenation.com/venue/the-gorge-amphitheatre-tickets

BUDGET DELIGHTS: Camping at the Wanapum State Park in Vantage, a hike through the Ginkgo Petrified Forest or rock climbing.

Between May 15th and September 15th you can reserve a campsite in advance at the Wanapum State Park, but expect that weekends fill up early and the campground is heavily used during the Gorge concert season. The costs for campsites range from \$14 to \$31 and you should bring a kite and strong tent pegs since the wind can pick up in the evening. Call (888) 226-7688 to make a reservation.

At the heart of the 7,470-acre Ginkgo Petrified Forest State Park is a 1930's *Civilian Conservation Corps Interpretive Center* built above rocks with early Native American cliff paintings. The information at the Interpretive Center offers a unique glimpse into the geological past of the state and explains how the region transformed a forest of trees into rocks. The park has some of the best petrified wood specimens in the world, including rare petrified Ginkgo trunks, and a trail runs through a section the petrified forest.

If you are more interested in climbing rocks rather than simply admiring the history they represent, leave the interstate at Exit 143 head north and take your first left at Vantage Road and head a little over a mile down to a famous basalt column climbing area known as The Feathers.

Local Cuisine

There is almost always someone climbing, and usually you will find a number of tents pitched at the base of the columns. Even if you are not a climber, the view from the road is worth it. The rocks resemble a wild row of massive teeth just begging for a good flossing from a few colorful climbing ropes.

SAN JUAN ISLAND

Time shifts the moment you drive or walk onto the ferry at Anacortes. You feel less stressed and that huge to-do list back home seems somehow less urgent. Even if you have cell coverage, you might be tempted to turn off your phone and wander the ferry deck as the boat threads through several of the 450 islands on the way to the dock at Friday Harbor. On the island, you are in for a treat with unique places to stay, great spots to eat tucked into the woods or on little side streets, trails to hike, beaches to walk and whales to spot. Bring your car or rent a bike and explore the island under your own steam. Either way you will find it easier to meander than race about, and I suspect this might be



part of the magic of the island.

SPLURGE: A night at the Friday Harbor House, dinner at The Bluff and a sailing lesson in the morning.

Friday Harbor House sits perched on the bluff overlooking Friday Harbor and offers 26 rooms and suites. The décor is comfortable contemporary and the views from most rooms along the bluff are worth the price of admission. Given the size of the hotel, the service is personal and the hotel almost has the feel of an upscale bed and breakfast. Bonus: Since the Friday Harbor House is only three blocks from the ferry dock, you don't need to bring your car onto the ferry if the lines are horrifically long.

Just inside the door of the Friday Harbor House you'll find The Bluff. Chef Joseph Foriska brings his passion for local foods and sixteen years of experience on the islands into the kitchen to offer up a seasonal menu full of stories of the farms that produced what shows up on your plate. He knows where his food comes from and delights to showcase each island ingredient rather than hide them in intricate preparations. Try the Jones Family Farm Pulled Pork served on folded and sweet steamed buns or the Ginger Miso Braised Rockfish with creamy risotto and buttered 'linguine' carrots.

Leave land behind with Cap'n Howard's Sailing Charters. Complete beginners can get basic sailing lessons or experienced sailors can get time on the water with easy-going Howard Crowell for \$65 an hour. There is a \$200 minimum but Crowell is happy to take up to six on-board at a time to split the cost of the charter. Call (360) 317-8421 to book.

WORTH IT: Elegant canvas tent camping without any of the set-up or tear-down at the Lakedale Resort and a dinner at either the Backdoor Kitchen or the Duck Soup Inn.

Try your hand at "glamping" at the Lakedale Resort or arrange to spend a night in the on-site retro Airstream trailer. Lakedale started as a glorified campground tucked in between three small lakes in the middle of San Juan Island. Plenty of guests still come for the great traditional campsites on the property, but over the years the owners have added family-friendly log

cabins and an upscale central lodge with well-appointed hotel rooms. The latest additions are even more memorable: spacious canvas tents set on platforms and furnished much like rustic hotel rooms with queen beds, couch futons, dressers and a small camp table and lantern. Bring your own cooler and fire-cook outside or



eat out (the Duck Soup Inn is less than two minutes away). Either way, Lakedale's tents offer the best of camping without the hassles.

No visit to the island would be complete without dinner at the Duck Soup Inn or the Backdoor Kitchen. Gretchen Allison is something of an island legend after twenty-one years as the chef and owner at the Duck Soup Inn. Her seasonal menus feature fresh Pacific seafood, island produce, homegrown herbs, as well as high quality meats and poultry. More recently, siblings Lee and Sasha Hilderman have created a second island-dining destination that you'll never find without help. Located literally in back of an old warehouse building at 400b "A" Street, the Backdoor Kitchen started as a simple catering operation and lunch counter, but has evolved into a dinner-only restaurant highlighting eclectic

international flavors a number of nights a week. The Backdoor Kitchen does still open for lunch once each week (Mondays) to serve up their beloved noodle bowl. www.ducksoupinn.com and www.backdoor-kitchen.com

BUDGET DELIGHTS: Tucked into little more than an alley in downtown



Friday Harbor is Pablito's Taqueria with a simple menu of slightly twisted Mexican street food: try the Chipotle Marinated Red Snapper Tacos, the Coffee-Braised Pork Tacos or one of the creative house empanadas or tamales. 140A Spring Street.

Head north out of town up along the northern side of the island for wine tasting at San Juan Island

Vineyards. The winery produces two estate whites from grapes grown on the property and the tasting room is housed in an 1896 schoolhouse. They are also currently pouring an intriguing '06 Merlot that winemaker Chris Primus produced from Yakima Valley grapes. www.san-juanvineyards.com

If you are on the island on a Saturday, don't miss the San Juan Farmer's Market, which is held in the Courthouse parking lot and has expanded to 40 vendors over the past 10 years. You will be able to buy island-raised produce, berries, flowers, meat, eggs and dairy products, as well as local seafood and shellfish. www.sjfarmersmarket.com

While a number of whale-watching boat tours are available, the penny-pincher approach is to head out to Lime Kiln Point State Park since Orcas can often be seen in the waters off the point. Or if a walk on an island beach sounds welcoming, try False Bay or Reuben Tart. False Bay is huge and Reuben Tart has some of the best tide pools on the island. ■