

# NEIGHBORHOODS

## top picks

- **Seattle Art Museum (p48)**  
SAM is settling into its expanded space, with exciting, up-to-the-minute exhibits complementing a strong permanent collection.
- **Pike Place Market (p62)**  
One of those mandatory sights – everybody does it, but there's a good reason for that.
- **Woodland Park Zoo (p94)**  
A classic family outing and one of the nicest zoos in the country.
- **Seattle Asian Art Museum (p80)**  
An extensive collection in an interesting space.
- **Henry Art Gallery (p82)**  
Small but impeccably curated university gallery.

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In Seattle, neighborhood is everything. Though the city is actually very compact, each area has its own distinct feel, and the different parts of town can seem worlds apart. This is most likely because of the disconnected terrain: before bridges and ferries made it easy to navigate the canal and lakes, most people just stayed close to home, resulting in the outlying neighborhoods being pretty isolated. That's why Ballard still feels like a Scandinavian fishing village, Chinatown feels like Chinatown and Capitol Hill could be its very own artsy, freewheeling universe. Today, though, it's easy to get around

the city, and it's fun to compare and contrast the various neighborhoods beyond the downtown core. The primary hassle will be finding a parking place, so it's highly recommended that visitors use public transportation to reach sights within the city center. See the Transportation chapter (p199) for details about how to get around the city using public transportation.

Of course, that's not to say visitors should neglect downtown itself. Downtown Seattle sits on a long isthmus between Lake Washington and Elliott Bay. Short-term visitors will probably spend most of their time here. North of Seattle's downtown area is another freshwater body, Lake Union. The lakes are linked to Puget Sound by the canals and locks of the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Although Seattle is a major Pacific port, the ocean is 125 miles away, which can be a little confusing because there's water everywhere. It's a good idea to look at a map to see how all the bodies of water connect, and trace the long route that ships must sail from Seattle to the open seas.

The downtown area butts up against Elliott Bay and encompasses the financial and shopping areas, First Hill, Pioneer Square, Pike Place Market, the Waterfront and Belltown. Seattle Center, with many of Seattle's cultural and sports facilities and attractions, including the Space Needle, is just to the north. West of Seattle Center is funky Lower Queen Anne, which is connected to Upper Queen Anne by Seattle's steepest hill. East of Seattle Center is gritty Capitol Hill, the city's gay quarter and hub of youthful urban culture. The Central District, Madison Valley, Madison Park and Madrona are residential neighborhoods on the east side of the Seattle peninsula.

Lake Union and the Lake Washington Ship Canal divide the city into northern and southern halves. The northern neighborhoods include the U District (named for the University of Washington campus), Wallingford, Fremont and Ballard. Each of these areas has a lively commercial center filled with restaurants, shops and bars. Just north of Fremont and Wallingford is Green Lake, the focal point of a large park area that also contains the city zoo.

To the west of Seattle, across Elliott Bay, is another peninsula, appropriately named West Seattle. This is where the original pioneer settlers founded Seattle.

It's worth noting that four bridges (besides the freeway bridges) cross the ship canal. The University and Montlake Bridges connect neighborhoods south of the canal with the U District. West of Lake Union, the Fremont Bridge crosses from Queen Anne to Fremont. The westernmost, Ballard Bridge, links the neighborhood of Magnolia, west of Queen Anne, with Ballard.

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