



Central & Eastern Washington

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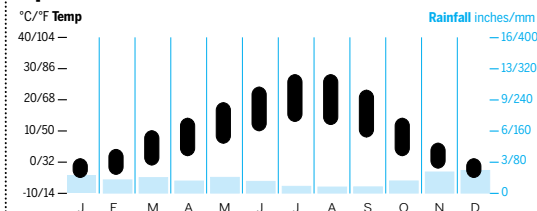
Why Go?

If states were delineated purely by geography, Washington east of the Cascade Mountains would be a separate entity. While the west breeds evergreen trees, liberal cities, perennial rain and gourmet coffee, the east is the opposite: a land of sunbaked hills and big blue skies stuffed with private vineyards, rodeo towns and huge Native American reservations.

The east's geographic identity is intrinsically linked to the mighty Columbia River, which has transformed both the landscape and the economy. This once-parched region now features gargantuan dams and ambitious irrigation projects that have converted barren valleys and scrubby steppe into a veritable Garden of Eden. Humanmade lakes have provided a nexus of outdoor recreation, while the rich, irrigated soil has propelled the region into an enological rival to California, producing some of the nation's youngest, fruitiest and most promising new wines.

When to Go

Spokane



Jul & Aug Wall-to-wall sunshine for wine-tasting trips in the Columbia River Valley.

Sep Ellensburg's Labor Day Rodeo is Central Washington's biggest show.

Dec Hit Bavarian Leavenworth for the picturesque Christmas Lights Festival.

CENTRAL WASHINGTON

Caught in the foothills of the grandiose Cascade Mountains, central Washington is a geographic crossroads where dramatic alpine peaks fold with eerie suddenness into a barren steppelike desert broken only by the winding presence of the Columbia River and its irrigating dams.

Wenatchee and Leavenworth are the most interesting urban centers here and both are popular stopping-off points on the scenic **Cascade Loop drive**. (The drive starts and ends in Everett, about 25 miles north of Seattle, and takes in the North Cascades, the Methow Valley, the Wenatchee Valley, the Columbia River and some of the San Juan Islands over its 440 miles.) Aside from Leavenworth's Bavarian bonhomie, outdoor adventures are the main draw.

Leavenworth

POP 1993

Blink hard and rub your eyes. Yes, all your *Sound of Music* fantasies may have just come true. This is Leavenworth, a former lumber town that underwent a Bavarian makeover back in the 1960s after the rerouting of the cross-continental railway threatened to put it permanently out of business. Swapping wood for tourists, tiny Leavenworth has successfully reinvented itself as a traditional *Romantische Strasse* village, right down to the beer, sausages and lederhosen-loving locals (25% of whom are German). The crisp and clean mountain-scenery setting helps, as does the fact that Leavenworth serves as the main activity center for sorties into the nearby Alpine Lakes Wilderness and Wenatchee National Forest.


Sights

Leavenworth's small Bavarian hub is centered on Front St, where gabled alpine houses nestle in the shadow of the craggy peaks of the North Cascade Mountains. A leisurely stroll through this diminutive, if distinctly surreal, alpine community, with its European cheesemongers, dirndl-wearing waitresses, wandering accordionists and neatly stacked log piles, is one of Washington state's oddest but most endearing experiences. Even the Bank of America and Starbucks signs are on homemade-looking wood panels in fancy Germanic fonts.

Leavenworth National Fish

Hatchery

HATCHERY

(12790 Fish Hatchery Rd; admission by donation; ☉8am-4pm)  Of three thriving fish hatcheries on the Columbia River, this is the largest and, quite possibly, the most interesting. Created to provide a spawning ground for salmon that had been blocked from migrating upriver by the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam in the 1930s, the ongoing fish-rearing project produces some 1.6 million Chinook salmon a year. The young smolt are released into Icicle Creek each spring, from where they migrate to the Pacific.

From the hatchery, you can hike the mile-long **Icicle Creek Interpretive Trail** and learn about the local ecology and history.


Waterfront Park

PARK

Tucked out of view but surprisingly close, this green area provides Leavenworth with access to the Wenatchee River. Wander down 9th St and follow the leafy domain over a footbridge and onto Blackbird Island, where you can catch a glimpse of Sleeping Lady Mountain ringed by foliage. Interpretive signs furnish the route and help explain the local plant and animal life.

Nutcracker Museum

MUSEUM

(www.nutcrackermuseum.com; 735 Front St; admission \$2.50; ☉2-5pm; ) As much a gift shop as a place to peruse, the Nutcracker Museum specializes, as you'd guess, in an exceptional variety (around 5000 at last count) of nutcracker dolls. Ebony, metal, boxwood, ivory and porcelain – who knew cracking nuts could be so much fun?

Activities

It's no wonder Leavenworth is one of Washington's adventure capitals: there are outdoor activities galore during all seasons. Aside from the following you can also try out dog sledding with **Leavenworth Dog Sledding Adventures** (☎509-630-0456; www.leavenworthdogssledding.com; 15263 North Shore Dr; tours per person from \$60) or tackle the river on a stand-up paddle board with gear available from **Leavenworth Mountain Sports** (☎509-548-7864; www.leavenworthmntnsports.com; 220 US 2; ☉10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun).

Hiking

Leavenworth offers ample opportunities for hiking. The most diverse selection of trails can be found in the nearby Alpine Lakes