



Northwestern Washington & the San Juan Islands

Includes ➔

Bellingham	95
Around Bellingham ...	100
Anacortes	101
Lower Skagit River Valley	102
Whidbey Island	104
San Juan Island	108
Orcas Island	114
Lopez Island	118
Shaw Island	120

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Seeds Bistro & Bar (p104)
- ➔ Pepper Sisters (p98)
- ➔ Mijita's (p117)
- ➔ Adrift (p102)

Best Places to Stay

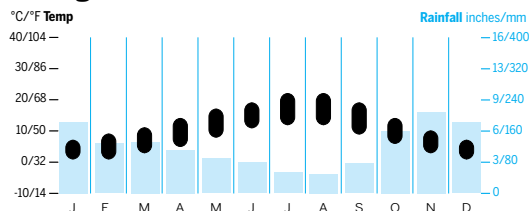
- ➔ Willows Inn (p100)
- ➔ Wild Iris Inn (p103)
- ➔ Rosario Resort & Spa (p116)
- ➔ Hotel Bellwether (p98)

Why Go?

Between Seattle, the Cascade Mountains and Canada lies Washington's most archetypal region, a 'greatest hits' of the Pacific Northwest. There's the skyline-hogging volcano (Mt Baker); the wilderness-flecked natural parks (everywhere); the liberal, collegiate city (Bellingham); the antiresort ski 'resort' (Baker, again); innumerable islands (the San Juan archipelago); and even a stash of credible vineyards.

The Northwest's urban hub is laid-back Bellingham, while its rural highlight could be any one of the 200-plus islands that speckle the northern reaches of Puget Sound. Cultural life tends to be influenced by Vancouver and Seattle, ensuring that the music's electric, the microbreweries abundant and the coffee aromatic. And wherever you go you'll be sure to find an abundance of Northwestern cuisine featuring locally sourced ingredients, from wild-caught salmon to the world's sweetest blackberries.

When to Go Bellingham



Mar & Apr
Vibrant flower displays at the Skagit County Tulip Festival.

Jun Dutch-inspired Holland Days Festival in Lynden.

Sep & Oct Avoid summer crowds and enjoy fall colors in the San Juan Islands.

NORTHWEST COAST

Bellingham

POP 81,862

Imagine a slightly less-eccentric slice of Portland, OR, broken off and towed 250 miles to the north. Welcome to laid-back Bellingham, a green, liberal and famously livable settlement that has taken the libertine, nothing-is-too-weird ethos of Oregon's 'City of Roses' and given it a peculiarly Washingtonian twist. Mild in both manners and weather, the 'city of subdued excitement,' as a local mayor once dubbed it, is an unlikely alliance of espresso-sipping students, venerable retirees, all-weather triathletes and placard-waving peaceniks. Publications such as *Outside Magazine* have consistently lauded Bellingham for its abundant outdoor opportunities, while adventure organizations such as the American Alpine Institute call it home base.


Historically, Bellingham was four different towns – Fairhaven, Sehome, Whatcom and Bellingham – that amalgamated into a single metro area in the late 19th century. Despite vestiges of an ugly industrial past along the waterfront, and a flirtation with out-of-town 1980s mall development directed mainly toward bargain-hunting Canadians, Bellingham's downtown has been revitalized in recent years with intra-urban trails, independent food co-ops, tasty brunch spots and – in genteel Fairhaven – a rejuvenated historic district.

Bellingham is 18 miles south of the Canadian border crossing at Blaine and 89 miles north of Seattle on I-5. The current city center is west of I-5; exit 253 leads to Holly St, a major downtown artery and one of the few streets to cut through the area without getting caught up in conflicting street grids.

Sights

Whatcom Museum of History & Art

MUSEUM

(www.whatcommuseum.org; 121 Prospect St; adult/child \$10/8; ☺ noon-5pm Tue-Sun)  This revamped museum is spread over three buildings: historic Whatcom City Hall (built in 1892), the adjacent Syre Education Center, and the innovative new Lightcatcher building. The last incorporates a spectacular 37ft glass wall and is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified. A rich array of exhibits includes historical material,

Northwest art and Native American basket weaving.

There's also a small shop and a special Family Interactive Gallery with exhibits and art for kids.

The Whatcom Museum has formulated an Old Town Bellingham Walking Tour that starts close to the museum and incorporates 20 sites in and around West Holly St. Pick up a map and leaflet when you visit the museum.

SPARK Museum of Electrical Invention

MUSEUM

(www.amre.us; 1312 Bay St; adult/child \$6/3; ☺ 11am-4pm Wed-Sat, noon-4pm Sun) This museum showcases more than 2000 exhibits relating to the early days of electricity and the golden age of radio. It houses the largest collection of its kind in the US.


Western Washington University

GALLERY

Founded in 1893 as a teacher training institute, WWU was redesignated as a university in 1977. Environmental Studies is a popular specialty here. The **WWU Visitors Information Center** (☺ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri) at the end of South College Dr can provide details of a self-guided tour of the campus' two dozen outdoor sculptures, and you can also pop into the **Western Gallery** (www.westerngallery.wvu.edu; ☺ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Wed, noon-4pm Sat) to view the art exhibits. The gallery is closed for summer recess.

Whatcom Falls Park

PARK

 You might feel you have wandered unwittingly into the North Cascades. Bellingham's eastern suburbs are bisected by a wild region that stretches from Lake Whatcom down to Bellingham Bay. The change in elevation is marked by four sets of waterfalls, including **Whirlpool Falls**, a popular summer swimming hole. There are numerous trails in the park as well as picnic tables and recreational facilities.



Activities

Wedged precariously between mountains and sea, Bellingham offers outdoor activities by the truckload. Lakes Whatcom, Samish and Padden, all within a few minutes of town, make for great picnicking and boating, while walkers and hikers can trace the well-paved trail through Fairhaven to Larabee State Park.