

THOUGHTS ON PRE AND POST WEEKEND EXCURSIONS IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR 75TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

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I have written over the years many suggested itineraries for friends wanting to explore the Northwestern US and Western Canada. After taking a couple attempts at merging a bunch of these letters to provide more detailed travel thoughts for you, I realized this was not too practical. Most of you are on schedules where time is scarce. Ergo, I have decided to outline areas which you can visit singularly, in pairs, or in sequence depending on your time schedules. For any of these trip thoughts, particularly the longer ones you can call me with further questions which fit your specific planning at 808 881-1610 until May 1 and thereafter at 425 455-0455 except for 2 weeks at the end of May when we plan to be travelling.

By way of background, almost every source of accommodation and travel is covered by "Google" in pictures, maps, rate schedules, and activity detail. Get a highway map of Washington State, BC, and areas of special interest such as National Parks in expanded scale. If you want to hike, order some trail maps via Google, the Parks Departments, or at Ranger Stations enroute. Buy a Golden Age Pass which let's you into all the National Parks (in the US) for free. You can buy fishing licenses at local stores or from your computer (instantly). In Seattle, REI rents any equipment you may need. Overnight hiking is fun but it takes three times as much gear. Lastly, get Summer schedule Ferry Guides from the Washington State and BC Ferries. It's fun to go in tandem with other couples' cars and be linked by cell phone or walkie talkie. If budget is not a deterrent, Seattle's Kenmore Air, a seaplane service with Cessnas and Beavers, will fly you on scheduled or charter flights to almost any spot you can land on water within .5 to 3 hours. They are very dependable and serve many BC salmon resorts. Lastly Fairmont Hotels manages properties in Victoria, Vancouver, Whistler, and the Rockies and can make one stop reservations from their web site with pictures, driving directions, room selection, etc.

AREA BY AREA

The Olympic Peninsula

One can circumnavigate the Peninsula or concentrate on the north end which is the most interesting. Using that route, board the Washington State Ferry from Edmonds to Kingston and then drive towards Port Angeles and the Park (3 hr drive plus ferry). I would recommend you schedule your time for one day at either end of your trip seeing Hurricane Ridge and spending that night at Collette's B&B near Sequim. It is an elegant 10 acre waterfront site with beautiful gardens facing the Strait of Juan de Fuca a short distance from Port Angeles. (Places we recommend may not have been visited recently but we hope the quality has been sustained.) Hurricane Ridge is in the Park and at the end of a long uphill drive starting near Port Angeles. You arrive on top of the contour lines with elegant views of the park from the north and a variety of wildlife.

For the balance of your 2-3 days on the Peninsula I'd focus on the Hoh Rain Forest and Sol Duc Valley, possibly a salmon fishing experience on the Straits at a place like La Push where I think guides are available, and beach combing in the Quinault area. Recommended accommodations would include a motel in Forks, the Crescent Beach Lodge, Klaloch Lodge, or Sol Duc Hot Springs. We tried Quinault Lodge 2-3 years back and found the management lacking. There are good hiking spots up the Hoh and Sol Duc and a Ranger Camp and nature center at the top of the Hoh Road. A local road and trail map would be handy. These would be available in Forks, at the Ranger Center, and at the gift shop where the Hoh River Road leaves the main highway. It's about 12 miles and 30 minutes into Sol Duc Hot Springs where there is camping and cabins for rent. Forks has some very adequate motels and restaurants. Klaloch Lodge has a nice restaurant looking down on the ocean. The rooms are said to be nice although we haven't been there for a long time. Further south past Quinault is some excellent beach strolling as well as Valley hiking headed inland.

You can return to Seattle the way you came stopping by the nice Victorian town of Port Townsend if time allows or you can extend your trip by boarding the Coho Ferry (Cannon Ball) at Port Angeles and cross to Victoria. The Fairmont Empress and Laurel Point Inn are nice properties and well located. There is a full gamit of price options. During you stay in Victoria a visit to Bucharth Gardens is a must. High tea at the Empress and the Museum are other noted attractions. Victoria has half a dozen good public golf courses. Bear Mountain (by Nicklaus) deserves its name. There is an excellent private club if you can get reciprocals. There are good restaurants in Victoria. One which is highly recommended is a fish house in the Sidney area.

For your return to Seattle you can either take the clipper from Victoria Harbour to Seattle or the Washington State Ferry from Sidney to Port Angeles via the San Juans having the option to overnight in Friday Harbor. Orca watching tours are both available in Victoria and from Friday Harbor. The whales should be active in mid summer because it's the height of the fishing season. You should see Orca while crossing the Straits as well.

Or, if you'd like to keep on going, take the Sidney to Tsawwassen Ferry and head for Vancouver, one of the world's prettiest and most cosmopolitan cities. There are many excellent hotels and restaurants to choose from. The Pan Pacific, Fairmont Waterfront Centre, Four Seasons, etc etc are all first class. We love the Tavern in Stanley Park for lunch. Tours of the city should include Stanley Park, the museum at the University, Lions Gate Bridge and the North Van suburbs.

If you're ready to head back to Seattle, a nice diversion along the way would include getting off I5 and taking Chuckanut Drive which follows the shoreline from Bellingham to Mount Vernon.

But, if you still have the bug, cross over the Lions Gate Bridge and head for Whistler, a ski area twice as big as Vail and Aspen with about 100 good restaurants. Whistler may have more hotels than Vancouver. It's a pedestrian walking village with great shops, golf

courses, lakes for swimming the chair lift to get up the mountain (you can ski and walk up top in summer and/or mountain bike down. There is a heli hiking outfit which can give you a day hike of a lifetime. The drive up and around Whistler is about as scenic as you'll find. Peter Kiewit improved the highway at a cost of billions for the Olympics. Proceeding further North for 25 minutes brings you to the Pemberton Valley ranch community which used to only be accessible by car in summer. About 30 years ago the lady who owned the local Pemberton links won the Irish Sweepstakes and built another course. It's worth a look. Also look out for bears. They are everywhere.

From Pemberton you can either take the Duffy Lake Road to the Fraser Valley and keep going north or circle back to Seattle. However, I'd recommend returning the way you came via Vancouver because the highway is so spectacular. It's about 5 hours back to Seattle or 2-3 hours to the Vancouver airport if you've had enough for this trip.

Cascade Mountain Loop Options

North from Seattle there are 3 passes crossing the Cascades and all are open in summer. Leaving Seattle on the south end is I90 (Snoqualmie Pass) which happens to end in Boston's "Big Hole". To come back you can use Stevens Pass or, further north, The North Cascades Highway (most scenic). I have "Googled" all the accommodations mentioned here and list their telephone numbers. But, do look at the web sites. All are complete with good descriptions, driving directions, rates etc. These are nice; these are interesting. I have skipped Stevens Pass because it's just a day's drive with little in between.

I90 area

About 95 minutes west of Seattle just off I90 and east of Snoqualmie Pass next to the town of Roslyn (site of Northern Exposure) is Suncadia, a brand new 3,000 acre golf course community in the mountains with 40 miles of bike paths and nearby North Cascades trail heads. There is a large Suncadia Lodge (866 904-6301), a complete spa, 3 fine golf courses, and more. Two of the golf courses are public (Palmer and Jacobsen) and the private track is by Tom Doak, who followed David Kidd at Bandon Dunes. We are members and I can usually get you on Tumble Creek as our guest. You could spend your whole visit here and want to stay longer. The road going north turns to dirt at Salmon La Sac and leads into multiple lakes and trail heads. There is a free standing winery, club house, and restaurant which is fun. There are many pictures etc on their web site.

Continuing West on I90 you pass by the Blewett Pass Road which is the shortest way to the Northern passes and go about 15 miles to Ellensburg to access the Yakima Canyon Road where Canyon River Ranch (509 933-2100) and Red's Fly Shop are located. The Ranch Lodge is brand new and elegant. The Fly Shop and guide service have been there quite a while. Even if you are not a fly fisherman, I would not skip over this possibility.

The Yakima Canyon is beautiful especially in Fall with colors and a large herd of California Big Horns. There is a pool and new restaurant. You can hire a guide and boat for half a day or all day including a guide who cooks lunch or dinner for you on the bank. It's just fun to sit and float. This is mostly class one water. The river is used for irrigation in early summer. My one caveat would be to see if the irrigation has stopped and if the flow is good for drifting and fishing. We will often go for a "Fish and Chips" trip here and at Suncadia alternating the two sports on different days.

My next suggestion is the Cave B Inn at Sage Cliffe (509 785-3500) which takes you another 40 minutes east on I90 but you can turn north from there and still hit the northern route. Here you are getting into the edge of the wine country. The Inn and winery are just across the Columbia and up the gorge in George, Washington. The nicely architected buildings overlook the spectacular Columbia Gorge and the accommodations and food are excellent. They have had financial difficulties but are still open at last report. Incidentally, the manager of the operating company, Jim Treadway, is a Dartmouth alum of a year or two after us.

Starting North

From any of these last three choices work your way up to Chelan where there are a lot of resorts, golf, and water sports. But, what I'm suggesting is to take the Lady of the Lake up to Stehekin about 30 miles at the north end of the lake. This gets you right into the wilderness. We have left the boat 3/4s up the lake and walked west for 3 days over the mountains and next to Glacier Peak and then been picked up on the Suiattle River. This area was featured by John McPhee in his book, the Archdruid (John Muir). I'm suggesting you stay overnight in Stehekin if they are serving food. There is white water rafting and hiking. It may be the smallest isolated town in the USA. If they don't serve food, you could take the boat back the same day to Chelan but I'd want to have some time there. I went up once in the winter with a guy from Wenatchee who was about Dartmouth 1970 football and had a cabin there. His truck was near the dock and he asked me to take the chains off when he lifted the back up. He needed both hands to do that.

Winthrop

This is where you can spend as much time as you like and then head back the spectacular North Cascades highway to Seattle (about 4-5 hours). Sun Mountain Lodge (1 800 572-0493) is first pick. It's perched atop Sun Mountain recently renovated. There's fishing, hiking, horseback riding sightseeing, and a huge herd of deer sharing your balcony. Winthrop is a "western" tourist town and the road going north deadends into the Pasayten Wilderness - next stop Canada.. A close second choice would be the Mazama Country Inn (509 996-2681). This is 10 miles towards Seattle from Winthrop and at the base of the Hart's Pass Road which goes higher than any other in the state and summits at Hart's Pass. I've taken this trip a few times (once with a valium since there's a place called Dead Horse Drop half way up where a guy lost all of his team due to a 2,000' slip up). There is also the Freestone Inn right near by which is fancier, but they only serve dinner and a continental breakfast.

On the Road again

You are now on a gorgeous mountain road with nothing but camp sites, trailheads, and the Pacific Crest Trail crossing for 40 miles. Take a picnic and plan for some short hikes, a lot of camera use, and great country. Towards the end you'll come to the top of Ross Lake where you can paddle and camp and fish for another week if you're still having fun.

Wherever you go try to make reservations ahead of time because this is the height of the season.

I like every option mentioned here and you can pick as many as you can handle. If you'd like to venture further a field I can add an itinerary to take you from Seattle to the Calgary airport through the Rockies or vice versa. Just let us know. See you this Summer.