

MOUNTAIN CITY SEA

DESTINATION DISPATCH

VOLUME XVII

PIERCE COUNTY | TACOMA | MT RAINIER | CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN | PUYALLUP
GIG HARBOR | LAKEWOOD | SUMNER | DUPONT | FIFE | UNIVERSITY PLACE

TRAVEL
TACOMA
MT RAINIER



Land and Language Acknowledgement

Travel Tacoma acknowledges that we reside on, and - by nature of our business - invite others to meet and recreate in the ancestral homeland of the Coast Salish people, and specifically of the Puyallup Tribe. The Puyallup people have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time, and continue to do so today, as they also carry on the use of the living *Lushootseed language*. We recognize that this land and language acknowledgement is one small step toward true allyship, and we commit to uplifting the voices, experiences, and histories of the Indigenous people of this land and beyond.



How many destinations on earth contain the transcendent trifecta of Mountain City Sea?

A careless woodworker could count them on one hand.

What you're about to enjoy in the following pages is the story of a national-park-scale mountain (**Mount Rainier**), a sophisticated, art-first metropolis (**Tacoma and surrounding communities of Pierce County**), and miles of saltwater shoreline (**the Salish Sea**).

Consider this guide your invitation to choose the geographic platform that will become memories. If you want to hear your footsteps echo in hushed museum galleries filled with the finest glass art on the planet, you're invited. If you want to stand shoulder to shoulder with old-growth forest with pine needles underfoot, you're invited. If your bliss is on a rolling sea with nothing between you and the waves but a paddleboard, *we invite you to find it here. And you will.*

For more about the experiences this natural platform offers:



TRAVELTACOMA.COM/MOUNTAIN-CITY-SEA

MOUNTAIN



When you're ready to learn how to do the mountain right, saunter over to:



TRAVELTACOMA.COM/REGIONS/MOUNT-RAINIER

When locals talk about heading to “Mount Rainier,” they’ll often fling their arm in the mountain’s general direction in a gesture that encompasses more than just the national park. The boundary around what constitutes “Mount Rainier” extends to the gateway towns and communities that surround the park, each with its own way to welcome visitors, whether it’s with boutique art galleries and bookstores; sprawling parks; a storied history of mining, quarry, and timber; hearty mountaineering fare; or rustic beam-and-timber lodging (with fire pits and hot tubs, of course) to serve as your base cam

Mount Rainier also includes the attractions, lodging and restaurants at the foot of the mountain that pay homage to the mountain in their design, cuisine, and craftsmanship. It includes the miles and miles of trails, inside and outside the park, where you’ll turn a random switchback only to see the mountain looming over you in all its spectacular glory. And of course, it’s Mount Rainier National Park itself. You don’t have to pass a park-entrance booth to be at Mount Rainier.

The secret of the mountain is its hospitality. It welcomes visitors of every skill or fitness level, in every season. It’s among the ultimate in American alpine climbing, but it’s also where families flock for day hikes, picnics, and photo viewpoints that are only a few feet from the road. It’s where ultra-fit climbers venture over crevasses on summit attempts, and where visitors with limited mobility can feel the spray off a waterfall. It’s snowshoeing up a glacier, or sitting on the patio of a cabin with a cup of coffee, listening to a symphony of birds and insects. It’s as simple as enjoying ice cream flavored with locally grown flowers, herbs and fruits.

Whatever level of adventure you’re seeking; wherever you are on your life and fitness journey; whatever season you’re traveling in, you’ll find your place on this 14,410-foot wonder. There’s a reason Washingtonians chose Mount Rainier to represent the state on Washington’s vehicle license plates and state quarter. It’s a state icon that’s literally iconic, but it welcomes you with open arms.

ASHFORD

The tiny town of Ashford is the gateway to the Nisqually Entrance to Mount Rainier National Park, the only entrance that's open year round. Put another way, it's the last stop for (insert pretty much any noun, and a few select verbs) before you enter the park. Cabins, lodges and woodland spas dot the wilderness around the city, hypnotizing visitors with whispered promises of hammocks, fire pits, hot tubs, and crisp air that smells like what car air fresheners wish they could emulate.

ELBE

Built on a platform of natural greens - the deep, lush green of the forest presses against Elbe from the east, and the stunning turquoise of Alder Lake opens to its west - the town itself is of iron and wood; of sweat and industry. It's a train and timber town that doesn't let you forget either, where you can dine and stay overnight in converted train cars, as you provision yourself for a day or weekend at Mount Rainier.

EATONVILLE

Eatonville started life as a trading post in 1889, where courageous explorers and settlers would gear up before heading into the great unknown for ode-worthy adventures. The food has gotten better since then, but it's still the place for provisions before you head to the mountain. If you like small, picturesque towns with award-winning diners, with wildlife attractions and photo-worthy sculpture art on the outskirts, Eatonville is the place for you.

WILKESON

When it comes to tiny towns punching above their weight, Wilkeson is a prime example. Less than 500 residents, and the town is able to boast five places on the National Historic Register, one of the best coffee shops in the state, the Seattle Times-ordained best pizza spot in Washington, and an old-fashioned soda shop with local, farm-grown herbs, flowers, and fruits for flavoring for sodas, cocktails, and ice cream.

CRYSTAL MOUNTAIN

It's a mountain of superlatives: The biggest ski area in Washington. The highest-elevation restaurant in the state. It's serviced by the state's longest (and onliest) gondola. Crystal Mountain is the right place to spend a winter weekend, with chalets you can ski up to and cabins, lodges, and woodland spas throughout the surrounding area. In summer, the Mt. Rainier Gondola feels almost like cheating, as it turns a mountain trek among the wildflowers into a fully downhill saunter, making for the perfect relaxed summer sabbatical.



Deep Forest Cabins | Ashford, WA



Alder Lake | Elbe WA



Mill Haus Cider Co. | Eatonville, WA



Church St. | Wilkeson, WA



Crystal Mountain Gondola | Enumclaw, WA



Mt. Rainier National Park | Ashford, WA



The Paradise Inn | Mount Rainier National Park



Tolmie Peak Lookout | Mount Rainier National Park



Crystal Mountain | Enumclaw WA



MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

Contained within Mount Rainier National Park itself are waterfalls, hundreds of miles of trails, hotels, restaurants, and historic buildings. You can choose to flow with the crowds into the park on summer weekends, or visit on a weekday or in the spring, fall or winter for a more intimate moment at the mountain.

Looking at 369 square miles of national park on a map can be daunting. Where do you even start? The first step is finding the right entrance. The entrances in Pierce County are:

Nisqually Entrance/Southwest/Near Ashford

The busiest and only entrance that's open year round, Nisqually is the gateway to the Longmire and Paradise recreation areas, where there's lodging, restaurants, restrooms, visitor centers and - especially during the summer - rangers. And along the single road between the two areas, trails, waterfalls, picnic areas and photo viewpoints invite you to drive slowly and savor with your eyes and feet. It's easy to see why the Nisqually Entrance is the busiest.

Carbon River/Northwest/Near Wilkeson

The more adventurous entrance, Carbon River is open year round to those arriving on foot, but only seasonally (check the NPS Mount Rainier homepage for dates) to car traffic, and only to the park gate. The area is well known to - and loved by - boulderers, mountain bikers, hikers and backcountry campers (with permits).

White River/Northeast/Near Crystal Mountain

Open seasonally (check the NPS Mount Rainier homepage, as dates change every year) to car traffic, the White River Entrance is where park visitors flock every summer to the network of spectacular trails, meadows, peaks, and fire lookouts accessible from the Sunrise recreation area. It's the highest point that can be reached by vehicle in the park, and the first to be touched by the rays of the sun every day.

A city set between a mountain and the sea? When you've gotta learn more, head to:



TRAVELTACOMA.COM/REGIONS/TACOMA

TACOMA

A major metropolis set between an iconic mountain and saltwater sea, Tacoma is brimming with natural and manufactured blessings. It's a sophisticated city with a vibrant core of arts and culture, and districts and neighborhoods that run the gamut from quaint and charming to thriving and energetic. Imagine the energy-level juxtaposition of a park-dotted waterfront and one of the most popular live entertainment venues in the world (the Tacoma Dome). That's Tacoma!

MUSEUM DISTRICT

Six major museums make up Tacoma's Museum District, with focuses that span art, history, maritime and the automobile. Glass art takes center stage, but you'll also see a museum comprising six floors of automotive extravagance, and the history museum for the entire state of Washington, among other treasures

STADIUM DISTRICT

Named for iconic Stadium High School (seen *10 Things I Hate About You?*), the district itself is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is filled with historic Victorian homes, tree-lined streets and old-style shops and restaurants still sporting their original vintage neon signs.

THEATER DISTRICT

The Theater District in downtown Tacoma is where a visitor can get a front-row seat to history at the Pantages Theater and The Rialto - both opened in 1918, still serving as premiere venues for music and theater.



6TH AVE

Stroll quirky, cool Sixth Avenue by day to discover vintage vinyl and compare cold brew from dueling coffee roasters, or wait until the moon shines to explore the dives and cocktail lounges that make up the backbone of the city's nightlife. It's the high-energy district of the young and eclectic; of the caffeinated and creative.



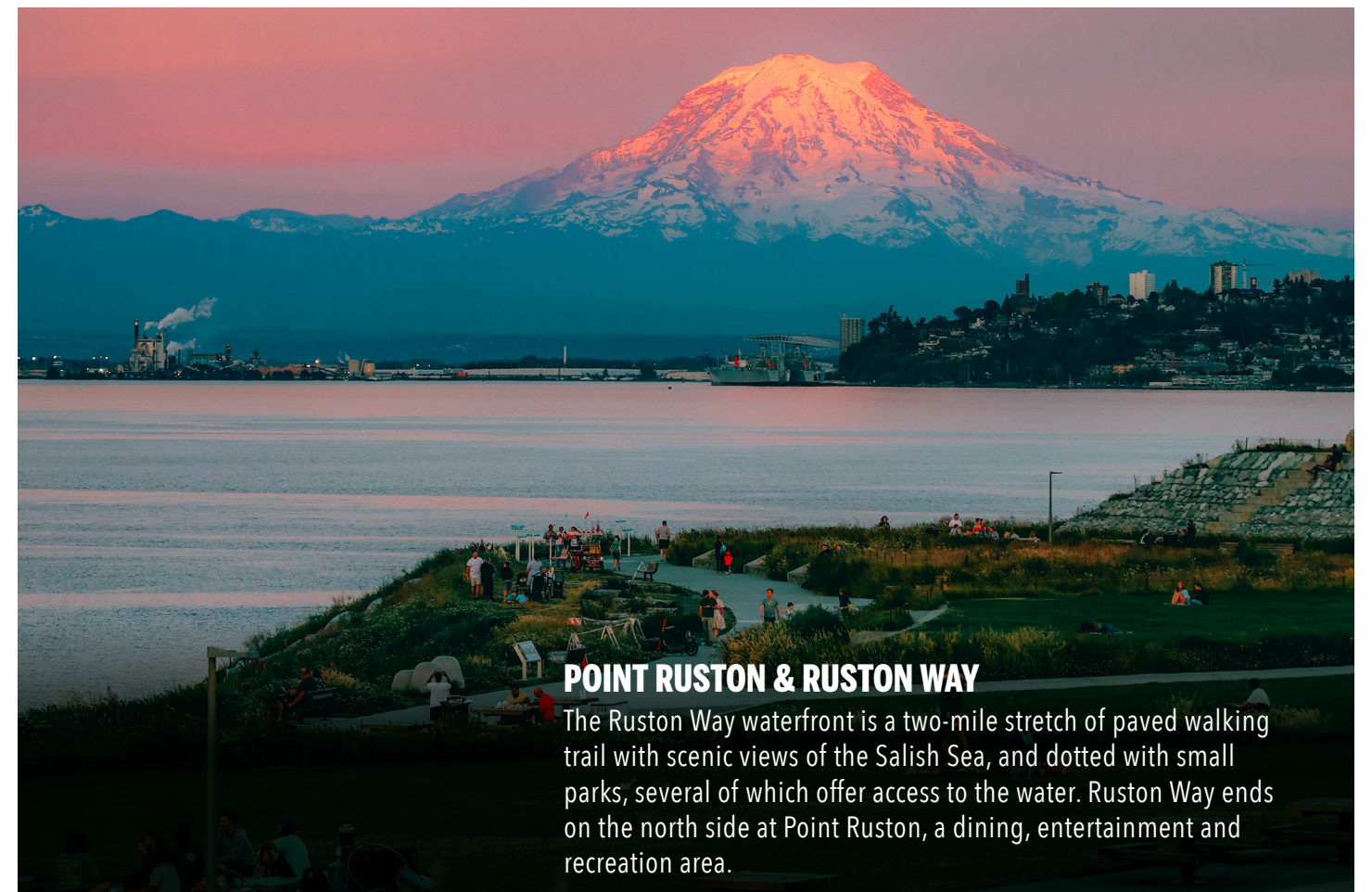
PROCTOR DISTRICT

When they were handing out charm, Proctor was first in line and took two helpings, which is how it ended up with tree-lined boulevards, decorated storefronts, boutiques, pocket parks, public art, and a historic arthouse movie theater and bowling alley.



POINT DEFIANCE

Point Defiance Park defies definition, with 760-acres that contain eight botanical gardens, the Pacific Northwest's only zoo/aquarium combination, a beach with access to the Salish Sea, a living history museum, a peninsula with unobstructed views of Commencement Bay, Vashon Island and the Olympic Mountains, and miles of walking and hiking trails.



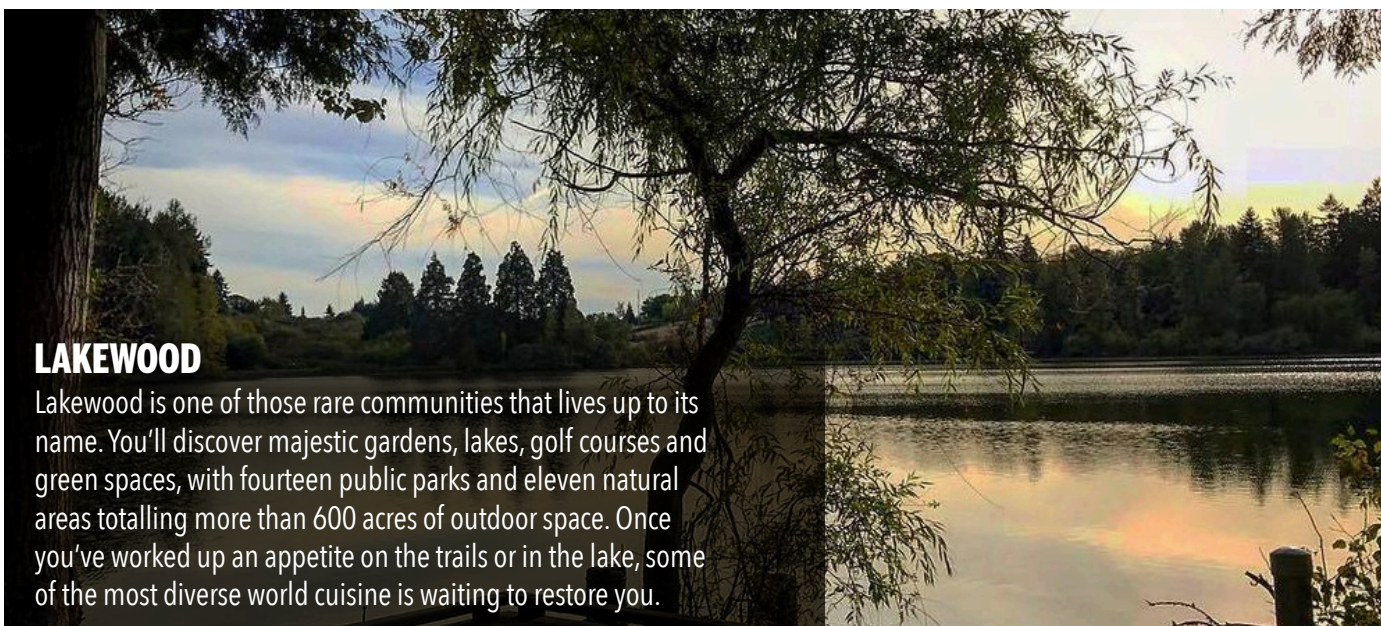
POINT RUSTON & RUSTON WAY

The Ruston Way waterfront is a two-mile stretch of paved walking trail with scenic views of the Salish Sea, and dotted with small parks, several of which offer access to the water. Ruston Way ends on the north side at Point Ruston, a dining, entertainment and recreation area.



SUMNER

Sumner is the hometown you'll want to adopt as your own. Locals have their favorite coffee places, book shops, clothing boutiques, and brewpubs all figured out. Fortunately, they're more than willing to share the secrets of where to get that perfect cup of coffee, as well as which park to stroll through while you sip it. The entire town - plus visitors - turns out for sip-and-strolls, artwalks, holiday parades, and the annual Rhubarb Days event, celebrating Sumner's designation as the Rhubarb Pie Capital of the World.



LAKEWOOD

Lakewood is one of those rare communities that lives up to its name. You'll discover majestic gardens, lakes, golf courses and green spaces, with fourteen public parks and eleven natural areas totalling more than 600 acres of outdoor space. Once you've worked up an appetite on the trails or in the lake, some of the most diverse world cuisine is waiting to restore you.



FIFE

Fife sits at the center of everything, both geographically and activity-wise. The city's retro diners and history museum have retained their historic charm, while a new and expansive network of parks and trails, as well as a popular aquatic center, make Fife one of Pierce County's recreation hubs. Located mere miles from most of the region's major cities and the Port of Tacoma, Fife manages a delicate balance as a center of industry with a small-town feel.



If you're ready to dial it back a notch and head to the towns around Tacoma, here's how:



TRAVELTACOMA.COM/REGIONS

PUYALLUP

Puyallup: Puyallup [pew-al-up] is home to one of the largest state fairs in the country each September, but year-round, a simple walk through a downtown filled with independently owned boutiques, record stores, coffee shops, and antiques stores becomes an odyssey of small-town allure. However, visitors shouldn't miss the many opportunities throughout the year the town takes to celebrate its farming roots with festivals and farm-to-table foods from local growers. For example, each summer, the city's expansive farmers market transforms downtown's Pioneer Park into a high-energy hub of farmers, florists, artisans, craftspeople, musicians, food trucks, and a public eager to engage with all of them. Visitors are advised to arrive with an empty stomach, an open mind, and a reusable shopping bag (or five).



GIG HARBOR

Gig Harbor is a charming maritime village full of opportunities for peace and solitude, but also places to connect and share a laugh over award-winning seafood, craft beer, and spirits. With nearby Mount Rainier rising large to keep a careful eye on the harbor and its people, this picturesque community has a "getaway" feeling while still being close to everything. Culture, history, and outdoor recreation intersect in Gig Harbor, and you're never far from a museum, an art gallery, or a spot to explore the water on a rented boat, kayak, or paddleboard.



DUPONT

DuPont sits within five miles of six stunning golf courses, including the Home Course and Chambers Bay, a host of the U.S. Open Golf Championship. Surrounded by naturally stunning fairways on world-famous courses with views of the Olympic Mountains and the Salish Sea, DuPont is truly the home of golf in the Pacific Northwest. After you've played 18 (perhaps 19?) holes, but still aren't ready to give up the wide skies and water views, a network of parks and historic hiking trails is waiting to walk you through the city's history and pre-history.



JOINT BASE LEWIS MCCHORD

Joint Base Lewis-McChord is the Department of Defense's premiere military installation on the West Coast, and according to the Army Times, the top duty station in the United States. Civilian visitors are welcome to visit select attractions on base, such as the Lewis Army Museum.



ART & CULTURE

In Pierce County's arts and culture, you'll find a forward-looking destination that also vividly remembers and honors what came before. It is art and history. It is music and dance. It is both celebration and commemoration, in tandem.

We celebrate art

At Tacoma Art Museum and Museum of Glass, as well as in public installations around Tacoma, you'll find towering displays of one of the most modern mediums of fine art: Studio art glass. Outdoor art galleries and murals in Puyallup and Sumner tell the stories of these cities, and the art galleries, farmers markets and night markets throughout the county put local arts and crafts into the hands (and shopping bags) of visitors.

We revel in automobiles

America's Car Museum and the LeMay Collections at Marymount both celebrate America's love affair with the automobile, with more than a thousand combined vintage vehicles, collector cars, custom whips, and rowdy rods.

We revere history

From Tacoma's waterfront (Foss Waterway Seaport Museum) to the mountainside at Mount Rainier (Longmire Museum and Pioneer Farm Museum) and everything between (Washington State History Museum, Tacoma Historical Society Museum, Fort Nisqually Living History Museum, Lakewood History Museum, DuPont Historical Museum, Karshner Museum), Pierce County thrives on its deep connection to its history.

We honor the armed forces

Those who blazed new trails are honored at the Buffalo Soldiers Museum in Tacoma, and the Lewis Army Museum at Joint Base Lewis-McChord is a tribute to the soldiers and airmen - and their vehicles and weaponry - that have made the Puget Sound a strategic hub since 1878.

We praise performance

Home-grown symphony and ballet companies thrill residents and visitors, while sprawling and historic venues such as the Tacoma Dome and the Pantages Theater attract the foremost musicians and entertainers of our time.

At Sea

Shoreline has exerted a primal magnetic influence on humanity since we walked upright, and it remains so in Pierce County, drawing visitors and residents with equal force. Pierce County's 1,100 miles of saltwater shoreline (13 miles in the city of Tacoma) afford kayakers, paddlers and swimmers an extraordinary and unique vantage point to experience this region. Possible encounters with Commencement Bay's Orca and humpback whales, as well as harbor seals and birds of prey make every outing at sea an adventure, but one that's accessible to those of all skill levels.

Ready to spend some time with the sea? The next step is at:



TRAVELTACOMA.COM/WATERFRONT

The trails along the waterfront are purpose-built for those who just want to enjoy a scenic walk with waves of nature's finest soundtrack. Tacoma's Ruston Way Waterfront in particular showcases a two-mile pedestrian path interspersed with parks, docks, hotels, restaurants, shopping and museums.

Encounters with the Pierce County waterfront that might just leave you speechless:

- ☐ Rent a kayak or paddleboard at Jack Hyde Park, the Foss Waterway, or Point Defiance Park's Owen Beach
- ☐ Tee off or take a hike at Chambers Bay Course/Chambers Creek Regional Park, overlooking the water
- ☐ Watch a sunrise over the water from Dune Peninsula
- ☐ Watch a sunset over the water, islands, and peninsula from from Gig Harbor, or Titlow Beach
- ☐ Take a harbor tour with Captain Tom from Destiny Harbor Tours
- ☐ Explore the history of Tacoma's relationship with its waterfront at Foss Waterway Seaport Museum
- ☐ Dine on the waterfront at one of the many waterfront restaurants in Pierce County
- ☐ Stay overnight on the waterfront in Gig Harbor, or in Tacoma, at a Silver Cloud property

THREE TO SEA

THREE TO SEA

As you've seen, there are dozens of places to trip over your jaw admiring the saltwater shoreline in Pierce County. Three places in particular stand out for the depth of the experiences they offer, the breadth of those experiences, or for sheer unexpectedness.

University Place

You might not expect a golf course - even one that hosted the U.S. Open Championship - to be listed as a premier waterfront experience. But combined with the adjacent Chambers Creek Regional Park, lined with walking trails, Chambers Bay might change your mind. As the wind whips up from the water, over the park's Central Meadow, and you look out over the islands in the foreground with the Olympic Mountains behind them, you'll certainly change your mind. And if you haven't changed it by now, a walk across the bridge connecting the meadow to a quiet sandy beach will let you know without a doubt that Chambers Bay and Chambers Creek are as much a waterfront treasure as anything inside Pierce County or beyond.

Gig Harbor

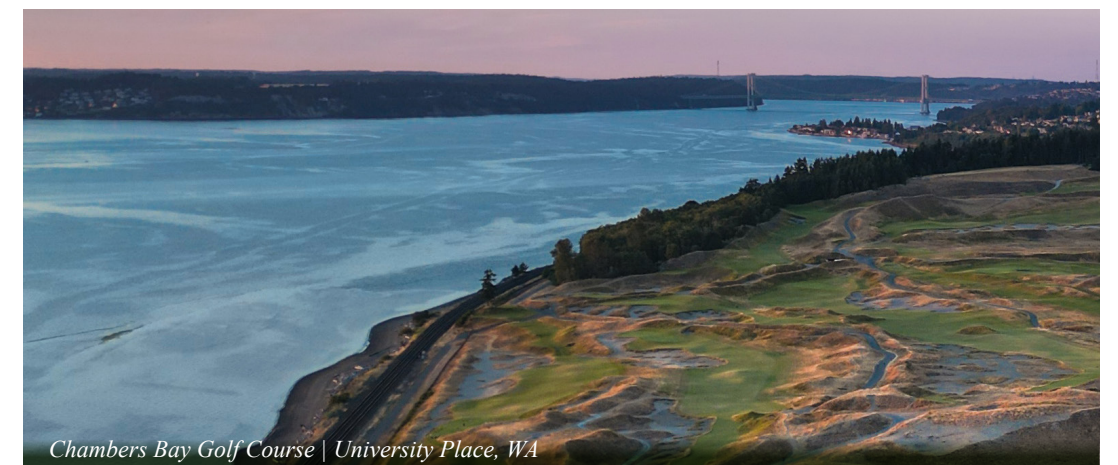
Gig Harbor is a more obvious choice as a hub for aquatic enjoyment, but even for a waterfront village, the outright variety of ways you can get on the water is astounding. Dine at a historic Croatian netshed built out over the water. Rent a paddleboard or kayak. Rent an electric boat. Take a boat tour with a company whose knowledge of Gig Harbor is deeper than the harbor itself. You can even go for a romantic, educational, and/or entertaining ride in the only Venetian gondola in the Pacific Northwest: the Gig Harbor Gondola.

Tacoma

Both the esplanade outside the Museum of Glass known as the Downtown Tacoma Waterfront and the Ruston Way Waterfront are year-round magnets for both locals and visitors as a place to walk, bike, paddle, bask, dine, or shop. Visitors can rent a paddleboard or kayak to go out on the water, rent a bicycle or bicycle surrey to catch the wind alongside it, or just stroll along to relish the waterfront at a pedestrian pace. Benches, parks, and restaurants line the entire waterfront, so you'll never find yourself without a place to stop and ask yourself, "If this ain't nice, what is?"



Ruston Way Waterfront | Tacoma, WA



Chambers Bay Golf Course | University Place, WA



Gig Harbor Gondola | Gig Harbor, WA



Point Ruston | Tacoma, WA

PIERCE COUNTY AFTER HOURS

When the sun goes down, it's time to wander by starlight and moonshine through the breweries, bars, lounges, clubs, and live-music venues of Tacoma and Pierce County.

This is How We Brew It

Name a more iconic quartet than water, wheat, yeast, and hops. We'll wait. While we're waiting, a bartender at one of the dozens of craft breweries and taprooms in Pierce County would love to pour you a local IPA, saison, or dunkel. Some of these taprooms are vast warehouses converted to brewing and sipping facilities. Some are tiny, hole-in-the-wall nanobreweries tucked into neighborhood corners. Each one has its own flavor, so you're never more than a few minutes from your next favorite beer. If ABV is your MVP KPI, the best ROI is going to be at one of our craft distilleries, including the most decorated distillery in the United States.

Raising the Bar (or Lowering It)

Upscale cocktail lounges with drinks both home-grown and flown in from around the world. Tiki bars so immersive, you might see Don the Beachcomber or Trader Vic waiting in line at the door with you just to get in. Dive bars that won't flinch if you pay with a sack of pennies. A camping-themed bar with the canvas credentials to prove it. A high-end sherry bar inspired by a Flamin' Hot Cheetos experience. If you know your taste (or embrace your lack of it), you'll find your drinkery in Pierce County.

The Names in Lights

It's hard to deny that a night out feels a little hollow if you don't see something spectacular on stage. If that thing for you is music, Pierce County's got bars with stages, stages with bars, coffee shops that seat 20 for open-mic nights, a dome that seats 20,000 for arena performances, historic theaters, and a combination hotel/multi-restaurant/multi-bar/concert venue that attracts national-level performers. And if your tastes run to the funny, Tacoma has several comedy clubs that can set you up with a night of knee-slappers and side-splitters.



EVENTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Got a reason to celebrate? Want one? Just give us an excuse!

Tacoma and the towns throughout Pierce County have festivals celebrating topics as wildly diverse as classic cars, Pride, rhubarb (yes, the spring vegetable), music, glass art, Indigenous culture, Independence Day, and the entire idea of "summer."

We're also 'fair'ly well situated every September when the Washington State Fair, one of the largest state fairs in the country, throws open its gates.

And top-tier performers, musicians, speakers, and athletes (and their spectators and fans) agree: There's no place like Dome. Year round, the Tacoma Dome - one of the largest venues in the world by ticket sales - puts you just one ticket away from many of the biggest entertainers on earth.

On the topic of sporting events, Cheney Stadium plays host to the Triple-A baseball Tacoma Rainiers and their legions of fans.

But wait, there's much, much more!

Do you like doing awesome things with people who are into the same stuff you're into? If so, scan the QR code and find an event. If not, why not?

[TRAVELTACOMA.COM/EVENTS](https://traveltacoma.com/events)



TRAVEL TACOMA MT RAINIER

Thank You, Partners

Travel Tacoma - Mt. Rainier Tourism and Sports would like to thank the cities within Pierce County: Tacoma, Mt Rainier, Crystal Mountain, Puyallup, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Sumner, DuPont, Fife, University Place, LTAC and TPA funding bodies; and our partners at Visit Rainier and the National Park Service/MORA.



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