

Washington's Wondrous Wilderness

North Cascades National Park

Nine Day Tour ~ August 3-11, 2024

Highlights: Nonstop, Roundtrip Airfare Newark to Seattle • Two Seaside Nights at the Orcas Hotel, Orcas Island • Four Splendid Nights at the Freestone Inn • Two Serene Nights Camano Island Inn • North Cascades Scenic Byway • Ferry to Orcas Island, San Juan Islands • Orcas Whale Watching Cruise • Thunder Knob Trail • Diablo Lake • Ross Lake & Dam Trail • Blue Lake Trail • Washington Pass Overlook • Mountain Community of Stehekin • Rainbow Falls Mist Trail • Stehekin's Heart of the Cascades Tour • Lake Chelhan Ferry • Gorge Creek Falls • Rainy Lake Trail • Ladder Creek Falls Trail • Cedars Nature Walk • Giant Cedars at Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest • Mount Baker's Artist Point • Picture Lake • Artist Ridge Trail • Nooksack Falls • Old Western Town Winthrop • Lost River Winery • Shafer History Museum • Falls Creek Falls • Sa Teekh Wa Bridge • All Breakfasts • Five Lunches • Two Dinners • Fully Escorted

Let's travel west where we'll lose ourselves in the Pacific Northwest wilderness and venture deep into the North American Alps, the lesser-known North Cascades National Park. This hidden gem of a National Park reveals a rugged beauty expressed as jagged peaks, deep forested valleys, cascading waterfalls and over 300 glaciers – more than any other U.S. Park outside of Alaska. We'll experience all this stunning nature along twisting, winding roads leading through the conifer clad mountains and take to the trails leading to brilliantly clear, glacier fed turquoise lakes, past rushing rivers with waterfall cascades and so much spectacular scenery and views along the way. If Mother Nature allows, we'll be entranced by a deep dark sky glittering with millions of stars, more than you've ever seen. We'll feel the history as thousands of voices from the past crackle to life in this alpine landscape, from Native Americans to early European and American fur traders and explorers to homesteaders and miners, all of which called this land home. Mountains aren't the only thing we'll encounter, we'll also set our minds to island time as we visit Orcas Island, part of the San Juan Islands serenely set in the heart of the Salish Sea. Horseshoe shaped Orcas Island is not only rural and hilly green paradise but is also home to magnificent orca whales who we'll try to spot on our cruise around the islands. So grab your sense of adventure along with some comfy clothes and join us on an exploration of Washington's wondrous wilderness!

Day 1. After arriving in Seattle, we'll make our way out to the San Juan Islands. Our destination is Orcas Island where we'll spend 2 days relaxing and taking in the fresh sea air. We'll grab a ferry/water taxi from the town Anacortes that will whisk us away to our home at the beautifully historic Orcas Hotel that's been welcoming travelers since 1904. Unpack and relax in your Victorian room until you're ready for dinner at your leisure right here at the hotel. A good night's sleep awaits!

Day 2. Orcas are on the agenda today! Our whale watching cruise will take us around the San Juan Islands in search of Humpbacks, Minke, Gray, and Orca Whales. Along the way, we'll encounter stunning scenery and may catch sight of seals, sea lions, porpoises, bald eagles, otters, and sea birds. It's a thrilling day out on the water!

Day 3. We depart today by ferry back to the mainland, but do not despair, the mountains await! After stopping at a local place for an included lunch, we'll begin our scenic drive along the North Cascades scenic byway. Your eyes will be glued to the windows as the twisting and winding road passes through rugged mountain peaks past rushing waterfalls and alpine glaciers. Our first stop to immerse



North Cascades Overlook



Nooksack Falls

in the amazing wilderness is Thunder Knob. This is a good leg stretcher trail to take in all the stunning scenery surrounding us. Cross the bridges spanning the rushing creek, through the forest with its mossy carpet. There is a climb uphill but it's worth the effort to see what is revealed at the top! After our walk, we'll be rewarded with more incredible scenery at glacial fed Diablo Lake with its turquoise color and jagged mountain background. Now onto our home for the next four nights, the splendidly solitude Freestone Inn. Relax in the quiet setting and enjoy more views from your private veranda overlooking the lake or warm up and get cozy by your own fireplace.

Day 4. Let's get back out into the beautiful Cascades! We'll retrace our steps from yesterday, viewing the scenery from a different perspective with our first stop at the Washington Pass Overlook. Follow the easy paved path that cuts through pine scented forest to staggering scenery of towering spires. We'll continue our route along the byway towards the forested trail leading to the impressive Ross Dam. After our short hike, we'll take in the sweeping views at the Ross Lake Overlook, then rest our legs for our next walk in the wonderful wilderness to Blue Lake. This mountain lake sits quietly at 6254 feet among towering granite peaks, forests, and flowering meadows. We'll take our time on this gem of a walk taking in all the diverse landscapes and cool our feet in the lake's icy water. Once back at the Freestone Inn, you can relax the night away as you please.

Day 5. We'll spend today visiting the unique community of Stehekin, nestled deep in the heart of the North Cascades only accessible by boat, plane, or foot. We'll get here by boat, no worries! Our tour will take us around the sites of the lower valley including the cascading beauty Rainbow Falls, then onto an included lunch at Stehekin Pasty Company. After, our travels take us upvalley to the entrance of the North Cascades National Park where there will be time to walk a short way on one of the trails or just relax and enjoy the sparkling river views. Once back at the port, the Lady of the Lake will sail us back along scenic Lake Chelan with amazing views along the way. The rest of the night is yours among the beauty of the Freestone Inn.

Day 6. We're off to the Western town of Winthrop for the day, but first we must make a stop to view the magnificent Falls Creek Falls. Follow the easy, gently graded trail to the first cascading waterfall and stop to take in its beauty. If your thirst for falling water isn't quenched by just one, follow a gentle switchback from the lower viewpoint to the top of the first falls. Here you can experience views of the upper falls and observe the rushing water over the rocks creating the lower falls. After let's explore the town and its Western flair and find a tasty lunch on your own. We'll stop by the Shafer Historical Museum and its incredible collection of Winthrop Western history, including original historic buildings and artifacts. Don't miss the Sa Teekh Wa Bridge spanning the Chewuch River and the Susie Stephens trail that meanders along the river. Now it's time to indulge in tastings at the Lost River Winery and relax among the splendid scenery. Once back at the Freestone Inn, the night is yours!

Day 7. Today we leave the Freestone Inn, but there's still so much more to experience in the North Cascades! Get your walking shoes on because the trails await with the first being an easy path to Rainy Lake, another picturesque beauty surrounded by our favorite mountain ranges. The impressive Gorge Creek Falls is our next amazing sight, another easy path to a scenic reward. Right nearby is the Gorge Lake Overlook, a very short trail that provides astonishing views of nature's beauty. Next we meander along an easy, refreshing woodland path with exotic flora to the loud and misty Ladder Creek Falls. Stop and take a long moment to feel the serenity of our surroundings. One more short easy walk that's definitely worth the extra steps, the Trail of Cedars nature path through towering Western red cedars that line the trail. Touch the stingy bark and smell the sweet fragrance of this lovely, forested area. Now we rest as we make our scenic drive toward our much awaited included lunch nearby. We just can't leave the Cascades until we visit the giant cedar trees preserved by Ranger Harold Engles who luckily refused to include this grove in a planned timber sale. You will understand his sense of appreciation of these majestic trees as you wander under the lush canopy of the mind-boggling enormous cedars accompanied by the sound of the crashing river waters. Now we make our way to our last home in Washington for the next two nights, the laid-back Camano Island set along Puget Sound, stopping for an included dinner along the way. The waterfront Camano Island Inn will be a welcome sight and perfect place to rest the night away.

Day 8. Enjoy a leisurely morning here at the inn, taking in all the lovely scenery and perhaps a walk along the beach. North is the direction today as we head to the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest located on the west side of the Cascades between the Canadian border and Mt. Rainier National Park. What will we see? Amazing glacier covered peaks, spectacular mountain meadows, and old growth forests rich in history. Our first stop is Nooksack Falls, a plunging cascade that flows through a narrow valley then drops freely 88 feet into a deep rocky, river canyon. Onto one of the most photographed vistas in America, Picture Lake. These reflective, sparkling waters feature a backdrop of craggy Mount Shuksan and a foreground of colorful wildflowers, just pretty as a picture. A spectacular short trail surrounded by a fragile alpine ecosystem from the stunning Artist Point leads to Artist Ridge with unbelievable scenery at every step. If we can tear ourselves away, we'll make our way back to Camano Island, stopping for an included dinner along the way.

Day 9. Today we say goodbye to our amazing Washington vistas as we make our way to the Seattle Airport for our flight back to home sweet home. © 2023 Group Tours & Travel

Air transportation is provided by United Airlines. A surcharge will apply if United Airlines increases the price of its airfare. One piece of luggage per person (baggage fee by United is not included) and one small carry-on are permitted. **A valid, government-issued picture ID is required to board the plane.**

Saturday, August 3: Flight # departs Newark at AM and arrives in Seattle at PM

Sunday, August 11: Flight # departs Seattle at PM and arrives in Newark at PM

Price per person is \$4,875 Twin & \$6,095 Single. No reservations accepted without a deposit of \$500 per person. Make checks payable to "Group Tours & Travel", and mail to our address above. Final payment is due May 18, 2024. There are no refunds if cancellation occurs after May 18, 2024. Group Tours is not responsible for any delays, cancellations, injuries or circumstances beyond its control and reserves the right to change the itinerary. All trip components are subject to change in accordance with Government, State and Local guidelines and/or mandates. Travel protection/cancellation coverage is available and highly recommended. This tour will run rain or shine. Visit www.grouptoursandtravel.com for photos and more tours.

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