



Call of the Coast

The Washington coast is calling and Iron Springs Resort has your number. So, hit the highway and head to the Pacific with your pooch. Ring, ring.

Written by Brandie Ahlgren | Photography by Julie Clegg | [Click an image to enlarge](#)

Miles of beaches to explore. Rainforests to wander. Waves crashing on the shore. Cozy cabins. Your four-legged friend by your side. These are the special ingredients that make **Iron Springs Resort** the perfect winter retreat for you and your pooch.

Located along Washington's North Beach coastline, Iron Springs Resort sits perched above the Pacific Ocean. It's a secluded place, with just 25 cabins on 20 acres, flanked by forest on one side and water on the other. Also on the property is a General Store, guest laundry and clam station—that's it, but it's all you need.

Although this was our first visit, I'd heard about Iron Springs from a few of my dog loving friends. They would go on and on about how dog friendly it is and they were right. Upon arrival, our first stop is to check in at the **General Store**. After a three hour drive from Seattle, Scout and Ziggy are itching to get out of the car and immediately they are invited by the resort's staff to come in with us while we check in and purchase some provisions (a.k.a. wine).





Open daily until 7 p.m., the General Store is small, but packed with most everything you might need for your stay including a wide range of food, beverages and assorted sundries—it's worth noting here that a visit to Iron Springs cannot go without baking up a batch of amazingly delicious cinnamon rolls, made famous by the resort's founder Olive Little.

In 1947, Olive Little bought Iron Springs Resort and at the time, it was just eight cabins and a main lodge. Soon after, Ms. Little expanded the lodge and opened a restaurant, where she turned out her famous clam chowder and cinnamon rolls. As the resort grew more popular, she continued to add cabins, carefully considering placement and orientation to take the utmost advantage of the breathtaking views and amazing location.

At the time of Olive's passing almost 60 years later, the resort had grown in number of cabins, and been the source of endless memories for friends and families—two- and four-legged alike. As one guest notes, "My first visit to Iron Springs was over 20 years ago and I took my constant companion at the time, my dog. What I remember most about that trip was not worrying about what time it was, the gooey homemade cinnamon rolls, walking the beach with my dog multiple times a day, with him futilely trying to herd flocks of Arctic terns, building a real fire (no gas logs here), a glass (or two) of wine, clam chowder, reading a good book, being able to both hear and see the ocean. This trip and others to follow, were for many years my private annual sojourn. The secluded experience and atmosphere is uncomplicated and pleasure comes from very simple activities. I always return home feeling re-centered."

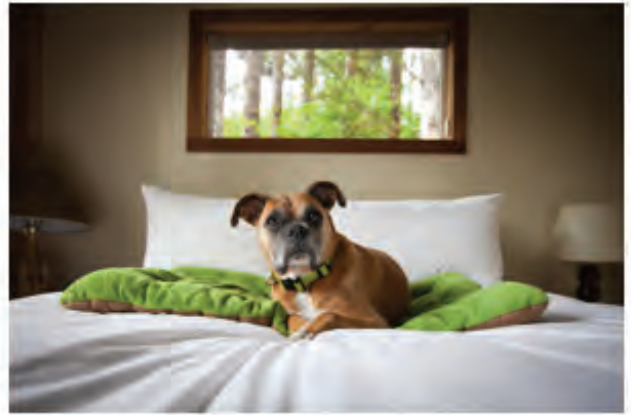


As with any property of this age, Iron Springs was in need of a facelift and in the Summer of 2010, restoration began. The new owners wanted to keep the resort's charm and integrity while adding some much-needed updates. And, as we explore the property and our cabin, they definitely accomplished their goal.

While the cabin is charming and cozy, modern upgrades include a completely renovated kitchen, now with dishwashers, renovated and enlarged bathroom, new furniture throughout, restored fireplaces or wood burning stoves, new wood floors, flat-screen satellite TV with DVD player (you can borrow DVDs from a long list of movies at the

General Store), new windows, barbecues, outdoor water spigots and hoses for washing sand off your pooch, new siding, insulation and decks, Wi-Fi throughout the resort, and a new clam cleaning station located near the beach.

And, the improvements have not gone unnoticed as one guest notes, "We first came to visit Iron Springs in 1987 with our friends who suggested we take Cabin 14. We fell in love with it. We've been back every year since. It was in 1989 that I proposed to my husband while staying at Iron Springs and we have celebrated our anniversary here every year for the past 22 years, and we have always had our furry, four-legged children with us. This is another one of the reasons we spend our time at Iron Springs. We love the views, the tranquility, privacy and the lovely beaches. Thank you for restoring this wonderful resort and we look forward to coming back."



It seems a common theme for Iron Springs, hosting returning guests year after year and we can see why. After exploring our cabin, it's time to take Scout and Ziggy to the beach and as we make our way down the trail, it is a sight to behold. Miles of sandy beach stretch in either direction, waves crash upon the shore, and the Pacific Ocean stretches endlessly on the horizon.



Our tour guides for the day are Iron Springs groundskeeper Jerry and his Jack Russell terrier Sheeba. As the dogs frolic on the beach, Jerry tells us he's seen a cougar and cub plus a brown bear and right then, we spot a bald eagle soaring overhead.

Speaking of birds, this region of Washington tends to attract birders from all over the country and nearby Hoquiam is home of the nationally recognized Shorebird Festival. Hundreds of thousands of shorebirds migrate from Central and South America to the Arctic each spring, stopping at the nutrient rich mud flats of the Grays Harbor

National Wildlife Refuge.

The region is also home to a number of state and national parks.

Griffiths-Friday Ocean State Park is a 364-acre marine park with 8,316 feet of saltwater shoreline on the Pacific Ocean and 9,950 feet of freshwater shoreline on the Copalis River. The park extends from the beach through low dunes to the river, then north to the river's mouth. The Copalis Spit natural area, a designated wildlife refuge, is also part of the park.

Depending on the time of year, you are also in razor clam country. The Pacific razor clam is one of the most sought after shellfish in the state of Washington and Iron Springs has all of the gear you need to dig for them (shovel, clam tube, mesh bag). There is also a covered, cleaning station on the property, with a nearby fireplace and bench to warm your toes plus a horseshoe pit if you are so inclined.





Clamming is a seasonal sport and a shellfish license is required— for just \$8.60, you can purchase a three-day razor clam license. For more information, visit the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife's website at wdfw.wa.gov/fishing.

If you are lucky enough to come away from your dig with a bushel of clams, you will find several recipes back at the cabin in the "Everything Book," including Olive Little's infamous clam chowder, fried clams and a recipe for the "best darn razor clam dip ever."

Alas, we are there during the off-season, so we opt for take-out pizza

from nearby Moclips. Other dining options include **McNeil's Green Lantern Pub**, located a mile or so away on Highway 109. The Green Lantern serves a variety of pub fare including clam strips, oysters and of course, burgers. There is also **Mill 109 Pub**, located in Seabrook, where the atmosphere is comfortable and inviting. Menu items include Dungeness crabcakes, with a trio of house made sauces, grilled salmon fresh from the Quinault River, and butternut squash ravioli.

Seabrook is also home to the **Salty Dog**, a one-stop shop for dogs and their humans. Featuring a full range of fun and functional products for playing, eating, sleeping and wearing, the Salty Dog will help you make the most of a trip to the beach, a walk in the woods, or an evening by the fire. As for chew toys, don't miss their Squeaky Razor Clam (a Salty Dog exclusive).

Back at the cabin, we settle in for the evening with a fire in the wood burning stove, our pizza and a movie from the General Store, while Scout and Ziggy make themselves comfortable in anticipation of another romp at the beach.

If you are looking for some additional relaxation, **Blue Spa** offers in-cabin massages for Iron Springs guests. A 60-minute Swedish massage is \$90 or a 90-minute massage is \$120. Simply call 206.755.9674 to book an appointment.

The next day, we wake up bright and early, thanks to Scout and Ziggy, and head to the beach. Coastal activities abound, from kite flying to beach combing. You can even arrange for horseback riding on the beach with **Chenois Creek Horse Rentals**. They have horses available for beginners to advanced riders, no appointment necessary.

We opt for a simple stroll on the beach, admiring the craggy bluffs, where the Iron Springs cabins are perched. It's a beautiful setting and like the many guests before us, we plan to return to this special place.



More Information

Iron Springs Resort

3707 Highway 109

Copalis Beach, Wash.

Phone: 360.276.4230

Toll-free: 1.800.380.7950

ironspringsresort.com

Rates start at \$149, depending on the cabin and time of year. Pet fee: \$20 per dog/per day