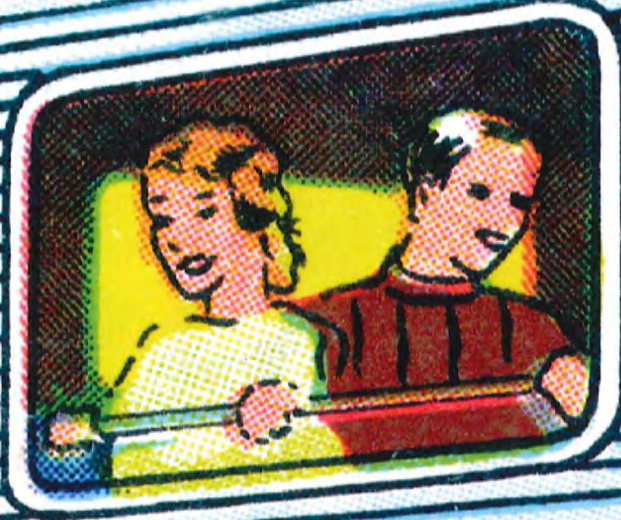


# Seattle's Child

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## Family Road Trips

*Hitting the Open Road with Kids*



# Washington Coast Getaway

## Don't Wait for the Sun to Come Out

Story & Photos By Taryn Zier

Are you feeling a bit melancholy with the weather? Are your kids restless? There's a pleasant seaside destination on the Washington coast with your name on it.

True, it probably won't be sunny and warm. But with a roaring fire, vast beaches for your children to explore, storms to watch and, most importantly, time to unplug and enjoy togetherness, you'll have a guaranteed mood builder.

The scenic North Beach coastal area, which lies west of Olympia and north of Ocean Shores, is no longer "Washington's best kept secret." Families are discovering, and now frequenting, the area. This story highlights two very special winter getaway spots – Iron Springs Resort and Seabrook. Although a mere four miles apart, they offer very different settings.

With one, you'll find a rustic, charming and secluded environment; the other is a chic village centered on the communal experience. With both, you'll find a great escape within about three hours of your home.

### Iron Springs Resort

The 25 semi-private cabins on a bluff overlooking the north end of Copalis Beach are real gems. On my family's recent winter visit, we enjoyed the fresh sea air from the deck, explored the beach and the acres of forest trails that are part of the resort, and relaxed in front of a cozy fire while the rain passed through.

The resort underwent a major renovation a

few years back (the original cabins date back to the 1940s). The restored cabins – each one unique and delightful in its own way – re-opened in the summer of 2011. Much of the original wood has been creatively repurposed. Our cabin, which smelled yummy, like cedar, was comfy, simple and serene. We had a great view of the ocean, and also of a bald eagle in all its majesty, perched on a nearby branch.

Access to the beach is a short walk down from the cabins, via a trail near the general store and check-in area. The landscape is a treasure trove of fun for children. Boone Creek empties into the ocean here, and my kids enjoyed discovering whirlpools, trying to find their way across the creek without getting too wet and playing with seaweed. (On that note, be sure to bring waterproof boots and extra clothes on your visit, or quarters for the laundry facility; little ones will most certainly get wet.)

The beach in front of the resort is vast, and we had it to ourselves most of the time. We also hiked up to the viewpoint overlooking the coastline and on the various nature trails, all part of the property. We amused ourselves with a little game after getting "lost" in the forest by listening for the ocean to find our way back (the tagged trees, thankfully, offer a back-up plan).

It's the small touches at Iron Springs Resort that impressed me most. The cabins are dog-friendly, with water and food dishes and

special's towels to dry off your sandy-legged pooch. There are free DVD rentals from the general store (and a good selection, too). Best of all, there is ample free firewood so that you can linger in front of a warm blaze without worrying about where to get more wood.

Iron Springs Resort is also an excellent place to go clam digging. Check with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife for approved dig days, which run periodically through May, and to get a license. Iron Springs even has a large clam-cleaning station for guests.

Depending on what you prefer, the lower cabins are nice for winter storm watching and offer easier access to the beach; the upper cabins have a great view and are more secluded. There is one duplex, for multi-family get-togethers. All of the cabins have floor plans and photos online, so you can pick the right one for your family.

Iron Springs Resort is located at 3707 State Route 109 in Copalis Beach. Winter rates range from \$149 to \$199 a night. Contact: 800-380-7950; [www.ironspringsresort.com](http://www.ironspringsresort.com).

### Seabrook Cottages

The burgeoning beach town of Seabrook is an inviting place to get a more communal experience. It sports side-by-side, picturesque cottages with nicknames such as "Ocean Smores" and "Beachy Keen." It's a great place to hook up with friends and family, or even to hobnob with strangers in the shared court-



Cabins at Iron Springs Resort

yards, where you can roast marshmallows and hang out.

“When we arrived at Seabrook, we felt like we had entered the land of Dr. Seuss, with the tall houses all nestled together and the sense of playful fun happening all around,” said Isabel Sanden, a local mother of three who spent New Year’s Eve at Seabrook. “There is a nice level of walk ability – it’s easy to get to the beach and around town – and children have a sense of freedom because there is very little traffic and lots of opportunities to experience the outdoors in a tangible way.”

While most of the Seabrook houses don’t offer the privacy or ocean views you get at Iron Springs Resort, they do offer certain other amenities, namely their killer indoor pool and spa. It is winter, and it is the coast, so it’s nice to have activities for rainy days. Seabrook also has a delectable, family-friendly restaurant, the Mill 109 Restaurant & Pub. The urban feel continues with two playgrounds, bike rentals,

a paint-your-own-pottery place, bookstore, pet store and spa.

Most of the cottages are across the highway from the beach. It’s not very busy on the road, especially in winter months, and there are some trails leading down to the beach as well. Ocean view and oceanfront properties jump up in price, but can be fun if you share the cost with another family.

The Seabrook rental office is located at 4275 State Route 109 in Pacific Beach. Rates start at \$99 for a cottage sleeping four (excluding taxes and cleaning fees), but pay attention to the “additional notes” field when you book; the less expensive homes are likely to have construction nearby. Winter is a great time to visit Seabrook, as prices generally increase \$100 or more a night during the summer. Contact: 877-779-9990; [www.seabrookcottagerentals.com](http://www.seabrookcottagerentals.com). **Taryn Zier is website editor at Seattle’s Child and mother of two children, ages 6 and 8.**

## Food and Groceries

It’s nice to pack food from home so you can head straight to the beach. The general store at Iron Springs Resort will have most things you forget, including breakfast, lunch, dinner and snack items. Lil’s Pantry, Seabrook’s corner grocery store, has a fair amount of food as well, including produce and munchies along with fun stuff such as marshmallows, pails and shovels. You can also order your groceries online from Lil’s Pantry (they ask for a week’s notice), which will be at your Seabrook cottage upon arrival. If you need a major grocery store, stop in Aberdeen, which is about 30 miles from the area.

I highly recommended a visit to Mill 109 Restaurant & Pub if you aren’t hunkering down in your cabin or on the beach the whole time. The pub offers standard kids’ meals, priced from \$2.99 to \$4.99, and a host of great meals for adults with a Northwest theme (we love the Longshoreman’s Fish and Chips and Timber Cruiser Tacos on the pub lunch menu). They feature live music on Saturday nights and the place is pretty tiny, so you might entertain an early dinner that day. Another family-friendly option is the Windjammer Restaurant & Lounge, just north of Seabrook at the Pacific Beach Resort. With seafood, sandwiches, burgers, pizza and pasta (kids’ meals cost \$4.95), you’re sure to find something to please the members of your family. Both places are open for breakfast, too.

## Places of Interest Nearby

If your kids need more excitement during your retreat, Ocean Shores is a 20 minute drive south, with family activities such as horseback riding and go-kart racing. As well, Griffiths-Priday Ocean State Park is just south of Iron Springs Resort, where you can walk to the beach through low dunes alongside the Copalis River. For nature at its finest, check out the rainforest hiking trails in Olympic National Park or head over to Lake Quinalt. If you have a Twilight fan, a couple of hours will get you to the now-famous town of Forks. For some local flavor, hit the Museum of the North Beach, just two miles north of Seabrook, where you can learn about the interesting history of the area.