

Meetings Focus[®]

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*Ever-evolving
Silicon Valley has
all the makings for
innovative events*

Museum of Glass,
Tacoma

Washington Wonders

Eight quintessential experiences of the Evergreen State

BLENDING A DIVERSE AND dramatic outdoor setting with a culture flavored by art and technology, Washington State isn't easy to pigeonhole with a one-size-fits-all label. But planners seeking settings and experiences that fully capture the essence of the Evergreen State will be rewarded with a slew of compelling choices—from the San Juan Islands to Spokane and beyond.

Here are eight incredible ways for meeting groups to make the most of a Washington wander.

MUSEUM OF GLASS, TACOMA

www.museumofglass.org

The modern American art scene gets no hotter than the glass-blowing goings-on of the Seattle-Tacoma region, hallmarked by the work of living legend and local native Dale Chihuly. And there's no better place to experience the creations of this highly challenging art form than a stop at The Museum of Glass in Tacoma.

"All glass—all the time," responds the museum's communications manager, Susan Newsom, when asked what makes the ultra-modern facility so unforgettable for groups. "Every day, artists demonstrate the intriguing process of creating works of art from molten glass in the Hot Shop—considered to be one of the finest glass studios in the world—giving visitors a bird's-eye view of their activities."

She adds that with its striking architecture, inspiring exhibitions of glass, the remarkable Chihuly Bridge of Glass and the finest museum store around—in addition to the live glass-blowing demonstrations—the Museum of Glass is a true Northwest cultural landmark.

Customized tours are also an option, and electrifying event spaces await as well—ranging from a boardroom with space for 20 to a 6,900-square-foot grand hall accommodating up to 500.

SPACE NEEDLE, SEATTLE

www.spaceneedle.com

Towering over the Seattle skyline, the Space Needle is easily the most recognizable of the Emerald City's many attractions and offers a number of ways for meeting groups to make the most of a visit.

"For nearly 50 years, the Space Needle has offered visitors and locals alike Seattle's most popular view," says David Blandford, Visit Seattle's vice president of communications. "At 605 feet in height, it's no longer Seattle's tallest building, but it's without question the most iconic."

Visitors can take a quick view from the observation deck—or dine at the rotating restaurant, which offers of a 360-degree view of the city, Puget Sound, two mountain ranges and much more."

Groups of up to 20 can savor a memorable meal at the SkyCity restaurant, and larger private events can be held at the Skyline level venue 100 feet above ground. Skyline has banquet/catering facilities and space for groups ranging from 20 to 360. Even larger groups can head to the 500-foot-high O Deck, hosting up to 500. An elegant menu showcases the best of local and regional cuisine,



sine, from Dungeness crab cakes to grilled wild salmon to tenderloin of Northwest beef.

While newer and larger towers have followed in the structure's footsteps—such as Toronto's CN Tower and the Stratosphere in Las Vegas—none have reached the iconic status of the Space Needle.

SAN JUAN KILLER WHALE WATCHING

www.visitsanjuans.com

Perhaps the most unspoiled islands of the lower 48, the San Juans are a pristine picture of nature at its most serene and seductive—and a charming choice for a group seeking to escape the hustle and bustle

of everyday life.

Groups visiting between May and September receive an added bonus: The opportunity for an in-person view of the *Orcinus orca*... better known as the Killer Whale. From land, sea or sky, a look at these awe-inspiring sea creatures will have your attendees talking about their experience for months on end. Weighing up to 18,000 pounds yet able to cut through the ocean at over 30 mph, they display a combination of size, strength and speed rarely seen in nature.

"The local orca whales of the San Juan Islands are the most highly researched and viewed orcas in the world," remarks Robin Jacobson, public relations manager for the San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau. "They are also the official Washington State Marine Mammal. Group participants have said they really enjoyed being able to keep their group together and talking afterwards about the same wildlife experience they shared."

Viewing possibilities include the Whale Plane, whale-watching boats offered by Kenmore Air and San Juan Safaris that handle groups of from six to 80, or the unique experience of watching from Kiln Point State Park—aka Whale Watch Park—on the west side of San Juan Island.

"It is one of the few places in the world with public access for viewing orca whales



White-water rafting in Spokane

close to the shoreline," Robinson says. "Researchers work inside the lighthouse there and a seasonal interpretive center makes a visit to the park all the more interesting."

She adds that the Whale Museum in Friday Harbor on San Juan Island is a fine way to learn some orca info before taking to sea on a viewing tour.

WHITE-WATER RAFTING IN SPOKANE www.rowadventures.com

While Spokane might be known as the largest city between Seattle and Minneapolis, it's the four-season outdoor scene that draws many travelers to the locale, where skiing, mountain biking, rock climbing and other active allures await. With the Spokane River cutting dramatically through the metropolis, rafting is an easy and exciting way for groups to go with the flow.

"With paddles in hand and a guide to lead, there is no better real-life team-building

experience than a rafting trip," says Peter Grubb, president and founder of ROW Adventures. "Usually such trips require a long drive to the river—but in Spokane, just minutes from the

downtown convention center, the Spokane River flows right through the heart of the city and features both a white water and a gentle float section. Within minutes of launching, rafters are surrounded by pine forests and feel hours away from the city. Wildlife such as deer, beaver, herons, osprey and eagles are commonly seen."

Grubb adds that two- and three-hour tours are on the slate of possibilities, and that his outfitting group also offers cycling tours, kayaking adventures or customized combinations of both. But it's hard to top the shared excitement of wild white-water fun.

"When groups share the fun and thrills of running rapids together, the sense of team and bonding are very real and lasting," Grubb says.

TWILIGHT TIME IN FORKS www.forkswa.com

Nestled on the outer reaches of the state's gorgeous Olympic Peninsula, the Forks area was thrust into the spotlight following its inclusion in the *Twilight* books and movies. Even if vampires and werewolves aren't your thing, the community and its outlying countryside will dazzle any group entranced by stupendous scenery.

"The Forks area is the only place you will find a temperate rain forest, wild beaches and mountains all within close proximity," says Lissy Andros, director of tourism, marketing and promotions for the Forks Chamber of Commerce. "We have lots of attractions in the area that large groups visit regularly, and the Hoh Rain Forest in the Olympic National Park is a great example. We also are very close to Pacific Ocean beaches like Third Beach, Second Beach and Rialto Beach."

Andros says the locale is abuzz with fresh-air fun, such as horseback riding, ocean and freshwater fishing, cycling and hiking. But she adds that a variety of venues are on hand for more structured doings.

"Forks also has great facilities that can be used for large groups, such as many of our restaurants, the Olympic Natural Resource Center—a University of Washington facility—the Forks Elks Lodge and the Forks Senior Center," she says. "We also have Tillicum Park, which has a covered section, picnic areas, a world-class skate park, playground,

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Happenings

SEATTLE AND PUGET SOUND AREA

- **Hotel FIVE** (866.866.7977; www.hotelfiveseattle.com), formerly the downtown Ramada, opened in May following a massive first-phase renovation of the lobby and 60 guest rooms. Following the second phase of renovation, the hotel will offer 116 urban-industrial-inspired guest rooms in central Seattle.
- The new **Space Gallery at the Museum of Flight** (206.764.5720; www.museumofflight.org) is set to open in spring 2012. It will hold the full fuselage trainer of a space shuttle and have function space.
- The **Hyatt Bellevue** (425.462.1234; www.hyatt.com) opened a new lobby restaurant, Suite, in August. The addition follows a massive expansion completed in July 2009 that added hundreds of new rooms and 40,000 additional square feet of meeting and event space.
- **Tulalip Resort Casino** (360.716.6000; www.tulalipresort.com) is in the exploratory stages of expanding their meeting and event space. The property currently offers approximately 30,000 square feet of flexible function space.
- The Tulalip Tribes' **Hibulb Cultural Center** (360.716.4013; www.tulaliptribes-nsn.gov) opened in August with a 23,000-square-foot cultural center, a 10,000-square-foot collections wing and a 42-acre natural history preserve. Event facilities are available.
- The **Hampton Inn & Suites Sea-Tac Airport** (800.HAMPTON; www.hamptoninn.com) is set to open in May 2012 with 218 rooms and meeting space for up to 100 guests.
- The **Artemis Hotel** (206.467.1708; www.yareton.com) in Des Moines, Wash., will open in 2013 with 250 guest rooms and suites and 6,000 square feet of convention and banquet space.

OLYMPIC PENINSULA

- The newly restored **Iron Springs Resort** (360.276.4230; www.ironspringsresort.com) reopened in July with 24 unique, private cabins on more than 20 acres of coastal woodlands.

SOUTHWEST AND CENTRAL WASHINGTON

- **Suncadia Resort** (509.649.6400; www.suncadiaresort.com) in Roslyn opened its third golf course, Rope Rider, in August. The par-72 course adds to the mountain resort's numerous amenities, including a swim and fitness center, the Glade Spring Spa and Swiftwater Cellars winery.

SPOKANE

- **Northern Quest Resort & Casino's** new hotel property (509.242.7000; www.northernquest.com) added 250 luxurious guest rooms to the popular casino. The AAA Four Diamond property now showcases 14 dining spots and more than 22,000 square feet of flexible meeting space.