

Get your shoes on: Hikes abound in Battle Ground

Outdoor playground beckons Fall adventurers



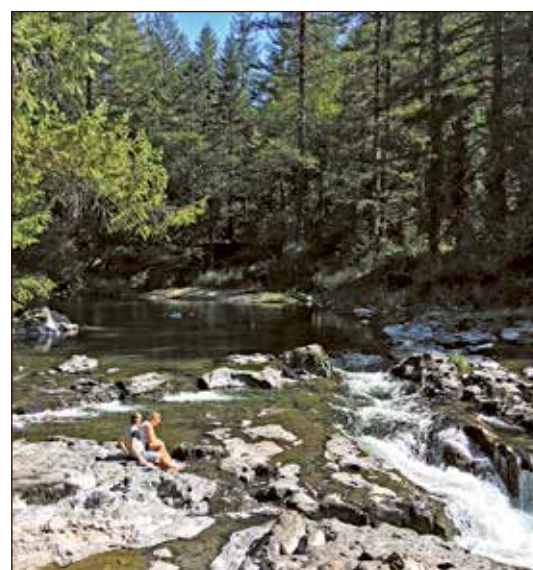
Photos, clockwise from top: Moulton Falls; the popular Battle Ground Lake; a bicyclist enjoys the trail; Lucia Falls.

Visitors and locals alike often overlook the lush evergreen forest and clean clear waters in the outdoor playground of Battle Ground, Washington. Situated just 15 minutes east of I-5, north of towering Mount Hood in Oregon, and south of Mount St. Helens, Battle Ground offers those seeking adventure a wealth of recreational opportunities, entertaining nightlife, and even a few good bites to eat. One scorching hot September day, my cousin, Goni, and I ventured out to uncover the hidden exploits that Battle Ground had to offer.

First Stop: The Lewis River

The Lewis River, famous for its flooding during Mount St. Helens' big eruption in 1980, runs right alongside Battle Ground. The river is a spectacular place for fishing, swimming, and overall water fun. The forested area has recovered and regrown since the flooding, and new life abounds in the area, making this fertile place perfect for hiking. Goni and I began our trek at the Lucia Falls Trail on the east fork of the Lewis River.

The trail begins at 27781 Lucia Falls Road in Yacolt. We hiked a very short distance before we got our first view of Lucia Falls. It is an easy five-minute walk to reach the first sighting. Swimming at Lucia Falls and several other areas along the Lewis River is prohibited. Authorities have posted signs informing visitors to stay out of the water to protect the vulnerable fish habitat. Unfortunately, when the temperature heats up in the area, both locals and visitors find the inviting waters too difficult to resist and they ignore the signs. As we hiked alongside the river listening to the rushing waters and the crunch of pine needles beneath our feet, we discovered many children and adults splashing, swimming, and playing in the water hoping to find relief from the overwhelming heat of the day.



The Lucia Falls Loop trail connects at Hantwick Road allowing hikers to meander the 2.5 miles to Moulton Falls. The trail parallels the river presenting hikers with both comprehensive and peek-a-boo views of the rushing waters along the way. Winter snow was still melting and the Moulton Falls flowed freely, spraying the air with a gentle cooling mist. Parking is available right off the road next to Moulton Falls, and, here again, we found people could not resist the enticing waters.

Walking along the trail, visitors view volcanic rock formations and an arch bridge. The round-trip hike is relatively easy and only five miles long; but for those looking for a more extensive hike, the Bells Mountain Trail begins near the Moulton Falls Trail. This hike is less traveled and far more rugged. It requires



an upward climb for nine miles and then it connects with links to Rock Creek Campground.

Clark County Lewisville Park

The Clark County Lewisville Park, located at 26411 N.E. Lewisville Highway in Battle Ground, encompasses 154 acres and is Clark County's oldest park. With its 13 shelters of various sizes, 17 barbecues, and 147 picnic tables, this park is extremely popular for outdoor parties and events. Visitors can meander around the park for a good walk, hike the wooded two-mile trail, or lie by the gently flowing river and relax. Parking is \$3 per car, and guests may use the shelters by reserving space ahead of time and paying a rental fee (Call 360-397-2285).

Battle Ground Lake

Battle Ground Lake features a heavily wooded campground suitable for tents and RVs. Non-motorized boats, kayaks, paddle boards and floaties occupied the lake on the day we arrived. A roped-off swimming area encourages swimmers to stay near the shore. The snack bar, open

in the summertime, offers paddle boat rentals and tasty treats for purchase. There are more than 10 miles of hiking and biking trails, including a flat trail looping around the entire lake that is easy enough for even small children to circumnavigate.

Battle Ground and the surrounding areas offer many different outdoor options for hiking, waterplay, horseback riding, and cycling. These activities have a way of increasing participants' appetites. After hiking, Goni and I checked out some of the local eateries, hoping to quench our thirst and suppress the growls emanating from our stomachs. Rather than choosing just one place to eat, we decided to indulge in a progressive-style meal, visiting three different ethnic restaurants for separate courses.

Ethnic Eats in Battle Ground

Goni had eaten in Battle Ground before; and since it was such a hot day, she suggested we start our meal at the Golden Tusk Thai Cuisine Restaurant, where we began our escapade with their lettuce wraps. The wraps, made of rice paper, arrived bulging with carrots, cucumbers, rice noodles, and a variety of lettuces that were both cool and crunchy. Two dipping sauces accompanied the rolls — a sweet chili sauce and a perfectly spiced peanut sauce. After finishing the rolls, along with large refreshing glasses of ice water, we ventured to the other end of town to try out the newest Mexican restaurant, the Cerveza Factory Grill & Cantina.

Cocktails here did not disappoint. The Cadillac Margaritas arrived mixed with the perfect ratio of tequila, Grand Marnier, lime, and triple sec. I prefer my margaritas without any mixer and these ice-cold beverages hit the spot. Still hungry, we ordered chips with bean dip and salsa along with some deep-fried calamari. The food was plentiful; but after finishing, we found we were craving something sweet to complete our progressive extravaganza.

The South Pacific Café & Lounge is located directly across the street from the Cerveza Factory Grill & Cantina. After we perused the menu, the waitress sold us on the South Pacific Pineapple Foster. This dessert, made with two homemade waffles sandwiching two scoops of vanilla ice cream, was finished with a generous topping of pineapple flambéed in rum, butter and brown sugar. To complete the day, we decided to check out the entertainment at the Rusty Grape Vineyard.



Clockwise from top: Lettuce wraps; Cadillac Margarita; Pineapple Foster.



Jason Meeks plays regularly at Rusty Grape Vineyard's outdoor venue.

Local Music

Adventurers will find the Rusty Grape Vineyard, located in the country about three miles outside of downtown Battle Ground. Visitors can choose to relax at any one of the several patios decorated with small tables and strings of twinkling lights or indoors in the comfortable country setting. The tasting bar inside offers glasses of the vineyard's wine or cider for purchase.

The vineyard hosts live music on the main patio attached to the wine tasting bar on Wednesday through Saturday from 7 to 9pm. Goni and I enjoyed music by Jason Meeks, who typically plays 90s alternative, 90s traditional and today's country music. He plays regularly at the vineyard and we thoroughly enjoyed listening to music on a warm night in this outdoor venue.

Battle Ground is not far away. Whether you love the outdoors, want to try some local ethnic food, or just need to get out of the house and do something different, jump into your car and head down the road to enjoy these outdoor activities and visit local eateries.

...

Ads removed for archival purposes



Vancouver resident Tracy Beard loves food, wine, exploring solo and with friends and family. She writes travel and adventure stories for several publications. Read more about her at tracybeardwrites.com.