

# Summer lake escape

## Cabin in the woods beckons

Story & photos by Tracy Beard



Summer is approaching and it's time to plan those fun days away from home. Whether you are tent camping, RV-ing, or staying in a cabin, summer is the perfect time to head out to a lake or river for a few days. Needing a break recently, I took a two-day trip and stayed at a property named "The Unique Cabin," which has been owned by the same family since the 1960s.



This property, built in the 1940s, is a little over six miles east of Castle Rock, Washington, on SR-504, also known as Spirit Lake Highway. The cabin rests nestled between trees up a slight hill on the far side of the road running alongside Silver Lake.



### Sunrise

After a restful first night, I watched from the kitchen window as the darkness of night yielded to the morning sun reflecting off the lake. What a great way to begin the day! The wind whistled through the trees while I cooked my steel-cut oats and banana on the stove in the tidy little kitchen. The banana melted into the oats, creating a natural sweetness. I added toasted almonds and dried cranberries to finish the dish and sat at the kitchen table enjoying it with a fresh glass of orange juice while deciding what activities I would do for the day.

My life seemed to slow down at the cabin. There is no Wi-Fi and only minimal phone service. Satellite TV is available, but I chose to spend my time reading and writing. The porch, furnished with a rocking chair and loveseat, beckoned me outside with my book.

The cabin, with its two queen-size beds, accommodates up to four guests. The cozy living room, complete with a log fireplace and adjoined by the fully equipped kitchen, created the perfect secluded getaway to inspire my writing. The cabin, constructed with rich hardwood floors, ceilings, and walls, epitomizes warmth and comfort. The bear and moose motif, even down to the bear toilet paper holder, match perfectly with the woodsy ambience.

The cabin host provides a canoe, paddle boat, rowboat, kayaks, and fishing equipment for guests to enjoy, along with a grassy beach to rest on along the water's edge. Silver Lake measures more than 35,000 acres in size with lots of room for boating, swimming, and fishing. The cabin is only half a mile from the Mt. St. Helen's Visitor Center and mountains of history are just waiting discovery.

The Silver Lake Wetland Haven, a half-mile nature walk encircling the center, is well worth the effort. The easy trail meanders through woods, then becomes a boardwalk heading out over the lake to a small island. Stick to the trail along the

island leading to another boardwalk, then back to the visitor center. The lake here is full of plants and wildlife with cattails and lily pads pervading the wetlands.

### Hoofing it

Mt. St. Helens offers a variety of scenery and different levels of hiking. The Hummocks Loop Trail has a minimal elevation gain and is only 2.3 miles long. The trail begins 2.4 miles southeast of the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center. This trail encompasses sections of mudflow debris, marshes, the Toutle River, and some views of Mt. St. Helens.

When looking for a longer hike, I would suggest the Coldwater Lake Trail. Call the Gifford Pinchot National Forest for Cowlitz County at 360-497-1100 or the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument 360-449-7800 before heading that direction to make sure everything is open. The Coldwater Lake Trail is 8.4 miles with minimal elevation gain. It begins at the boat launch at the foot of Coldwater Lake, 2.2 miles southeast of the former Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center (now used by the Mt. St. Helens Institute for group programs) on Highway 504. Highlights for this hike include a waterfall, lake, and canyon views.

Closer hikes are available adjacent to Seaquest State Park. Approximately 4–6 miles of trails ramble throughout and around the campground. The wooded campground located just off the highway is a beautiful option if you wish to camp instead of stay at a cabin in the area.

Four different islands are scattered within Silver Lake. Most are privately owned, but one is easily accessible and offers zip lining to the public. This is a fun activity for those looking for a little excitement during their vacation.

I packed snacks and various ingredients for a few meals on trip. Pre-made taco meat makes for easy prep at dinnertime. I built an excellent taco with flour tortillas, pre-shredded cheddar cheese, tomato, and lettuce, and added some wine, a fire, and a good book — all the elements needed for the perfect evening in a cabin. For the afternoons, I brought crackers, prepared tuna, veggies with dip, and some of my favorite grasshopper mint fudge cookies.



If you are not up to packing in your own meals, nearby Castle Rock offers fast food and several eateries, including Parker's Restaurant, a great option for steaks, seafood and pasta.

Getting out into the woods, hiking, swimming, and playing in the water are fantastic ways to spend a few days this summer.

Make a point to set aside some time with your kids, spouse, significant other, or friends, and book reservations to spend time at a lake, river, or mountain before the summer is long gone.

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Former Longview resident Tracy Beard, now of Vancouver, Wash., enjoys travel, hiking, cooking, wine tasting and travel. She writes food and adventure stories for several publications. Read more about her at [www.tracybeardwrites.com](http://www.tracybeardwrites.com).

### If You Go

#### "Unique Cabin"

Silver Lake, Wash.  
Dan & Sue Belding • 360-274-7482

#### Seaquest State Park

3030 Spirit Lake Highway  
Castle Rock, Wash • 360-274-8633  
\$10 day-use pass or annual Discover Pass required

#### Mt. St. Helens Visitors Center

3029 Spirit Lake Hwy (Milepost 5 on State Route 504) Castle Rock  
Open daily 9–5 • 360-274-0962  
Admission: Age 6 and under Free  
7–17: \$2.50; 18 and older: \$5  
Family: \$15

#### Weyerhaeuser Forest Learning Center

17000 Spirit Lake Hwy (MP33), Toutle, Wash. FREE  
Open 10–5 • 360-274-7750

#### Johnston Ridge Observatory (MP 55)

\$8 per adult. Age 15 and under free.  
Open 10–6 • 360-274-2140