



Port Townsend

Witness the resurgence of a Victorian seaport

written by Tracy Ellen Beard

IN THE LATE 1800s, city fathers poured their hopes, dreams, sweat and tears into building Port Townsend, once the second-busiest seaport on the West Coast. Constructed at the northeasternmost point of the Olympic Peninsula and along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, this city sat poised for growth in anticipation of the arrival of the Pacific Coast Railroad.

Alas, to quote the insightful words of Robert Burns, “The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.” Misfortune came upon the city—railroad planners bypassed Port Townsend in favor of a route on the east side of Puget Sound, and the city’s economy floundered.

No longer are the streets filled with a parade of top hats, corsets and petticoats. The lingering aroma of fish does not permeate the air, nor do people line the docks waiting

to purchase wares from afar. The harbor that once teemed with seafaring traffic is now peppered with an assortment of recreational vessels.

Today, the charming Victorian seaport thrives on tourism. The city has outstanding dining options, luxurious B&Bs and a booming art scene. Historic buildings and unique shops create a delightful ambience from days gone by.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Port Townsend sits on the Port Townsend Bay. Finistère’s chef’s tasting menu is for adventurous appetites only. The seaport has a Victorian feel. Port Townsend Vineyards has a tasting room with locally made wines.



The Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation celebrate all things nautical.

Day 1

PIZZA • BOOKSTORES • ARTS

On your way to Port Townsend, make a quick stop in the small town of Chimacum, where farms supply quality ingredients to the local communities and beyond. Visit Finnriver Farm & Cidery for a delicious tasting of farm-crafted hard ciders and dessert wines. On Friday or Saturday, stay long enough to enjoy a woodfired pizza and live music.

If you missed pizza at Finnriver, pick up a quick slice in downtown Port Townsend at Waterfront Pizza. Employees constantly refill the pizza rack with a variety of flavored pies. Beware, locals love this tiny place and you may have to wait for the slice of your choice.

Walk along Water Street and peruse the art galleries, quaint boutiques and Victorian shops while you treat yourself to a decadent chocolate or a scoop of ice cream from Elevated Ice Cream Co. & Candy Shop. Stroll into one of the city's four bookstores offering readers an opportunity to escape to new worlds, live out a fantasy, or even improve their writing skills. Step back in time as you gaze upon the historic buildings, or enter the Jefferson Museum of Art and History to learn more about the seaport's past.

Maritime activities continue to influence the city. Poke around the Northwest Maritime Center and Wooden Boat Foundation near the marina. Here you will learn about the long history of the Wooden Boat Festival, and nautical enthusiasts can sign up for programs teaching world-class boatbuilding and maritime skills.

Art abounds in Port Townsend, and the city's calendar is filled with music festivals, writers' workshops, art walks and year-round theater featuring plays, poetry and prose. Locals and visitors enjoy the Film Festival, which showcases all types

of films, including free outdoor movies on the weekends during September.

Admiralty Distillers is open on Saturdays or by appointment. Jake Soule, the owner, will share his story while you taste his distilled creations.

Take part in the longtime tradition of afternoon tea at Pippa's Real Tea. Select a flavor you find appealing, then choose one of Pippa's delectable treats as an accompaniment. Try a slice of cake or a traditional scone, but be sure to order Pippa's authentic clotted cream—it is simply divine.

For dinner, try Finistère. Owners Scott Ross and chef Deborah Taylor devised a menu with small and large plates. Diners with adventurous appetites should order the multi-course chef's tasting menu. The potato leek soup is delicious and soothing, and the gnocchi with pork shoulder ragu and shaved Parmesan will leave you convinced that you've been transported to a trattoria in Italy.

Next up, head to Cellar Door, the city's subterranean cocktail lounge and restaurant, or Sirens Pub for some fun after dark. Sirens' upstairs seating offers views of the water, and the main floor features a fireplace to warm you on cold nights. Both venues highlight live music from local musicians on the weekends.

Finally, it's time to sleep in luxury. Snuggle into silky soft sheets and lay your head on pillows suited for royalty at the Ravenscroft Inn. Hidden in a residential neighborhood, this bed and breakfast is the perfect place for a relaxing getaway. Read a book in the library, cuddle up with a blanket by the fire in the great room or simply unwind in the comfort of your lavish guest room.





FROM LEFT Port Townsend's Saturday Market appeals to all ages. The Ravenscroft Inn is tucked into a residential area.

PORT TOWNSEND, WASHINGTON

EAT

Finestère
restaurantfinistere.com

Fountain Café
www.fountaincafept.com

Silverwater Café
silverwatercafe.com

Taps at the Guardhouse
facebook.com/
TapsFortWorden

STAY

Ravenscroft Inn
ravenscroftinn.com

**Bliss Vista Cottage
at Fort Worden**
fortworden.org

PLAY

**Jefferson Museum
of Art and History**
jchsmuseum.org

**Northwest Maritime
Center and Wooden Boat
Foundation**
nwmartime.org

**Port Townsend
Farmers Market**
jcfmarkets.org/saturday

Cellar Door
cellardoorpt.com

Sirens
sirenspub.com

Day 2

MARKETS • FERRY RIDES • HISTORIC HOMES

Breakfast at the inn changes frequently, but guests can always count on locally made granola or muesli, fresh fruit, yogurt and a pastry. A hot breakfast follows with offerings such as frittata or fluffy lemon ricotta pancakes with blueberries.

On Saturdays, walk a few blocks to the Port Townsend Saturday Market. Local farmers and purveyors line the blockaded streets with fresh produce and tasty morsels for patrons to relish. For lunch, assemble a picnic from the market, or get a bite at the Silverwater Café downtown.

Outdoor activities abound in the area, so explore the local waters by renting a kayak, rowboat, or longboat. Ride the ferry or take one of the numerous tours available near the marina. For land discoveries, enjoy one of the local trails on foot or by bike. For a diversified city walk, begin by strolling through Chetzemoka Park. Make a right at the beach and wander alongside the water

down to the marina. Revel in the water's beauty and appreciate the variety of boats, then cross back to the street and meander up the hill and admire the historic homes on your way back to the park.

After exploring the outdoors, check into one of the newly renovated cottages or a historic vacation rental on Officers Row at Fort Worden State Park. The Bliss Vista Cottage sits on a hill overlooking the water with views of passing ships for your entertainment. For a drink or appetizer before dinner, stop over at Taps at the Guardhouse. If a member of your party misbehaves, put them behind bars in the old jail cell.

Dine at a longtime favorite restaurant, Fountain Café. Owner Nickolas Yates uses locally sourced ingredients in his Northwest cuisine. Choose a delicious menu item like the chicken and linguini, or branch out and order one of the specials—the lamb shank is perfect.

Day 3

SCENIC DRIVES • LAVENDER FARMS • HEARTY BREAKFAST

Wake before sunrise and make a hot beverage in the cottage kitchen, then get comfortable on the porch and gaze over the water as the sun peeks from beyond the horizon.

Blue Moose Café is an unpretentious eatery with delicious, hearty breakfast items. Stop at Port Townsend Vineyards and

sample locally produced wines, or extend your trip and delight in a scenic drive along the Strait of Juan de Fuca toward Sequim. Spend the afternoon visiting fragrant lavender farms, then dine at Nourish or Alder Wood Bistro where ingredients are sourced from nearby farms. 🌿