

On the North Side of the Gorge

Fun in Carson, Washington

Story and Photos by Tracy Beard • Photo of Panther Creek Falls by Adam Sawyer



The Oregon side of the Columbia River Gorge is celebrated for cascading waterfalls, wild windsurfing, adventurous hiking trails and stunning scenery. Meanwhile, Carson, a small town located in Skamania County on the Washington side of the Columbia, makes a perfect home base for visiting the gorge's northern highlights. The town affords accommodations for both budget and luxury travelers, boasts dining options ranging from pub grub to gourmet cuisine and offers exciting activities from hiking to wine tasting.

Sleeping Options

Carson Hot Springs Golf & Spa Resort presents an assortment of accommodations. Reasonably priced standard rooms are perfect for those looking for a place to lay their heads while exploring the area. Guests with a bigger budget may prefer the larger resort suites equipped with a kitchen, jetted tub and picturesque forest views. Although these larger suites come with more frills, they are not considered lavish. The resort's philosophy is to create a place for guests to connect with nature and rejuvenate the senses. Several rooms offer hot tubs located on the balcony. These tubs utilize the mineral water without the use of chlorine. The water is always changed between occupants.

All resort guests are welcome to enjoy the resort mineral-water pool, which features a hot side and a cold plunge. Owners aim to create an atmosphere for health and wellness, and the bathhouse and resort are rustic but comfortable. According to General Manager Marfa Scheratski, it is helpful to have a bath in the mineral waters and a wrap before a massage. This pretreatment can



The bathhouse at Carson Hot Springs is rustic but comfortable.

take 20 minutes off of the masseur's necessary effort to work out the tension in a client before their massage treatment. Many guests have confided in Marfa that they want to take a more holistic approach to health rather than wait until they fall apart and require a visit to the doctor. These guests believe that the mineral baths help to relieve their stress and, therefore, are part of their effort for better health.

The 18 holes at Elk Ridge Golf Course challenge both beginners and seasoned golfers, and the Elk Ridge Clubhouse is open seven days a week for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

On my visit to Carson, I stayed in the Green Leaf Cabin at Carson Ridge Luxury Cabins (pictured, above right). Ten magnificently decorated cabins serve as the accommodations for this opulent, privately-owned bed and breakfast. Each



cabin is named and comes complete with unique décor, a handcrafted bed, fireplace, jetted tub for two and a front porch with a log swing and bistro table. I spent several hours relaxing and gazing out over the landscape while gently rocking on the swing. The cabins are spaced to ensure privacy and I felt like I was alone with nature.

Owning and managing any B & B is difficult, but owners Richard Albert

cont page 19

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The work of freelance writer and photographer Tracy Beard has been published in many regional, national, and international magazines. Her stories focus on luxury and adventure travel, outdoor activities, spas, fine dining, and traditional and trendy libations. She attended culinary school in San Francisco and owned a catering company, adding to her enjoyment and authoritative understanding of food. Formerly of Longview, she now lives in Vancouver, Wash.



Panther Creek Falls. Photo by Adam Sawyer



The hike to Falls Creek Falls includes several footbridges.

and Theresa Regnier made it look easy. Richard's passion for excellent service, a keen eye for detail and an energized work ethic, paired with Theresa's genuine heart for hospitality, culinary skills and talent as a knowledgeable concierge help to make certain that guests will have a positive and memorable experience at their B & B.

Theresa prepares a delicious three-course breakfast each morning that she serves in the dining room. Guests who prefer to dine alone can pre-order their breakfast and have it delivered to their cabin for a small fee.

Hiking Choices

One of the most beautiful waterfalls on the Washington side of the gorge is only a short drive from Carson. Panther Creek Falls is a 130-foot waterfall located in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. It is only

a short walk to the wooden viewing platform, rendering this waterfall accessible for most visitors.

Falls Creek Falls is a bit further away and is considered a moderate hike. The round trip to the falls is 6.2 miles with about 1,150 feet of elevation gain, but the waterfall views are well worth the effort. During the first half mile of the hike, I discovered several places where you can scramble down to the creek without much effort. Quiet wading pools with icy-cold water sit undisturbed, beckoning brave overheated hikers to take a quick dip. On the north side of the creek is a suspension bridge, and old-growth cedar and fir trees line the trail. After another footbridge, the roar of the falls permeates the air. A collection of boulders provides front row seats to this glorious waterfall. Bring a lunch and spend time enjoying the gentle spray and scenic beauty.



Maryhill Winery's terrace overlooking the Columbia River.

Wineries abound on the Washington side of the gorge. Whether a person is looking for a quiet wine tasting experience or a bustling stop, it can be found on this side of the river. Maryhill Winery presents entertainment on most weekends throughout the year, and their calendar of events is located on the winery website, maryhillwinery.com.

cont page 20

VISITOR CENTERS
FREE Maps • Brochures
Directions • Information

- **Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce Kelso Visitor Center** I-5 Exit 39
105 Minor Road, Kelso • 360-577-8058
- **Woodland Tourist Center** I-5 Exit 21
Park & Ride lot, 900 Goerig St., 360-225-9552
- **Wahkiakum Chamber** 102 Main St, Cathlamet • 360-795-9996
- **Castle Rock Visitor Center** Exit 49, west side of I-5, 890 Huntington Ave. N. Open 10-2.
- **Naselle, WA Appelo Archives Center**
1056 SR 4, Naselle, WA. 360-484-7103.
- **Pacific County Museum & Visitor Center**
Hwy 101, South Bend, WA 360-875-5224
- **Long Beach Peninsula Visitors Bureau**
3914 Pacific Way (corner Hwy 101/Hwy 103)
Long Beach, WA. 360-642-2400 • 800-451-2542
- **South Columbia County Chamber** Columbia Blvd/Hwy 30, St. Helens, OR • 503-397-0685
- **Seaside, OR** 989 Broadway, 503-738-3097; 888-306-2326
- **Astoria-Warrenton Chamber/Ore Welcome Ctr**
111 W. Marine Dr., Astoria 503-325-6311 or 800-875-6807

Local Information
 Points of Interest
 Recreation
 Special Events
 Dining ~ Lodging
 Arts & Entertainment

Map suggests only approximate positions and relative distances. Consult a real map for more precise details. We are not cartographers.

North Gorge *from page 19*

Dining Selections

Stevenson, Washington, is only a five-minute drive from Carson, where the Red Bluff Tap House and Clark & Lewie's Travelers Rest Saloon & Grill offer standard American fare. Henni's Kitchen & Bar, in White Salmon, Washington, offers small gourmet plates from an eclectic array

of countries. Although there are many other eateries around the area, visitors can also opt to make a quick hop over the river and choose from one of the delicious restaurants in Hood River, Oregon.

After a weekend away, it's nice to come home and whip up a quick dinner. Following are two of my favorite summer quickies.



By Tracy Beard

**PROVISIONS
ALONG THE TRAIL
OR BACK AT HOME**



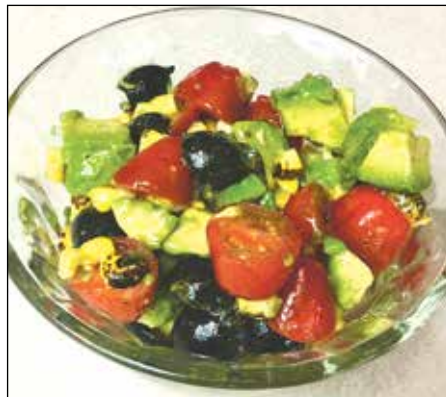
Tracy's Favorite Fish Tacos

- 2 tilapia loins
- 1 teaspoon seasoning salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 taco-size flour tortillas
- ½ head romaine lettuce, chopped in thin slices
- 1 ripe mango, sliced lengthwise
- 1 ripe avocado – sliced lengthwise
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 1 chipotle, seeded and minced
- 1 lime, cut into wedges

Mix chipotle in sour cream and let marry in the refrigerator for a few hours. Sprinkle both sides of the tilapia with seasoned salt. Heat the oil and cook the fish on both sides until cooked through and flaky, approximately 5 minutes. Keep warm.

Wash and chop lettuce. Slice mango, avocado and lime. Cut tilapia lengthwise. Warm tortillas in a hot pan until hot and pliable. Lay ½ tilapia on the tortilla and dress with the sour cream mix, avocado, mango and lettuce. The recipe makes four tacos.

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Tracy's Summer Corn Salad

- ½ bag fire-roasted frozen corn, thawed
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- ½ can black olives, cut in half
- 4 tablespoons good extra virgin olive oil
- 1 chipotle chili, seeded and minced
- 1-½ tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 tablespoon honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

Mix oil, lime juice, chipotle, honey, and salt and pepper in a small container until blended. Place corn, tomatoes, avocado and olive in a bowl. Toss with dressing.

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