

Kayaking, disc golf, fishing & great food

Relaxing Skamokawa getaway sure to please

Father's Day brings to mind picnics and barbecues. Step it up this year and head for Skamokawa, Washington, a town overflowing with outdoor activities just waiting for you to explore with Dad. Skamokawa sits along the Columbia River, just 26 miles west of Longview on Washington State Route 4. The small, quiet town was once a bustling steamboat landing, but today is a tranquil place perfect for relaxing and enjoying life.

Choose from several lodging options and pick whatever suits your family's style. The renovated Skamokawa Resort has eight hotel rooms situated above the resort's general store and varying sized vacation units next door. Whether you just need a double bed or a full-size condo that sleeps six, the Resort can accommodate you. Several units with decks overlook the water, giving your clan the opportunity to watch the ship's journey up and down the river.

Vacation units come with fully stocked kitchens making it easy to prepare meals for Dad and the family. Fireplaces and Jacuzzi tubs will enhance your pleasure by boosting your relaxation in these units. Families with boats may access the public landing and dock next to the Resort, and the on-site store stocks a variety of groceries perfect for barbecues and picnics along with a large selection of beer and wine. Pack a lunch and spend the day fishing with Dad. For a more rural stay, check out The Inn at Lucky Mud, a spacious bed and breakfast.



The view from Skamokawa Resort, looking across the slough toward the Columbia River.



Fishing and disc golf at Lucky Mud

The Inn is six miles from town and has four spacious rooms that sleep two to three people each. The pond, loaded with bass and trout, is 100 feet from your back porch. You don't need a license to fish on this piece of private property, so don't miss out on the excitement of reeling in your big catch and telling fish stories when you get home. The Inn at Lucky Mud maintains two disc golf courses, one for beginners and one for those with experience. Disc golf is rising in popularity and I've heard it may even attain the status of an Olympic sport by 2020.

The courses meander through the property, giving you opportunity to test your disc-throwing technique. Whether you're trying to avoid tree branches, toss over water, or angle your throw up or down a hill, you are sure to have a good time



The Inn at Lucky Mud owners Sara and Adam (and even their 2-1/2 year-old Aiden pictured here) will give you pointers on how to play disc golf if you are a first-timer.

watching Dad perfect his skills. Breakfast is included for guests at the Lucky Mud, so you'll be fortified to play disc golf or explore the entire 40-acre wooded property (see photo, page 18).

If your family enjoys camping, Vista Park offers options

Choose from partial to full RV hookups, tent sites in the trees or near the beach, to yurts located just up the hill. The park allows for free day use of picnic tables, playgrounds, and the beach, but donations are appreciated.

Vista Park has many activities to enjoy with Dad. Bring your gear, pick up a fishing license at the Skamokawa store, and fish from the park's shoreline. The predominantly flat campground is perfect for bicycle riding, and the quarter-mile nature trail follows the river, offering a woodsy escape with peek-a-boo views of the river. For an exciting water adventure, book a kayak trip with Columbia River Kayaking, like I did.

My trip began in the rain; hopefully yours won't, but this is the Pacific Northwest, so be prepared for all kinds of weather. It's just

Story & photos by Tracy Beard



Yurts at Vista Park come equipped with a pull-out futon couch, bunk bed, and a table with four chairs.



Whether you catch a fish to cook over the campfire, toss a burger on the grill, or dine out at a local eatery, you won't starve around Skamokawa. Photos, from top: Captain's Seafood Platter (The Duck Inn); Barbecued ribs (Roadkill Restaurant); breakfast entrée served to guests at The Inn at Lucky Mud.

At right: The Duck Inn's Skamokawa Sunset cocktail makes an ideal end-of-day relaxer.



Above: Tracy Beard, about to set sail in a kayak. She enjoys the outdoors and explorations of all sorts, including travel, cooking and wine tasting. The former Longview resident now lives in Vancouver, Wash., and writes food and adventure stories for several publications. Read more about her at www.tracybeardwrites.com.

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more water...right? Kyleen, the owner/guide, gave me a short talk about safety before we geared up and dragged the kayaks down to the dock. Warm and toasty in my wet suit, I found the rain didn't bother me. Getting into the kayaks in deep water is a little trickier than loading up from the shore. Lying on my side while gripping the dock, I put my feet in the kayak and slowly lowered myself in, without tipping over.

Safely inside the kayak, I settled in and began paddling up the slough.



Kayaking in Skamokawa (PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA RIVER KAYAKING; below, a view on one of the Inn at Lucky Mud's two disc golf courses.

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We traveled along and admired Price Island on the right. The island is part of the Julia Butler Hanson National Refuge for the Columbian white-tailed deer. This sanctuary and the nearby Lewis and Clark Wildlife Refuge provide an ideal habitat for local animals and a variety of birds. We spotted an eagle during our paddle and a friendly seal followed us up the slough.

Once we reached the place where this trip turns into the Columbia River, we discovered that the water was pretty rough. Kyleen made the call to veer into a small waterway where juvenile salmon hang out. Paddling up the gentle waters, she pointed out various birds. Upon our return, the river had calmed, so we

headed out into the shipping channel. The waters here move quickly and you must stay aware of any ships that may join you, but this route put us on the fast track back to the dock. Kyleen calculated that we went four times as fast on the return as on the initial paddle up the slough.

Duck in to The Duck

The Duck Inn Restaurant offers a large array of American favorites. The Captain's Seafood Platter can be deep-fried or sautéed. My dinner of tender halibut arrived, half of it sautéed in garlic butter and the rest deep fried and accompanied with a dill tartar sauce. The perfectly cooked shrimp arrived with spicy cocktail sauce ideal for dipping. Crispy deep fried clams piled next to the baked potato, loaded with sour cream and butter, filled the platter, and the sweet crunchy coleslaw and Texas garlic toast finished off the meal. Logan Britt, the owner and bartender, makes a mean Skamokawa Sunset Cocktail, ideal for enjoying on the deck out back overlooking the slough (*see photos, page 17*).

For another option, this one available to adults only, head over to the Road Kill Saloon for a glass of beer or wine. This local watering hole is unique, with couches and memorabilia from days gone by. The new owners, April and Ric Murdock, make only one dinner selection each night. The night I

was there, April prepared a kettle of barbecued ribs. Check out what's on the menu board and end your meal with a slice of locally-made pie for dessert.

Skamokawa's bustling history, which you can investigate at Redmen Hall, adds charm and flavor to the town, making it a special place to enjoy with Dad.

If You Go

Skamokawa Resort

1391 West State Route 4
Skamokawa, Wash.
360-795-0726

The Lucky Mud Inn

44 Old Chestnut Drive
Skamokawa, Wash.
800-806-7131

Columbia River Kayaking

957 Steamboat Slough Road
Skamokawa, Wash.
360-747-1044

Vista Park

13 Vista Park Road
Skamokawa, Wash.
360-795-8605

The Duck Inn

1377 West State Route 4
Skamokawa, Wash.
360-795-6055

Roadkill Saloon

8 Fairgrounds Road
Skamokawa, Wash.
503-329-1717

Redmen Hall

1394 SR-4, Skamokawa, Wash.
Open Th-Fri-Sat-Sun, 12-4pm
Info: 360-795-3007 or email:
fos1894@gmail.com