

TRAVEL SCENIC BY-WAY FOR AUTUMN FUN

A corn maze, wine tasting, crisp air

Story & photos by Tracy Beard

Thurston Bountiful Byway, lying south of Olympia, Washington, offers a scenic 60-mile loop of numerous places to stop and enjoy delicious culinary delights, view the area's wildlife, walk or ride a bicycle and purchase beautiful plants to add to your garden. Pack up a lunch, bring your bike and join me on this exciting loop about an hour's drive from Longview, Washington.

Rutledge Farm

This September, Rutledge Corn Maze hosted its first sunflower festival. Sunflower stalks reaching 10-feet tall or more filled the west side of the property. Brick red, copper, brown, and bright yellow blooms stood in rows like a cornfield. The festival was a success, and the Rutledge family plans to repeat this festival in the upcoming years.

The yearly corn maze and all its fall fun runs into the first week of November. The Rutledge farm is a spectacular place to bring the entire family. It boasts a haunted maze and a themed



Vancouver, Wash. resident Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, traditional and trendy fine dining and libations for



regional, national and international magazines and is a regular "Out & About" contributor to CRR.

maze each year. This year's theme is Big Foot. The farm offers several activities to keep guests engaged. The cow train chauffeurs guests around the farm, and tents with firepits are available to rent. Get lost in one or both mazes or play a game of horseshoes or cornhole. I have heard that shooting the corn cannon is quite an exciting activity. No autumn festival would be complete without a wagon ride, and the Rutledge farm does not disappoint.

Lael's Moon Garden Nursery

If you are interested in adding to your family garden, make a stop at Lael's Moon Garden Nursery. Owner Larry Lael has labored for over 40 years creating this magnificent Eden-like paradise. Meander the garden and then pick out a few plants to spruce up your garden at home. Larry is ingenious with plants and flowers; he has even managed to grow a banana tree that is over 10 feet tall.



Medicine Creek Winery

Medicine Creek Winery produces delicious wines. Bring a picnic lunch or buy some nibbles along the way to pair with a glass or bottle of wine. The tasting room offers comfortable seating, and outside you will find tables and chairs for your dining pleasure.

Trails Along the Way

The Chehalis Western Trail and the Yelm-Tenino Trail are great places to get out and walk or ride a bike. The two trails were once railroads. Today they are paved and converted into bicycle and walking trails. The Chehalis Western Trail passes through Olympia, South Bay, Lacey, East Olympia, Skookumchuck and Rainier, Washington.. The Yelm-Tenino Trail is 14.5 miles long and runs parallel to State Route 507, and it intersects with the Chehalis Western Trail. The Monarch Sculpture Park, located along the Yelm-Tenino Trail, features exciting and extravagant sculptures. I particularly enjoyed the enormous sculpture of a hand holding pickup sticks. The little dragon was cute too.

Don Juan's Mexican Kitchen

The staff at Don Juan's Mexican Kitchen makes a killer Cadillac margarita. The chips and salsa are perfectly seasoned, and the chili verde made with pork bathed in tomatillo and serrano pepper sauce is fantastic.



IF YOU GO: Thurston Bountiful Byway

Visitor Information Center 103 Sid Snyder Ave SW, Olympia, WA 98501
Toll Free 877-704-7500 Download a map and self-guided tour guide at www.experienceolympia.com/thurston-bountiful-byway.

RUTLEDGE CORN MAZE • 302 93rd Ave SE, Olympia, WA 98501
360- 357-3700 Website: RutledgeCornMaze.com

MEDICINE CREEK WINERY • 947 Old Pacific Hwy SE, Olympia, WA 98513
360-701-6284 Website: MedicineCreekWinery.com

LAEL'S MOON GARDEN NURSERY • 17813 Moon Rd SW, Rochester, WA 98579
360- 273-9567 LaelsMoonGarden.com

MONARCH SCULPTURE PARK 8431 Waldrick Rd SE, Tenino, WA 98589
360-264-2408 MonarchSculpturePark.org

DON JUAN'S MEXICAN KITCHEN 639 Lincoln Ave E, Tenino, WA 98589
360.264.8226. Open 'til 8 or 9pm Tues thru Sun.

The Refuge

Billy Fran Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge is a fabulous place to spend a few hours or even the entire day. If you are looking for a short walk, venture out on the one-mile boardwalk that

weaves through the grassy marsh. If you are not in a hurry, continue past the trail to the dirt road. Make a left and keep walking for 30 minutes until you reach the next boardwalk. This wooden walkway expands over the

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estuary and out to an excellent viewing area where you can look out over the Sound. When the water is out, the site is filled with wildlife and birds. The trails and boardwalks have minimal elevation gain and are wheelchair accessible. Make a day of it and seek out the local wildlife.

Thurston Bountiful Byway has something for everyone. You can drive the loop and enjoy the scenery or get out and explore nature, the local shops, restaurants and more.

When you get home, or if you just read about this outing and decided to stay home, why not enjoy my Spanish Tortilla? It's nothing like the Mexican tortilla!

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As is her custom, Tracy includes an outing-worthy recipe with her Out & About stories.



PROVISIONS ALONG THE TRAIL

Tracy's Spanish Tortilla

- 5 eggs
- 3 potatoes, diced or sliced
- ½ small onion, sliced thinly
- 3 Tbl. heavy cream
- 4 Tbl. extra virgin olive oil
- 10 spears asparagus – diced
- 3 ounces goat cheese
- 2 Tbl. grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste



Preheat the broiler in your oven and position rack on the second shelf. Place one tablespoon olive oil in a heavy ovenproof frying pan. Add the onions and cook on medium heat until transparent. Do not brown. Remove from pan to a medium bowl. Add one tablespoon oil to the pan and add asparagus. Sprinkle with salt and cook on medium 3 minutes until bright green. Remove from pan and add to onions. Add three tablespoons oil and the potatoes to the pan. Cook on medium heat until tender, approximately 15 minutes. Season and scramble the eggs, mix with Parmesan and cheddar cheeses. Add cooked onions, asparagus and seasoned cheesy eggs to the potatoes in the pan. Cook on low for five minutes until eggs begin to set. Drop dollops of goat cheese onto the set eggs. Place the pan on the second shelf in the oven and broil until cooked through, approximately 5 minutes. Remove pan, let sit for 5 minutes before cutting to serve.

Serving suggestion: The tortilla is delicious hot, cold or room temperature. Serve with dressed greens (with a light vinaigrette) and enjoy with a glass of pinot grigio or chardonnay.

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