

# Ready for Summer!

Story and photos by Tracy Beard

*Book your rafting, riding, and paddling adventures now*

Summer is just around the corner, and everyone is itching to get outside and explore after a cold, wet winter. Whether you, your family, or your friends enjoy rafting, tubing, kayaking, or horseback riding, excellent companies are waiting to help you explore the Pacific Northwest. Book your adventures early to secure desired dates and fill your late spring and summer days with outdoor fun.

## Rapid Rides Adventure - Tubing and White-Water Rafting

Rapid Rides Adventure in Toutle, Washington, offers white-water rafting from mid-April to late May and tubing from May through early September. James Fratello and his cousin Pete run the show. Last year, Rapid Rides was open Friday through Sunday, but James hopes to operate on weekdays this summer. Extend your adventure and bring a tent to camp on the riverfront before



or after your experience. Single tubes, inflatable kayaks, and larger tubes for four are available. Run the rapids alone or hire James or Pete to guide you along the river.

Rapid Rides provides a shuttle service, so you do not have to paddle back upstream on this four-mile adventure. When my daughter Brittney and I checked out this company, Brittney floated with Pete, and I rode with James. We tubed the north fork of the Toutle River, which was moving quickly with one- and two-level rapids along the way. The views along the river are gorgeous, and sometimes deer and beavers are spotted along the route. The journey is fun for families, with nothing too scary, but with enough white water to get a little wet.

Floating down the river on tubes is fun for kids and adults. Life jackets are required, and helmets are encouraged. James provides this equipment and has wetsuit booties for those who want them. The trip takes 1-1/2 - 2-1/2 hours from start to finish, allowing people enough time to enjoy the river without taking up the entire day. Call 360-463-3830 to make your reservation.

## Double Mountain Horse Ranch

The Columbia River Gorge is an incredible place to explore on foot, by boat, by car, and on horseback. Margo Vankat and her team at Double Mountain Horse Ranch, based out of Hood River, Oregon, supply horses for all different level riders. Double Mountain Horse Ranch provides unforgettable horseback rides through local orchards and vineyards, up to cascading waterfalls, and to peaks overlooking spectacular views of Mount Hood and Mount Adams.

Margo took me on a back road out of Cascade Locks on my ride. The temperature was in the 60s, perfect weather for a day of riding. Margo saddled the steeds, and soon we were en route to Dry Creek Falls. Margo has all the necessary permits with



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the U.S. Forest Service, allowing her to take people out into areas not otherwise available to the public.

We wandered off the trail and through the forest. We crossed rocky creeks and fallen logs, finally stopping to savor a delicious lunch while sitting in front of Dry Creek Falls. The horses patiently waited as we chatted and watched the waters cascade down the falls into a majestic pool that continued down the mountain as a babbling brook that the horses willingly crossed. Margo pointed out where a scene took place in the movie "Wild," with Reese Witherspoon. Margo's herd is a combination of horses she has selected along with ones she has rescued. She regularly scouts for additions to add to her team of steeds. Double Mountain Horse Ranch offers a variety of tours, lessons, and a kids' riding camp. Riders on the two-or-more-hour trips are encouraged to bring water, snacks, a camera, sunscreen, and a sack lunch to savor while experiencing the great outdoors. Each trip, led by experienced guides, lasts at least 90 minutes, and riders should wear closed-toed shoes and long pants. Hats, boots, and helmets are available for use during the ride. Participants can choose from one of the following preplanned trips, customize their trip with Margo, or sign up for lessons or camp.

"Wild Adventure" takes riders to a waterfall near the Pacific Crest Trail running from Mexico to Canada.

"Columbia River Gorge" begins in a meadow on the west side of the Hood River Valley. The trail climbs through the forest

along fern grottoes and cascading streams. Weather permitting, riders will journey to the Teepee Trail, a private pathway traveled by early Native Americans. It boasts views of the Columbia River Gorge, where Lewis and Clark came out to the Wild West and highlights a spectacular view at Mitchell Point Overlook.

"Oregon" whisks riders to a viewpoint overlooking five awe-inspiring peaks: Mount Defiance, Mount Hood, Mount Adams, Mount St Helens, and Mount Rainier. This ride is weather dependent due to the elevations.

"Fruit Loop/Sunset" takes place later in the day, and the route meanders through orchards and vineyards. Riders can view the sunset and evening stars from a new angle via horseback.

"Orchards" explores vineyards and fruit orchards with views of Mount Hood and Mount Adams. Riders 21+ may do a little local wine tasting along the way (extra fees apply).

Private lessons are available from 1.5 hours and up for all ages and skill levels, and the kids' program is available for a week or just a day. Call Double



Mountain Horse Ranch at 541-513-1152 or make your reservation at [www.ridinginhoodriver.com](http://www.ridinginhoodriver.com)

**Columbia River Kayaking, LLC.**

Look no further if you want to spend a few hours or a few days enjoying a kayaking adventure. Columbia River Kayaking, LLC. offers a variety of excursions for every level of kayaker. 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 did not bother me; however,

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By Tracy Beard  
**PROVISIONS**  
ALONG THE TRAIL

**Shrimp, Mango, and Avocado Salad**

- ¾ lbs cleaned, deveined, cooked shrimp, diced
- 2 ripe avocados - diced
- 2 ripe mangos - diced
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- 1 teaspoon sweet pickle relish
- 2 tablespoons red bell pepper - minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Vegetable chips

Mix the mayonnaise, ketchup, relish, red pepper, salt, and pepper to make your "thousand island" dressing. Toss the shrimp in the dressing. Divide and arrange the avocado artistically on four plates. Top with the mango, and then top with the dressed shrimp. Serve with or without chips.



**Winter Blossom**

*A drink like one discovered at The Allison Inn and Spa*

- 1 ½ ounces Botanist gin
  - ½ ounce Cointreau
  - 1 ½ ounces cranberry juice
  - ¼ ounce lime juice
- Place all the ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake and then strain into a whisky glass over ice.

getting into the kayaks in deep water was 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 into the kayak without tipping over.

Safely inside, I settled in and began paddling up the slough. We traveled along 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.

During our excursion, we spotted an eagle, and a friendly seal followed us up the slough. Once we reached where this trip turns into the Columbia River, we discovered that the water was rough.

Kyleen decided 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 fast, forcing you to remain aware of your surroundings and any ships nearby, but this route put us on the fast track back to the dock. Kyleen calculated that we went four times faster on the return trip than on the initial paddle up the slough. Book your trip now at 360-747-1044.

After all this outdoor fun, try this delicious and refreshing salad and cocktail (above).

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