

# The Captivating PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Text and photos by Dr Wendy Low

The US is a huge country with great diversity in its people, cities and landscape. In our travels as a family over the years, we have visited many parts of this beautiful country but our favourite is, hands-down, the Pacific Northwest. Washington and Oregon are two of the states that make up this part of the continent, with an abundance of evergreen forests and majestic mountains dominating the landscape. Visitors are spoilt for choice in what they would like to see and do, and can spend their time exploring the sights in the city of Seattle and its environs, or choose from the many national parks scattered throughout the region.

## Sights and sounds

The coastline of Washington and Oregon is breathtakingly beautiful. Puget Sound is a fjord with Seattle to its east and the Olympic Peninsula to its west. There are many islands in this body of water and oftentimes, orcas and grey whales can be seen migrating through the Sound. A network of ferry routes service these islands, not just for passengers but also for vehicular passage. It is quite an experience driving your car onto one of these large barge-like vessels, enjoying the scenery and possibly spotting a whale, dolphin or sealion while crossing the waters.

In Seattle, the Chihuly Garden and Glass exhibition in the Seattle Centre is a must-see. Beautiful glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly are featured in this long-term exhibition. Chihuly is an innovative artist who has pushed the art of glass sculpting to creative boundaries, producing colourful jaw-dropping glass installations, some of which are permanently displayed in this museum.

Another must-see attraction is the Pike Place Market. This market is frequently seen on television shows and movies that are shot on location in Seattle. It is most famous for its Fish Market area where fishmongers throw entire fish to colleagues to be prepared for buyers to bring home. Apart from seafood, the market also has stalls selling various foodstuff and arts and crafts from local producers and artists.

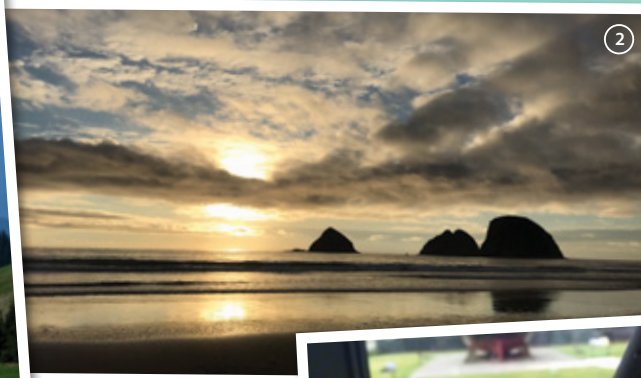
Within walking distance of Pike Place Market is the original Starbucks store where it all started, but be prepared for long lines (well, the lines used to be long pre-COVID-19) to buy your coffee! Along the same street as Starbucks is Ellenos Yogurt, a family business selling Greek yogurt. I highly recommend the marionberry-flavoured one... it is so good! And since you are there, you might as well taste some of Beecher's handmade cheese at their store, also located along the same street. There

is a huge vat in the store where the cheese is made and samples of the different cheeses are available to make it easier for you to decide on which ones to buy.

If you enjoy being on the water, take a harbour cruise on Puget Sound to enjoy the spectacular skyline of Seattle, or choose to take a cruise on Lake Union or Lake Washington to take a peek at the mansions of Medina where two of the world's richest men (Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates) live. Venturing further afield, the Boeing Factory in Everett is another popular tourist attraction. Located about 30 to 40 minutes' drive north of Seattle, factory tours where you get to walk through the actual factories in which the Boeing planes are manufactured (no photos allowed, unfortunately) are offered! The factory buildings alone are engineering wonders – they are so large that when they first started operating, they had their own weather, with clouds forming at the top of the buildings. Air conditioners had to be installed to stabilise the environment. If you are visiting on a weekend or during peak travel season, it is advisable to book your tour online in advance as they fill up quickly.

## Whet your appetite

Apart from sightseeing, you should also sample the local fare. Seattle is



a city of coffee, Starbucks being the most obvious brand, but there are loads of other local coffee shops to try. It is also a foodie paradise with an endless list of restaurants to sample. One of my favourites is The Pink Door located in Post Alley not far from Pike Place. The restaurant is nondescript with no signboard bearing its name, but you can easily identify it by its pink door! Using fresh local ingredients, its menu changes from season to season but always offers top-notch quality.

Being on the coast, fresh Dungeness crab, Alaskan king crab and different varieties of salmon are readily available at reasonable prices. Ivars is an established chain of seafood restaurants at various locations that range from casual fast-food type set-ups to a lovely full-service waterfront restaurant in Mukilteo. If you like dining by the sea, I also recommend Arnie's in Edmonds which serves a variety of American food including seafood. The restaurant is situated adjacent to a boardwalk – check the sunset time and make a reservation for dinner accordingly so that you can enjoy a walk along the

boardwalk while watching the sun set after your meal. In my opinion, it is one of the best places to view the sunset on a clear day.

### Of road trips and cheese

Edmonds is also the town from which you can take a car ferry to the Olympic Peninsula and drive to the Olympic National Park. I recommend spending a few days there in order to enjoy the various sights and trails as it is a huge area. Hurricane Ridge is a must-go, with trails that cater to different levels of difficulty and they offer amazing mountain views.

If you can, do make some time for a road trip down the coast of Oregon. You can go clamming in Garibaldi, visit a cheese and ice cream factory in Tillamook, check out the lighthouses that dot the coastline, explore the tidepools, or just simply enjoy the sunsets and awe-inspiring views.

The Tillamook Creamery also offers a self-guided tour of its cheese factory. Although the tour is free, have your wallets ready to buy delicious local-made cheeses or to sample their ice cream on site.

This is just a snippet of what the Pacific Northwest of the US has to offer for visitors. One thing I can say for certain is that your visit there will be unforgettable! ♦

#### Legend

1. Hiking on Hurrigan Ridge, Olympic National Park
2. Sunset at Oceanside, Oregon with a view of the Three Arch Rocks
3. Glass Boat with Ball Floats – sculpture by Chihuly
4. Tillamook ice cream

Dr Low is a retired GP and empty nester. Having taken the roads less travelled, she has lived in five different countries, moved countless times and likens herself to a hermit crab, carrying the *barang-barang* accumulated over 30 years of expatriate living with her husband and two sons.

