

THE Good Life

WHERE WASHINGTON FEELS LIKE HOME

A **ward media** PUBLICATION

ROOTED IN *Community*

A Tale of
Two Houses

Mike and Tracy
Devany's new house

Spokane's

Remarkable
Riverside Park

Summer Escapes

The Best Weekend
Getaways in North
Central Washington

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One painting captures the essence of this region like almost nothing else you can find here. From apple blossoms to apples themselves, from the river to the fish and the power that come from it, this valley knows how to create.

Photo By Andrew Simpson/Ward Media

July / August 2026

Cover photography: Delaney Adrian /Courtesy of Stevens Pass

Vol. 20 / No. 4

Come In. Stay Awhile. Make Something.

What makes a community thrive?

Across North Central Washington, artists, chefs, entrepreneurs and dreamers are finding the answer in shared spaces built around creativity and connection. From vibrant studios and community kitchens to business incubators and gathering places, these hubs are helping turn ideas into something bigger than themselves.

More Than a Destination

Lake Chelan is known for its sparkling water, vineyards and summer adventures, but the real story is the life built around them. From multigenerational family cabins and quiet mornings on the lake to small-town traditions and year-round community connections, this feature explores what makes Lake Chelan more than a destination—it's a place people call home.

The Ultimate North Central Washington Bucket List

From sunrise paddleboarding and vineyard views to alpine adventures and hidden local treasures, North Central Washington offers no shortage of ways to make the most of summer. Consider this your seasonal bucket list—a guide to ten unforgettable experiences that showcase the beauty, flavor and spirit of the region before the long days fade into fall.

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A new chapter, rooted in *community*

When Amy and I founded Ward Media, we did so because we believed local communities deserve strong local storytelling.

Not just coverage of government meetings and breaking news, though those things matter. Communities also need stories that celebrate who we are, what we value and what makes this place special.

That is why I am so excited to welcome you to this new chapter of The Good Life.

For years, this magazine has showcased the people, places and experiences that make North Central Washington such a remarkable place to live. As Ward Media takes the helm, our goal is not to change what readers love about The Good Life. It is to build upon that foundation while continuing to tell stories that inspire, inform and connect us.

The timing feels right.

Across North Central Washington, our communities are experiencing growth and change. New businesses are opening. Families are choosing to put down roots here. Industries are evolving. New ideas are taking shape. At the same time, many of the traditions and values that have defined this region for generations remain as important as ever.

The challenge before us is not choosing between preserving our past and embracing our future. It is finding ways to do both.

The communities that thrive are not the ones that resist every change. Nor are they the ones that abandon the qualities that made them successful in the first place. The strongest communities understand who they are while remaining open to what they can become.

I see evidence of that every day.

I see it in entrepreneurs investing in downtowns and main streets. I see it in

artists, musicians and makers who enrich our cultural life. I see it in farmers and growers who continue traditions while adapting to new realities. I see it in volunteers who give their time, nonprofit leaders who tackle difficult challenges and neighbors who show up when someone needs help.

Most of all, I see it in the next generation.

This region's future is being shaped right now by young people learning, creating, questioning and preparing to lead. The communities we leave them will depend on the choices we make today. The investments we make, the opportunities we create and the stories we choose to tell all play a role in shaping what comes next.

That is where The Good Life comes in.

This magazine is not simply about beautiful homes, great food, local destinations or interesting personalities, though you will find plenty of those pages ahead. At its heart, The Good Life is about community. It is about the people who make this region a place worth calling home.

In each issue, we hope to introduce you to people you have never met, places you have never visited and ideas you may not have considered. We hope to celebrate the creativity, resilience and generosity that exist throughout North Central Washington.

Most importantly, we hope these stories remind us of something that is easy to overlook amid the demands of daily life: a good life is not defined solely by what we achieve for ourselves. It is built through the relationships we nurture, the communities we strengthen and the legacy we leave for those who follow.

Thank you for joining us as we begin this journey. The future of North Central Washington is bright, not because growth is



guaranteed or challenges will disappear, but because of the people who call this place home. Their stories are worth telling.

We look forward to sharing them with you. ■

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The Good Life

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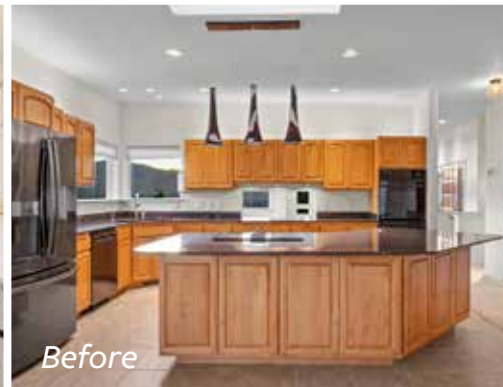
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Feature

Come In. Stay Awhile. Make

Something

There are a thousand ways to introduce someone to Wenatchee.

You can point toward the Columbia River as it bends around the city, the orchards climbing the hillsides or the Cascade peaks rising beyond them. You can send visitors to Pybus Public Market or tell them to catch a summer concert in the park. But many locals have developed a simpler ritual.

They stop at the corner of Wenatchee Avenue and First Street.



By Andrew Simpson
Ward Media Staff Reporter

Stretching across the side of a downtown building, Sara Hasslinger's "Greetings from Wenatchee" mural has become one of the city's visual signatures. Families gather there for graduation photos. Apple Blossom visitors stop beneath its towering letters. It appears in social media posts, tourism campaigns and local news stories, quietly becoming one of the images through which the community introduces itself.

The mural celebrates Wenatchee's orchards, rivers, mountains and outdoor recreation.

Its creator sees something more.

"I'm a people weaver," Hasslinger said.

Spend an afternoon with her at Artworx, the collaborative arts space she founded just around the corner, and the meaning becomes clear.

Artworx doesn't feel like a traditional gallery. Visitors enter through a storefront shared with local businesses before wandering into exhibition spaces where finished paintings hang beside handcrafted gifts, vintage clothing and locally made



Whether it's her murals downtown or the one on the Orondo Reservoir, Sara Hasslinger's art decorates the entire valley, and at Artworx she provides a space for other artists to create their own body of work.



Photos By Andrew Simpson/Ward Media

Even a night at a local taproom in Leavenworth can turn into a celebration of creators, like Washington's Poet Laureate Derek Sheffield's visit to Bushel & Bee during a literary open mic.



Entrepreneurs from the 2026 Flywheel Conference visited the Trades District to see what it looks like when you create a space for others to create in.

goods. Beyond them are working studios, where paint brushes rest in jars beside half-finished canvases, tubes of color lie scattered across well-used tables and tomorrow's projects wait wherever there's room to set them down.

The building feels less like a destination than a workshop in constant motion.

Artists drift between studios. Visitors stop to ask questions. Someone pauses over a display of handmade cards before striking up a conversation with the person who

made them. Another wanders in expecting to browse artwork and discovers a class underway deeper inside the building.

Nothing in Artworx seems designed to keep people apart.

"I think art is the grease in the gears," Hasslinger said. "It can be applied to everything."

That philosophy reaches well beyond the paintings hanging on the walls.

Over the past year, Artworx has become a place where artists share ideas, nonprofits discover creative partners, community workshops introduce new makers to unfamiliar skills and collaborations begin almost by accident. What starts as a conversation over a canvas sometimes becomes a public mural, a shared exhibition or a project neither person expected when they walked through the door.

For Hasslinger, those moments matter just as much as the finished artwork.

The mural outside may be one of Wenatchee's most recognizable images, but the connections formed inside Artworx are the work she's just as proud of.

A short walk north, another creative space is built around much the same idea. It isn't just walkable. It feels connected.

The sounds change before anything else

The quiet conversations of the studio give way to mixers, ovens and the rhythm of hands shaping fresh bagels. Stainless steel worktables replace easels. Through the back doors, the bustle of the kitchen opens onto a garden where herbs and vegetables grow beside flowers, a small bridge crosses a koi pond and a long community table waits beneath strands of lights for the next celebration.

At first glance, Wenatchee Downtown Kitchen couldn't seem more different from an artist's studio.

Look a little closer, and the resemblance becomes impossible to ignore. Stretching across two walls of the gathering space, another of Hasslinger's murals overlooks the room where entrepreneurs test recipes, guests celebrate milestones and new businesses begin to take shape. It feels perfectly at home there, another reminder

that in Wenatchee, creative worlds have a habit of overlapping.

Barb Andre-Van Lith, owner of Ring-a-Bell's Catering and Wenatchee Downtown Kitchen, sees no distinction.

"One of the things I've learned is that food has a unique ability to bring people together," she said. "When people gather at an event they're often in a celebratory mood and generally happy to share some good eats. Food is a natural catalyst that inspires great conversation."

"One of my favorite moments is when a taste evokes that nostalgic feeling of a childhood memory," she said. "I've seen meals inspire tears, turn strangers into friends and bring families back together."

That experience shapes the Downtown Kitchen every bit as much as the commercial equipment inside it.

Andre-Van Lith smiles as she talks about the garden, where herbs and vegetables eventually find their way into the kitchen and guests linger beside the koi pond long after dinner has ended. Many still remember the years when the property was home to The Cellar Cafe. Others are discovering it for the first time.

Ring-a-Bell's Catering still operates from the building, but Andre-Van Lith has begun imagining something larger. The commercial kitchen gives emerging food businesses an affordable place to grow before investing in storefronts of their own. The garden hosts celebrations and community gatherings. Guest chefs, cooking classes and live music all fit naturally into a place designed to bring people together.

"If Ring-a-Bell's Catering is about serving people through food," she said, "the Downtown Kitchen is about helping create opportunities for others to pursue their own dreams."

Andre-Van Lith talks about cooking the way many artists talk about creating.

"For me, the creative process is an adrenaline rush," she said. "It usually starts with an idea... Then I head into the kitchen and start experimenting."

Not every experiment succeeds

"The reality is that many ideas don't work the first time," she said. "Some are complete failures."

The failures don't discourage her. They become part of the process.

"I keep tinkering, adjusting and refining until it comes together," she said. "There's a thrill in taking something that isn't working and continuing to finesse it until it becomes something special."



It's not all paintings and bagels and coffee being made in the Wenatchee Valley. Wellmann Moto makes high-end "hyperbikes" with up to 800 horsepower.



Behind Wenatchee Downtown Kitchen is a garden where "making" starts with growing: Herbs and vegetables from this planter box might end up in a meal you have this week.

Swap recipes for paint, flour for pigment, and Andre-Van Lith could almost be describing the artists working a few blocks away at Artworx.

The same spirit shows up throughout the valley.

On summer evenings, music drifts across the grass of Memorial Park, Lincoln Park and Centennial Park while children dance near the stage and neighbors unfold lawn chairs beneath the trees. At Pybus Public Market, winery lawns, breweries and community festivals, ordinary gathering places briefly

Feature

become concert venues before returning to everyday life the next morning.

Those transformations aren't limited to music

Once a month, Bushel & Bee Taproom trades its usual rhythm for LitMic, where many of North Central Washington's strongest writers gather to share new work. On one recent evening, Washington State Poet Laureate Derek Sheffield stood before the crowd, evidence that a place built for conversation over cider can just as naturally become a home for poetry. Those performances aren't separate from the story unfolding inside Artworx or Wenatchee Downtown Kitchen. They're another expression of the same instinct: creating spaces where people don't simply consume art, food or music, but encounter the people making it.

Whether the gathering begins around a stage, a table or an easel, the invitation is remarkably similar: come in, stay awhile and make something together.

That same progression is beginning to shape entire neighborhoods

Walk through the Trades District in East Wenatchee and the smell of freshly roasted coffee reaches you before the front door closes behind you. Bread cools on racks at Heirloom Baking Co. while visitors wander toward the sound of music spilling from Cascadia Taphouse. Nearby, Lilies of the Valley gives floral arrangements from weddings, memorials and other events a second life, redesigning them for delivery to hospitals, nursing homes and care facilities throughout the valley. A few doors away, a craftsman slowly transforms steel into custom motorcycles.

Each business is different

Together, they tell the same story.

Originally envisioned by the Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority as an incubator for emerging businesses, the district has become a place where entrepreneurs work beside one another instead of in isolation. Earlier this year, attendees at Flywheel, North Central Washington's annual gathering of



At Pybus Public Market, itself a showcase for creators inside, you can catch live music on an early Saturday afternoon. The Welter Brothers often perform at the Farmer's Market on the Pybus Stage.

entrepreneurs and investors, toured the Trades District to see the region's startup ecosystem in action before returning to pitch their own ideas.

As businesses grow into permanent homes elsewhere in the valley, new entrepreneurs move into the spaces they leave behind, creating a cycle designed to keep new ideas moving forward. The district's next phase will expand that vision, but its success is already measured by more than occupied storefronts. Like Artworx and Wenatchee Downtown Kitchen, it has become a place where making is strengthened by proximity, conversation and collaboration. Seen separately, the three spaces appear to have little in common. One is an arts collective, another a commercial kitchen and the third a business incubator.

Spend time in each of them, though, and the distinctions begin to soften.

Artists become mentors. Chefs become entrepreneurs. Business owners become collaborators. A mural finds its home inside a kitchen. A commercial garden becomes part

of an event venue. A former industrial district fills with coffee, bread, music and handmade goods.

Perhaps communities have always thought of art and entrepreneurship as separate investments.

Here, they increasingly feel like the same one. The places themselves are different. The impulse behind them is remarkably similar.

Whether someone is mixing paint, shaping dough, writing a poem, roasting coffee or sketching the first plans for a new business, the work almost always begins the same way: with an idea, a willingness to make it real and a community willing to make room for it.

In North Central Washington, those rooms are becoming easier to find.

They look different from one another. A studio. A kitchen. A park. A cidery. A warehouse.

But they keep offering the same invitation: Come in.

Stay awhile.

Make something. ■



One constant theme in the valley is the overlap and collaboration, like this mural, painted by Sara Hasslinger, inside the Wenatchee Downtown Kitchen.



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Summer Escapes:

The Best Weekend Getaways in North Central Washington

Whether you're craving mountain trails, lakeside relaxation or fine wine, you don't have to travel far to enjoy a memorable summer getaway in North Central Washington. From Bavarian-charmed towns to rolling vineyards, our region is full of weekend destinations that feel worlds away while being just a short drive from home.

"You can have a great stay in a place that takes you away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, but it's only a half hour away," said Visit Chelan County Executive Director Jerri Barkley.



By Taylor Caldwell
Ward Media Staff Reporter

A European Escape

With Bavarian-charmed storefronts and stunning mountain backdrops, Leavenworth can make a weekend getaway feel like an international destination without the hassle.

Start your downtown visit with a stop at the Willkommen Center, located at 645 Front Street, where you will find information, maps and local recommendations. While you're there, keep an eye out for the historic glockenspiel above the center's doorstep, which typically plays every hour on the hour.

For a taste of Bavaria, downtown has plenty of options, including beers and bratwurst at München Haus or schnitzel at

Andreas Keller Restaurant. Here's a tip: plan your meal at Andreas Keller between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m., and enjoy a dinner accompanied by a live accordionist.

One of the town's most memorable summer experiences is seeing "The Sound of Music" at the Ski Hill Amphitheater. Set in the woods with the Cascade Mountains as the backdrop, the Leavenworth Summer Theater show is a "can't miss" experience.

There are plenty of places to stay in Leavenworth. For options near town, consider staying at the Enzian Inn, where the Leavenworth Alphorns can often be found playing their traditional alpine instrument on the roof. For close-by camping, Icicle RV Resort offers full RV hookups right along the Icicle River.

A Lakeside Retreat

Lake Chelan's ideal soil and weather are a great combination for growing grapes. Pair rolling vineyards with stunning lake and mountain views, and you have one of the best wine tasting destinations in all of Washington state. With over 30 wineries hugging the shores of Lake Chelan, there are plenty of options to sip a great glass of wine with an incredible view.

From French varietals to Italian-inspired architecture, wineries in Chelan will have you feeling like you've been transported to the Mediterranean. Explore Rhône inspired wines at Cairdeas Winery's Barn Tasting Room, located along the north shore of Lake Chelan. Or, step into the Italian countryside at Tsillan Cellars Winery & Vineyards, which features cascading waterfalls, expansive terrazzos, gardens, dramatic Italian architecture, and more.

Beyond the wineries, Lake Chelan is one of the region's premier destinations for outdoor recreation. Summer is the best time of year to get out and enjoy the famous lake, but also consider checking out some of the lakes along Manson's backroads, such as Wapato, Roses, Dry, and Antillon Lakes.

A boat ride to the remote town of Stehekin, located on the opposite end of Lake Chelan, is well worth the visit. While you're there, enjoy a hike and treat yourself to the Stehekin Pastry Company. For lakeside accommodations, Campbell's Resort — which has been in operation since 1901 — offers 1,800 feet of private beach with kayak and paddle board rentals, as well as two heated pools.

For a laid back vibe with adventure access, book a stay at Echo Valley Resort. Just a 15-minute drive from downtown Chelan or Manson, the resort offers camping, cabin stays and several Airstreams for glamping with a retro twist. At Echo Valley Resort, visitors can enjoy more than 30 miles of mountain bike trails and over 140 miles of hiking trails at their doorstep.

Hidden Gems

While Leavenworth and Lake Chelan often hog the spotlight, there is so much to enjoy and explore between the two tourist destinations.

"You get to live a little more like a local," said Barkley.

Drive just 20 minutes outside of Leavenworth, and you can find a cozy cabin getaway in the Plain and Lake Wenatchee area. The temperatures are cooler, the crowds are smaller, and the access to nature is unmatched. The mountain setting provides the perfect setting to relax with a book by the river or explore a new trail. On Saturdays, check out the farmers market at Plain Hardware in the morning, then spend your evening sipping wine and enjoying live music at Plain Cellars. Check with Lake Wenatchee State Park for upcoming stargazing nights on the lake.

Down valley, Cashmere offers competitive views and local vibes, combining the Wenatchee River, expansive orchards and superb views of the mountain peaks that define the Enchantments.

"Everybody's doing some really fun things, but Cashmere is a really unique place to visit now," said Barkley.

In recent years, Cashmere has become a hub for business and community. Start your morning with Gaucho Coffee inside Side Street Cashmere, then spend the next few hours perusing vintage and local goods at Brassbound Collective, vinyl at Cashmere Records and your next read at Understory Book Shop. While you're downstairs, you might as well have a drink at Yonder Cider Taproom.

Grab some luxury picnic ingredients from HoneyHour Market and head to Riverside Park for a picnic by the Wenatchee River.

For a unique stay in town, the Chickadee Suite Airbnb offers a vintage, cozy feel right inside the heart of Side Street Cashmere.

"What I appreciate most about the rural towns are the unique stays," said Barkley.

No matter which destination you choose, one weekend is perfect for remembering just how much there is to discover close to home. ■



Plain is the perfect getaway for outdoor access, whether it's getting out on the trails or exploring Lake Wenatchee. Plus, you're only a short drive from Leavenworth. **Photo By Shane Wilder / Icicle TV**

Dave and Krista Boyle used to vacation in Chelan. Then one night they looked over their dock at this view and asked themselves why they should ever leave.

More Than a Destination

Photos by Andrew Simpson/Ward Media

The Life People Build Around Lake Chelan

People invest in a Lake Chelan lifestyle for all kinds of reasons.

For some, it's the picture they've carried for years: a dock stretching into impossibly blue water, grandchildren learning to waterski, afternoons at a favorite winery and evenings that end with the sun disappearing behind the mountains. Others come for a weekend and begin wondering what it might be like if they never had to leave. The dream is built on lake views, warm summers and the promise that life somehow moves a little differently here.

Much of that dream is exactly what visitors find. Lake Chelan stretches more than 50 miles into the Cascade Mountains, making it one



By Andrew Simpson
Ward Media Staff Reporter

of Washington's most remarkable natural landmarks. Around its shoreline, the neighboring communities of Chelan and Manson have become one of the state's favorite vacation destinations, drawing boaters, hikers, golfers, wine lovers and families looking to make memories on the water.

What makes the valley remarkable, however, isn't simply what there is to do. It's that, somehow, it has remained a real hometown while welcoming the rest of the world.

Downtown Chelan still belongs to the people who live there. Visitors stop at Pat & Mike's on the South Shore for gas, sunscreen or an ice cream cone before heading out on the lake. Locals still shop at Bear Foods,

grab burgers at the Lakeview Drive-In and wave to familiar faces as they make their way through town. Ten minutes farther around the shoreline, Manson carries that same small-town character among vineyards and orchards, its wineries woven naturally into everyday life rather than set apart as tourist attractions.

If residents need a new appliance or a trip to Costco, they point the car toward Wenatchee without much thought. But daily life happens here. This is where directions are still given by landmarks instead of intersections, where favorite restaurants become gathering places and where a quick trip "into town" means something different depending on which side of the lake you call home.

That sense of belonging is what drew Dave and Krista Boyle across the mountains.

After years of spending weekends at the South Shore property that had been in Krista's family for decades, retirement gave them the opportunity to stop visiting and start living the life they had imagined.

"We liked the small-town atmosphere," Boyle said. "All that goes along with that."

Like everyone who lives on the lake, Boyle accepts that summer changes everything. The population swells, boats fill the water and restaurants buzz from morning until night. Tourism, he said with a laugh, is an "evil necessity." It fuels the local economy and supports the businesses that make the community thrive, even if it means surrendering some of the quiet that residents treasure.

What surprised him wasn't the crowds.

It was how quickly they stopped defining the place.

Ask Boyle to describe a perfect summer day and he doesn't begin with boating or restaurants. He talks about the quiet of the morning, before much of the lake has awakened. He lights up talking about September, when school has resumed, the water remains warm and many of the visitors have gone home.

"You get to enjoy the lake at its best without so much traffic," he said. "You don't have to wait an hour for an ice cream cone downtown."

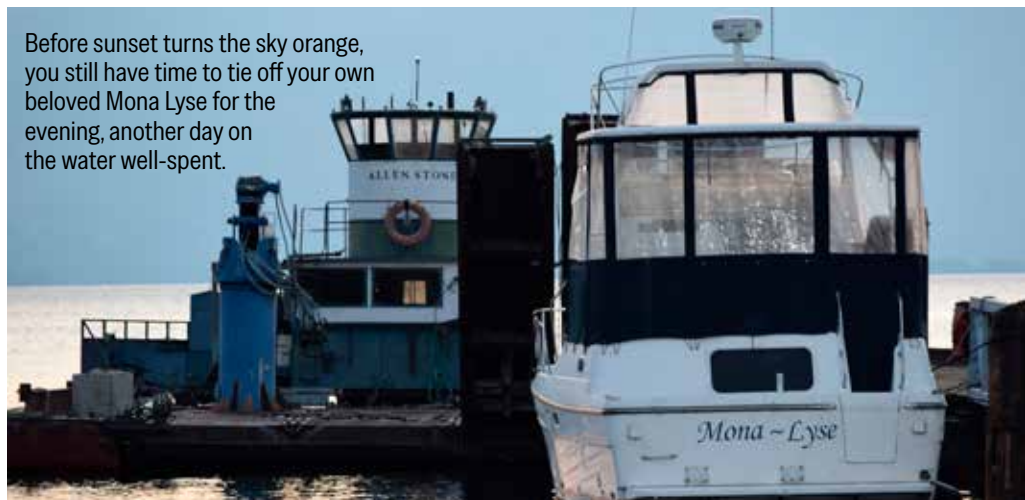
Living on the lake also means becoming part of its natural rhythm in ways weekend visitors rarely experience. Deer wander through the property so often they've become neighbors more than novelties. A great blue heron has fished from his dock. Coyotes, bobcats, bears and even the occasional cougar have all made appearances over the years. One afternoon, a bear wandered directly into the middle of a backyard party.

"It was a little fun," Boyle recalled.

For Boyle, though, no image captures life on Lake Chelan better than watching an eagle circle overhead, spot a fish and dive before he can cast a line of his own.

Those are the moments that stay with him. Not property values, or square footage or even the view itself.

Before sunset turns the sky orange, you still have time to tie off your own beloved Mona Lyse for the evening, another day on the water well-spent.



The life that unfolds because of it.

That perspective carries over into the people who share the shoreline. Boyle laughs about neighbors who arrive in everything from a Rolls-Royce to an aging Jeep, then shrugs off the difference.

"We all get along," he said.

For all the money it can take to buy a place on Lake Chelan, the conversations residents remember most aren't about real estate. They're about changing seasons, wildlife, neighbors, family and another quiet morning on the deck watching the lake wake up.

Somewhere along the way, the investment stops being about the property.

It becomes about the life built around it.

If Boyle's Lake Chelan is measured in quiet mornings and changing seasons, that's only one expression of life around the water. The same lake that rewards residents who know where the herons fish also welcomes families chasing their first ride behind a wake boat, couples discovering a favorite winery and visitors who simply want to spend a summer afternoon somewhere they can't quite find anywhere else.

Sunset Marina makes something of a parking lot for boats down on the south shore, right between where you might rent a jet ski and where you'd climb aboard the Lady of the Lake.

The beauty of Lake Chelan is that it leaves room for both. A summer day often unfolds naturally. Early mornings belong to anglers, paddleboarders and kayakers taking advantage of calm water before the activity builds. By late morning, boats are launching from public ramps, downtown sidewalks begin to fill and families are deciding whether the day will be spent on the water, at the wineries or wandering through town.

By afternoon, those choices have a way of blending together.

A morning on the lake becomes lunch downtown. Lunch turns into a tasting at a favorite winery. Before long, someone is checking to see who's playing music that



Feature

Live music from the Kevin Albert Jones Band gets the crowd at Hard Row to Hoe Winery dancing on a Sunday afternoon.

evening. That easy rhythm has become one of the valley's defining characteristics.

The wineries that helped establish the Lake Chelan Wine Valley have evolved into gathering places as much as tasting rooms. Whether it's Tsillan Cellars, Benson Vineyards, Hard Row to Hoe, Radiance or one of the many others scattered between Chelan and Manson, the draw extends well beyond the wine itself. Vineyard lawns fill with neighbors, patios become evening meeting places and live music drifts across the vines as the sun settles behind the hills.

On another evening, the crowd may gather for open mic night at Mellisoni Vineyards, where it's just as likely to include city officials as professional musicians. In Chelan, people often wear more than one hat. A community development director might spend the day reviewing plans for future growth before picking up his instrument that evening. That's simply part of life in a place where public service and community life comfortably overlap.



The same familiarity extends well beyond the wineries. Kids still leap from the Woodin Avenue Bridge every summer despite generations of signs warning them not to. My Buddy's Place in Manson has earned a devoted following for serving baskets of fries surrounded by nearly every dipping sauce imaginable. In the fall, nearly every television above a bar is tuned to the Seahawks. Visitors might remember the attractions. Residents remember the traditions.

Those traditions change with the seasons.

Summer may define Lake Chelan in the public imagination, but autumn brings apple bins, pear harvests and vineyards heavy with grapes, reminders that the communities surrounding the lake were built as much on agriculture as recreation. Winter

settles into a quieter rhythm. Winterfest draws visitors back, Echo Valley welcomes skiers and snowboarders to the hills above Manson, and bald eagles become easier to spot along a shoreline that suddenly feels as though it belongs to the locals again.

That cycle is part of what makes Lake Chelan different.

It isn't simply a place people visit for a weekend before heading home. It remains a living community through every season, balancing tourism with everyday life in a way few destination towns manage. Visitors can spend a perfect day on the lake and leave believing they've experienced the best the valley has to offer. The people who stay know they're still discovering it. For some families, however, the best days on Lake Chelan don't end when the weekend is over.

They become traditions.

Robin Brown grew up spending summers at her family's cabin on the South Shore, just a handful of properties from the Lake Chelan Yacht Club. Nearly a century later, the cabin is still doing exactly what it was built to do.

Bring people together.

It isn't a luxury home by today's standards, and that's part of its

charm. The cabin has changed very little over the decades. There are two main rooms, a screened porch that was enclosed years ago, a small dressing room and a bathroom. On busy summer weekends, mattresses spill onto porches and cousins happily claim whatever space they can find.

Nobody seems to mind.

"The cabin is where everybody gathers," Brown said.



Even through the driftwood that collects along the shoreline, you can see that the crystal clear waters of Lake Chelan are irresistible.



Don Morse Park, right in downtown Chelan, is one of the most popular places in town all summer long, for its swimming access, playground, courts, and proximity to everything.

That simple idea has guided nearly a century of family decisions. As waterfront property values climbed, Brown's family created a system that allows three branches of the family to share both the cabin and the responsibility of caring for it. Every spring brings cleanup weekends. Every fall means putting the cabin to bed for another winter. Family members pitch in with repairs, maintain the dock and boat lift, and do much of the work themselves.

The investment isn't simply financial. It's measured in labor, compromise and a shared commitment to making sure the next generation grows up with the same memories.

"We've been able to really keep the peace," Brown said. "Everybody gets to enjoy it."

The cabin has been in the family since the early 1930s.

That represents nearly a century of Fourth of July celebrations, fishing trips, dock jumps, family dinners and children who simply assumed Lake Chelan was where summer happened.

Like Boyle, Brown rarely talks about the property itself.

She talks about what happens there.

Children who once slept on air mattresses now bring children of their own. Cleanup weekends become reunions. The dock becomes the backdrop for another generation of family photographs. The cabin has become more than a place to spend a vacation. It has become part of the family's identity. That may be Lake Chelan's greatest distinction.

There are beautiful lakes throughout the Pacific Northwest. There are places to boat, fish and vacation in nearly every direction. Few, however, manage to feel simultaneously like a destination and a hometown, exciting enough to draw first-time visitors and familiar enough to keep generations coming back.

At the upper end of the lake sits Stehekin, one of Washington's most remarkable communities, where residents still live in a town that cannot be reached by car. It serves as a quiet reminder that even after generations of growth, Lake Chelan continues to hold a little mystery.

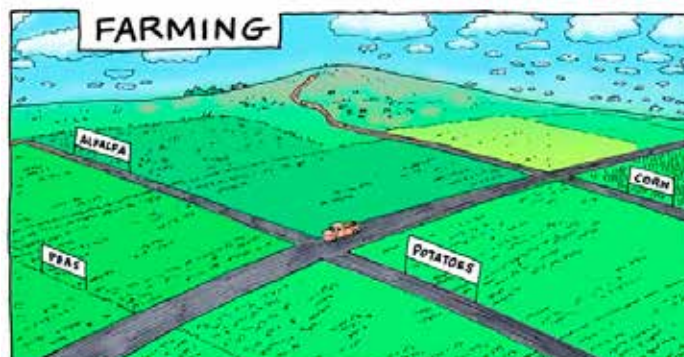
Some people arrive looking for a vacation home, but others discover something much harder to define.

Lake Chelan never stops feeling like somewhere worth arriving. ■



Local country music legend Owen Barnhart sets up his gear on la terraza at Tsilian Cellars. His world-class voice makes for a perfect pairing with their award-winning wines.

THEN & NOW by DAN MCCONNELL



For those who want to stay awhile but not relocate, there are plenty of vacation spots and condos dotting both the south and north shores of Lake Chelan.





Building North Central Washington (Building NCW), is a nonprofit organization bringing together the builders, tradespeople, designers, suppliers, lenders, and local businesses who help shape the places we call home.

Welcome from Building NCW

If you've ever admired a beautiful home, tackled a weekend project that somehow lasted three weekends, or headed to the hardware store "for just one thing"... welcome. You're among friends.

We believe great communities start with great people, quality craftsmanship, and

maybe a well-stocked junk drawer. In each issue of *The Good Life*, we'll share home inspiration, local stories, seasonal fun, and a few relatable Home Truths that might have you saying, "Well... that's definitely my house."

Whether you're dreaming about your next home project, looking for inspiration,

or simply enjoying everything North Central Washington has to offer, we're glad you're here. Here's to celebrating the people who build our communities... and to everyone who's made at least three trips to the hardware store for one project. We've all been there. ■



25 Ways to Summer *Like a Local*

North Central Washington knows how to do summer right. Long evenings, fruit stands on every corner, mountain views that never get old, backyard BBQs, and weekends that somehow disappear way too fast. We've put together 25 local adventures to inspire your best summer yet. The only question is... how many can you check off before pumpkin spice starts showing up? ☀

Explore

- ☐ Watch the sunset from Saddle Rock
- ☐ Spend a day at Lake Chelan
- ☐ Walk through Ohme Gardens
- ☐ Catch an AppleSox game
- ☐ Take the scenic route home
- ☐ Explore a new hiking trail

Taste

- ☐ Visit your favorite farmers market

- ☐ Stop at a local fruit stand
- ☐ Grab ice cream on a hot afternoon
- ☐ Try a restaurant you've never been to
- ☐ Sip a locally crafted cider, wine, or beer
- ☐ Treat yourself to a local coffee shop

At Home

- ☐ Host a backyard BBQ
- ☐ Eat dinner outside
- ☐ Plant flowers or fresh herbs
- ☐ Read a book on the porch

- ☐ Hang string lights outside
- ☐ Watch the stars after dark

Community

- ☐ Shop at a locally owned business
- ☐ Attend a summer concert or festival
- ☐ Invite neighbors over for dessert
- ☐ Volunteer for a local organization
- ☐ Visit a community event you've never attended
- ☐ Share your favorite NCW spot with someone new



What Makes a House a *Home?*

**It's not the square
footage. It's the stories.**



There are plenty of ways to measure a house. Square footage. Bedrooms. Curb appeal. The size of the kitchen island.

But let's be honest... no one has ever said, "Remember that amazing 432-square-foot bonus room?"

What we remember are the moments

The birthday candles that almost set off the smoke alarm. The front porch where coffee somehow tastes better. The kitchen that's

Home Truth #1

If you can find the TV remote on the first try, today is going to be a good day.

always just a little too crowded during the holidays, yet no one wants to leave. The couch where the dog insists they pay the mortgage because they've claimed the best seat in the house.

Home isn't about perfection. If anything, the best homes have fingerprints on the windows, shoes by the front door, and a drawer that's somehow become the official

Home Truth #2

Every backyard BBQ has one person who takes the job of 'grill master' very, very seriously.

home for batteries, takeout menus, and mystery keys.

Around North Central Washington, home looks different for everyone. It might be

a historic farmhouse tucked between orchards, a downtown bungalow full of character, a cabin with mountain views, or a brand-new home waiting for its first family

Home Truth #3

The dog doesn't care how nice the house is. They just want the sunny spot by the window.

tradition. Different styles, different stories, but they all have one thing in common: they're built for living.

The best homes aren't the ones that look untouched. They're the ones that have survived birthday parties, muddy dogs,

Home Truth #4

Somewhere in every home is a chair that's been promoted to 'laundry storage.'

science fair projects, holiday dinners, and that one paint color someone swore would look "less yellow" once it dried.

At Building NCW, we're fortunate to work alongside the builders, designers, suppliers, tradespeople, and local businesses who help create the places where life unfolds. They don't just build houses. They help create the backdrop for first steps, graduation celebrations, backyard cookouts, and quiet Tuesday nights that don't seem important until years later.

Because while a house may start with lumber, concrete, and blueprints, a home is

built one memory at a time. So this summer, open the windows. Invite the neighbors over. Eat dinner outside. Stay up a little too late watching the sunset. Let the kids track a little dirt through the house. (It vacuums.)

Because one day, those ordinary moments will be the stories everyone remembers.

After all, the good life isn't about having the perfect home. It's about loving the life happening inside it.

Building More Than Homes

Building NCW is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting the people

Home Truth #5

Coffee tastes better on the porch. Science hasn't confirmed it, but we're pretty sure it's true.

behind North Central Washington's homes and neighborhoods. Through education, advocacy, and community partnerships, we work to strengthen the building industry

Home Truth #6

You know it's cherry season when your kitchen counter suddenly has more fruit than available space.

while helping create vibrant places where families, businesses, and communities can thrive.

Learn more at buildingncw.org ■

Feature

The Ultimate North Central Washington

Bucket List

Amos Rome Vineyards is the perfect place to enjoy good wine and great views. **Photo by Heirloom Creative/ Courtesy of Amos Rome Vineyards**

10 must-do things before summer ends

Summer in North Central Washington is truly special. Long, sun-filled days invite us to spend a little more time in the moment. Whether it's sharing a bottle of wine with friends, picking fresh fruit, or adventuring in the outdoors, summer is a season for exploring, reconnecting and savoring the places that make us grateful to call NCW home.

"The variety of terrain and recreation opportunities in this small geographic area is pretty immense," said Jerri Barkley, Executive Director of Visit Chelan County.

With so many options at our finger tips, it can be overwhelming to decide how to spend precious summer days. So, here are ten must-do things to check off your list before the end of the season.

1. Paddleboard at Sunrise

There are few better ways to spend a hot summer in North Central Washington than getting out on the water. From the Cascades to the Columbia, the region offers endless opportunities for water recreation, whether it's waterskiing across a glassy lake, carving

through the wake on a jet ski, or floating the river with friends.

With so many great options, there's no wonder why the region attracts thousands of people to its shorelines every season. However, between motorboats, crowded beaches and floating parties, finding a quiet moment on the water can be difficult.

But there are few disruptions to be found at sunrise.

Paddle boarding at dawn offers a side of our lakes and rivers that most people don't get to see. The water is calm enough to reflect the surrounding mountains, and it's quiet enough to hear only the sounds of singing birds and the rhythmic stroke of your paddle.

And while most people are asleep, the rivers and lakes are active with wildlife. In the early hours of the morning, you might catch an osprey diving for fish, bats flying overhead, or otters breaching the surface. However, paddle boarding does come

Get a new perspective of Leavenworth with expert guides from Bavarian Walking Tours, Coco and Tom. **Photo by Taylor Caldwell/Ward Media**



By Taylor Caldwell
Ward Media Staff Reporter



look into Walla Walla Point Park, Confluence State Park or the Horan Natural Area. Entiat City Park also has Columbia River access. In Leavenworth, check out Lake Wenatchee or mellow sections of the Wenatchee River.

2. Visit Ohme Gardens

Ohme Gardens is one of the more unique outdoor destinations in the Wenatchee Valley, offering an alpine oasis among the rocky shrubsteppe. It all started when Herman Ohme purchased 40 acres of land for an orchard nearly a hundred years ago. According to the garden's history, the acreage had a bluff that offered breathtaking views of the snow-capped Cascade Mountains and the Columbia River valley, but the ground itself was craggy, desolate, and rock-strewn. Ohme and his wife, Ruth, would stand on the bluff and dream of alpine meadows, shimmering pools and shady evergreen pathways in a place where the scorching summer sun was relentless.

After years of hard work transplanting evergreens, laying stone pathways and hand watering the gardens, the Ohmes brought their vision to life. Today, the Ohme Gardens map features winding pathways through lush gardens, shaded benches, waterfalls and pools, with the same views that inspired the Ohmes all those years ago.

When the temperatures reach peak highs this summer, you can find respite in Ohme Gardens, thanks to the hard work and vision of Herman and Ruth.

To add a little magic to your visit, check the Ohme Gardens website for a schedule of events in the gardens, such as Sound Healing and Yoga Nidra sessions, story hours and movie nights. Or, look for the gnomes and fairies hidden throughout the gardens.

3. Sip wine overlooking the lake

Designated in 2009, Lake Chelan is the 11th AVA (American

Viticultural Area) in Washington State. The shores of the breathtaking lake host over 30 wineries, each one revealing the distinct personalities of their grapes and winemaker. Enjoy the unique palette of Lake Chelan wines, take in the breathtaking views, and settle into the present this summer.

Amos Rome Vineyards makes fine wines that are meant to showcase the unique climate and terroir of the Lake Chelan Wine Valley. Its grapes are exclusively grown in the Lake Chelan AVA, many of which can be seen surrounding the tasting room. Enjoy the sunshine and stunning views from the deck or lawn, and be sure to check out Amos Rome's event calendar for upcoming live music.



While it's best known for winter recreation, Stevens Pass is a great option for hiking, biking and disc golf in the summer. **Photo by Delaney Adrian /Courtesy of Stevens Pass**

"Summer at Amos Rome Vineyards is about slowing down and savoring the moment. There's something special about sitting among the very vines where our estate fruit is grown, taking in the panoramic lake and mountain views, and enjoying a glass of wine made just steps from where the grapes were harvested. It's an authentic Lake Chelan AVA experience that simply can't be replicated," said Amos Rome's Briana Clark.

Perched right on the south shore, Siren Song Vineyard Estate and Winery invites visitors to fully immerse themselves in the beauty of Lake Chelan. The seven-acre property includes estate vineyards, a tasting room, dining areas, lounge area, and overnight accommodations. Each experience offers stunning lake and vineyard views while being surrounded

by lush gardens, fountains, and whimsical works of art.

But don't stop there. The Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce's website offers an extensive list of must-visit wineries, and you can't go wrong with any one of them.

4. Play a round of golf with picturesque views

With surrounding views of rolling hills, the Columbia River and Cascade Mountains, you would be hard pressed to find a golf course in North Central Washington with sub-par views. No pun intended.

Nestled along Lake Wenatchee, Kahler Mountain Club's 18-hole, par 70 golf course challenges skills at every level while offering beautiful views of the surrounding forest and

Cascade Mountains. Be sure to work up an appetite, as the Wildflour Restaurant offers a delicious menu of craft cocktails and chef-driven food, with a focus on handmade pasta.

In East Wenatchee, you can find breathtaking views of the Columbia River from the Highlander Golf Course. The 18-hole course features three canyon-carry holes carved into the sheer cliffside above the river, a challenging water feature and more.

In Chelan, Bear Mountain Ranch takes pride in maintaining an immaculate 350-acre championship level golf course, offering challenge at every skill level. Set among rolling terrain and natural plateaus, the course offers panoramic views of Lake Chelan.

"The views are unparalleled. You get a birdseye view of the Lake Chelan Valley for most of the front nine. Things always look



Feature

better from on top of the mountain! The best view would come from the tee box of our signature hole, the par 3 seventh,” said Head Golf Professional Chase Snodgrass.

Snodgrass offers some advice: play from one shorter set of tees than you think you need to, and always hit one extra club than you think you need to going uphill.

“This is one of the toughest golf courses in central Washington—but it makes for even more satisfaction upon completion,” said Snodgrass.

If you like Bear Mountain Ranch, consider taking a trip to one of its sister courses: Desert Canyon Golf Resort in Orondo, Rock Island Golf Course in East Wenatchee, or Alta Lake Golf Resort in Pateros.

5. Pick fresh fruit at a local orchard

The bounty of fresh fruit is arguably one of the best parts of summer. There’s nothing like tasting the warmth of the season in a juicy peach or the explosion of sweetness from a handful of berries, especially when you’ve picked them yourself.

There’s something oddly satisfying about picking fruit, whether it’s the excitement of finding a hidden bunch behind the branches or the reward of filling up a bucket. Maybe, it just brings us back to the child-like joy and wonder of summer.

Lucky for us, North Central Washington is famous for its agriculture, thanks to the basin’s dry summers, fertile soil and cool nights.

Stutzman Ranch has deep roots in Wenatchee Valley, starting as a homestead in 1907. Today, the fourth-generation farm grows a variety of delicious tree fruit for visitors to pick or buy at the fruit stand. This time of year is often ideal for peaches, but it’s best to visit Stutzman Ranch’s website for hours, harvest windows and details.

Here’s a tip: consider grilling your peaches for an extra sweet treat. Sprinkle them with a little sugar and cinnamon — or balsamic vinegar reduction — then serve with a dollop of vanilla ice cream.

While many may know Annie’s Fun Farm for its pumpkin patch, the East Wenatchee farm has plenty of u-pick opportunities throughout the harvest season. U-pick blueberries start in July, as well as the farm’s u-pick veggie garden. Through late summer, you can find



Robert Knowlton sells produce and starts from Mystic Acres farm in Rock Island at a farmers market. **Photo By Mark Stahl/Courtesy Of Cascade Community Markets**

vegetables, melons and one of the best flavors of summer: sweet corn.

6. Wander a farmers market

The farmers market is synonymous with summer, and for good reason. It brings together some of the best parts of the season: delicious produce, fresh flowers, live music and the joy of a sunny morning stroll. Plus, it feels good to splurge on that fresh bouquet, French pastry or artisanal cheese knowing that the purchase is supporting local business.

In the upper Wenatchee Valley, you can find Cascade Community Markets every Saturday in the heart of Leavenworth. On second and fourth Saturdays of the month, treat yourself to an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast served by the Leavenworth Lions Club. For a more low-key experience, Cascade Community Markets is at the Cashmere Museum on Wednesday nights.

The Wenatchee Valley Farmers Market



Taste the magic of summer by picking your own fruit at a u-pick farm or orchard this summer. **Photo by Shane Wilder / Icicle TV**

runs every Saturday in front of Pybus Public Market. Consider riding your bike to the market, which sits along the Apple Capital Loop trail. Sustainable Bike CoOp provides secure and staffed bicycle parking for market shoppers, and is even offering bike safety inspections and recommendations at no cost.

Grab a bite to eat, enjoy some entertainment and shop local at the Chelan Farmers Market every Thursday evening at River Walk Park. Look for Laurel’s Crown Cheese, which is made with grass-fed milk from Jersey Cows in the Knapps-Coulee Valley. Catch the Manson Farmers Market Wednesday and Saturday mornings in the Manson Grange Parking Lot.

7. Get a bird’s eye view

North Central Washington is nature’s playground when it comes to adventure sports. With world-class climbing, kayaking, mountain biking and stunning backdrops, there’s no wonder it’s a destination for adrenaline seekers.

For those who love the thrill, why not add a new activity to the list? And while you’re at it, gain a new perspective — from thousands of feet in the air. With Skydive Chelan, you can view Lake Chelan and the surrounding area from 7,500-13,000 feet in the air. According to the website, a typical tandem skydive involves a 20-minute scenic plane ride, 30 to 60 seconds of freefall, and a 5-7 minute parachute ride back to Earth.

If complete freefall isn’t your thing, Chelan Airports — brought to you by the same owners — offers tandem paraglide trips. Soar over the region with views of Lake Chelan, the Columbia River, and the snow-capped Cascade Mountains.

“There’s something truly unique about seeing Lake Chelan from the air. The

contrast between the crystal-clear lake, the surrounding mountains, orchards, and vineyards is breathtaking,” said Sonya Kadrevis of Skydive Chelan. “Even people who have lived here for years tell us they see the valley in a completely new way after a skydive. It’s a perspective that very few people experience, and it’s one they never forget.”

For the ultimate Chelan experience, opt for the winery tandem with either skydiving or paragliding. Your flight will land among the vineyards, where you can enjoy a nice glass of wine to celebrate.

If once isn’t enough, the sister companies offer training and instruction for skydiving, paragliding, speedflying and paramotoring.

8. Get outside at Stevens Pass

The summer season is the perfect time to get to know another side of Stevens Pass, which is best known for its wintertime terrain. Centrally located between several Wilderness areas and two National Forests, trails around Stevens Pass offer stunning alpine views.

“Summer at Stevens Pass offers a whole different way to experience the Cascades, with hiking, disc golf, lift-access biking, and mountain views all in one place. Whether guests are visiting for the day or settling into the RV lot as a weekend basecamp, it’s a place to slow down, explore, and make the most of summer in the mountains,” said Communications Manager Miranda Faulkner.

From Stevens Pass, hikers can access a segment of the famous Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), which spans 2,650 miles in total from Mexico to Canada. A 2 mile hike south will take hikers to the Cascade Crest and breathtaking vistas of the Chiwaukum Mountains and the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Stevens Pass is also a popular resupply spot for long-term PCT hikers, many of whom have walked from Mexico.

Those looking for a more leisurely activity can take a scenic chairlift ride up and walk down the 2.5 mile Cowboy Mountain Nature Trail. The trail winds through mountain meadows, talus slopes and alpine forests. The trail intersects with the Pacific Crest Trail, so hikers can follow this trail up for a bit more exercise, or head directly to the base area. The trails are known for revealing alpine

wildflowers, marmots, pika, ravens, mountain hemlock and Alaska yellow cedar.

The mountain also offers other summer activities, such as a trail network of downhill mountain biking and an 18-hole disc golf course. Visitors can take their time by staying a few nights in the RV lot. After your outing, cool-off with an ice cream from the T-Bar. If you buy a scenic chairlift ride, the ice cream is free.

9. Take a walking tour of Leavenworth

It’s no doubt that Leavenworth is a destination for the senses, from incredible views and charming storefronts, to traditional musical performances, beer gardens and bratwurst. But there’s more beyond the surface.

Bavarian Walking Tours invites visitors and locals alike to get to know Leavenworth



Paddleboarding offers the perfect balance of fun and challenge. For a tranquil nature experience, plan your outing for the early morning hours.

Photo by Shane Wilder / Icicle TV

through the eyes of its guides: a town with a vibrant community and rich history. Along a scenic walk, guides share the story of Leavenworth from the first people of the area to the Great Northern Railroad, the logging industry, and the eventual transition to an Alpine Village, sharing fun facts about the town along the way.

Sign up for the Sip & Stroll to pair your historical walking tour with a wine tasting, or opt for beer with the brewery tour. For cuisine, enjoy a three-course Bavarian lunch with the Bite of Bavaria tour.

“At the heart of every tour is the unique and entertaining history of the area. Our guests not only get to learn about the area, but they get to sample some of the best wine, beer, and food in the world while doing so. Not to mention, our guides are very well connected in the area and every tour is a VIP experience for our guests,” said expert guide and co-owner Tom Potter.

Save some time after your tour to visit the Greater Leavenworth Museum — tours come with a complimentary 7-day pass. Want to see more? Potter suggests adding a tour with Bavarian E-Bike Tours. The E-Bike tour takes visitors beyond Front Street for a 16-mile journey through some of the best views in the valley.

10. See a sky full of stars in the Methow

For thousands of years, the night sky has been an endless source of wonder and inspiration for human imagination. Yet, artificial light has made it increasingly difficult to see the stars in all of their unobstructed beauty, making locations with truly dark skies a rare delight.

The Methow Valley is known for having some of the darkest skies in the country, making it an unmatched destination for

stargazing. The Methow Dark Sky Coalition recommends several viewing options throughout the area, including Harts Pass/ Slate Peak, Mazama Meadows and Sweet Grass Butte. The coalition recommends Pearygin Lake State Park as an accessible viewing point near town, with options to camp. Check in with park staff before you plan your trip — rangers often hold Saturday night interpretive star tours, staffing and weather permitting, starting in late July.

Highway 20 has several safe pullouts for stargazing, but passing traffic may interfere with your observation. A short walk to the Washington Pass Overlook can provide some peace as well as views of the Milky Way above Liberty Bell and the Silver Star mountains.

Before you go, check out the coalition’s website for more information about stargazing conditions, viewing locations and light pollution: methowdarksky.org. ■

Feature

Backyards Reimagined

Photos Courtesy of Boyer Mountain Pool

A poolside basketball hoop adds a recreational element to this family-focused outdoor living space.

Creating the Ultimate Outdoor Escape

Summer in North Central Washington is meant to be lived outdoors. Long sunny days, warm evenings and sweeping views of lakes, vineyards and mountains naturally draw people outside, making the backyard an extension of the home rather than simply a patch of grass.

That shift in thinking has fueled growing interest in outdoor living spaces that blend recreation, relaxation and entertaining into one cohesive design. Swimming pools, outdoor kitchens, fire features, patios and thoughtfully designed landscapes are no longer considered standalone amenities. Instead, they're being planned together to create destinations where families and friends want to spend time.

For Dale McElroy, owner of Boyer Mountain Pool, that transformation has been at the heart of the family-owned company's work for more than three decades.

Boyer Mountain Pool has built pools and transformed backyards throughout Washington, Eastern Oregon and Northern Idaho for more than 30 years, installing more than 1,500 pools across the Northwest.

Thoughtful landscaping and generous gathering spaces transform this backyard into an inviting destination for family and friends. ▶

Today, the company specializes in fiberglass swimming pools, automatic safety covers and complete backyard renovations designed around the way homeowners live.

Designing for the way people live

While swimming pools remain the focal point of many projects, McElroy says today's homeowners are thinking much bigger than simply adding a place to swim.

"The demand has grown tremendously," McElroy said. "People are spending more time at home and realizing they can create a vacation right in their own backyard. Instead of traveling every weekend, they're investing



By Quinn Propst
Ward Media Staff Reporter

in pools, patios, outdoor kitchens, fire features, landscaping, and other amenities they can enjoy every day."

That evolution reflects a broader lifestyle shift. Rather than viewing the backyard as separate from the home, homeowners increasingly want outdoor spaces that function much like an additional family room — a place where children play,

adults unwind and guests gather throughout the year. As a result, McElroy says clients are asking for comprehensive designs instead of individual features.

"They're looking for a complete outdoor living space," he said. "They want a place where kids can play, adults can relax, and everyone can gather."



Among the most requested features are tanning ledges, spas, expansive patios, automatic safety covers and large entertainment areas that accommodate everything from family dinners to neighborhood gatherings.

Bringing every element together

The most successful outdoor spaces don't happen by accident. They begin with a master plan that considers how every element works together.

"It starts with thoughtful design," McElroy said. "The pool should flow naturally with the patio, landscaping, seating areas, and outdoor features. When everything works together, it feels like an extension of the home instead of something that was added later."

That philosophy is shaping many of today's backyard trends.

Clean, contemporary designs continue to dominate, with homeowners gravitating toward natural colors, stone coping and larger gathering spaces. Integrated lighting allows outdoor living to continue well after sunset, while energy-efficient heating and cooling systems help extend the swimming season. Automatic safety covers not only improve safety but also simplify maintenance and reduce operating costs.

Beyond the pool itself, outdoor kitchens, pergolas, fire pits, retaining walls, landscape lighting, putting greens, splash areas for children and smart automation systems are becoming increasingly common.

Together, those features transform a backyard into a multi-functional environment where cooking, dining, recreation and relaxation all happen within the same space.

No two families are alike

Although design trends influence many projects, McElroy says no two backyards

should look exactly the same because no two families use them in the same way.

"We spend a lot of time asking questions because every family uses their backyard differently," he said. "Some entertain large groups, some have young children, and others simply want a quiet place to relax. We design around how they'll actually use the space instead of offering the same solution to everyone."

That personalized approach often begins long before construction starts.

Contractors evaluate how homeowners plan to use the space, the property's natural features, existing landscaping, sun exposure, access, drainage and long-term maintenance needs. By addressing those factors early, the finished project becomes more functional and avoids expensive changes later.

Planning the entire backyard from the outset also allows each feature to complement the others rather than competing for space.

Today, McElroy says the pool typically serves as one element within a larger vision.

"It's often paired with outdoor kitchens, covered patios, fire features, custom concrete, landscaping, and comfortable seating areas," he said. "The goal is to create a destination where family and friends naturally want to spend time together."

Meeting the challenges of the landscape

North Central Washington offers spectacular scenery, but designing outdoor living spaces often means working with complex terrain.

Some of Boyer Mountain Pool's most

Thoughtful design transforms this backyard into an extension of the home, blending the pool with gathering spaces and natural landscaping.



A custom pool extends the home's living space outdoors, creating a place for entertaining, recreation and everyday enjoyment.



An integrated spa allows homeowners to transition easily between warm and cool water while keeping the entire pool area connected.






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Feature

memorable projects have required extensive engineering before construction could even begin.

One recent project involved a steep hillside overlooking the water.

"It required extensive engineering, retaining walls, and significant site preparation before we could even install the pool," McElroy said.

The work was demanding, but the result completely transformed the property.

"In the end, the homeowners gained a beautiful outdoor living space that completely changed how they use their property," he said. "Those challenging projects are some of the most rewarding because of the transformation they create."

Such projects highlight the importance of choosing experienced contractors who understand more than simply pool installation.

Excavation, drainage, soil conditions, permits and long-term durability all play critical roles in the success of a project, particularly on difficult sites.

According to McElroy, one of the biggest mistakes homeowners make is focusing only on the pool while postponing decisions about everything else.

Another common oversight is underestimating the importance of drainage, site access and overall planning.

"A well-designed project considers the entire property from the start," he said.

Built for the Northwest

Climate also influences nearly every design decision.

Unlike warmer regions with year-round swimming weather, Central Washington

experiences four distinct seasons, including freezing winter temperatures that can place significant stress on outdoor structures.

"Living in Central Washington means we experience all four seasons, so durability is extremely important," McElroy said.

That's one reason Boyer Mountain Pool specializes in fiberglass pools, which he says perform especially well through repeated freeze-and-thaw cycles.

The company also recommends efficient heat pumps, automatic safety covers, proper drainage systems and concrete finishes selected specifically for the region's climate.

Increasingly, homeowners are also looking for environmentally friendly and energy-efficient options.

"Variable-speed pumps, LED lighting, efficient heat pumps, saltwater systems, and automatic safety covers all help reduce operating costs while making pools easier to own and maintain," he said.

Those technologies not only lower energy use but also reduce maintenance, making pool ownership more practical for busy families.

Creating places that bring people together

Looking ahead, McElroy expects outdoor living spaces to become even more integrated with daily life.

Technology, automation and longer swimming seasons will continue to shape future designs, but he believes the biggest trend isn't about equipment or materials.

It's about how families choose to spend their time.

"I think we'll continue seeing backyards become true extensions of the home," he



A custom swimming pool, spacious patio and lounge chairs create a private backyard retreat designed for relaxation.

said. "More integrated technology, smarter automation, longer swimming seasons, and complete outdoor living environments will become the norm. Families are placing a higher value on spending time together at home, and I don't see that changing anytime soon."

For McElroy, the most meaningful projects aren't necessarily the largest or most elaborate. They're the ones where homeowners later describe their backyard as the place everyone naturally gathers.

"We've been fortunate to work on many incredible projects throughout North Central Washington, Eastern Oregon, and Northern Idaho—from waterfront homes and challenging hillside installations to simple backyard transformations," he said. "The best stories are always the ones where homeowners tell us their backyard has become the place where everyone gathers. Those are the projects we're most proud of because it's about more than building a pool—it's about creating a place where memories are made."

After more than 30 years in business, that philosophy continues to guide every project.

"At Boyer Mountain Pool, we don't just build swimming pools—we build places where families come together," McElroy said. "We build every project the way we'd build it at our own home. That's what's driven our business for more than 30 years, and it's still what motivates us every single day." ■

Extensive engineering and site preparation transformed this challenging hillside property into a functional outdoor living space.





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Cream and salmon wall colors and plentiful windows and make the most of the sunlight in this open kitchen, and with bench seating and a long table the couple can seat twelve for a scenic dinner.

All photos are by Mike Irwin



A Tale of Two Houses

By Susan Lagsdin
Good Life Contributor

It's tough to talk about Mike and Tracy Devany's new house up the Twisp River Road without indulging in metaphors like "forged in fire" or "a Phoenix rising from the ashes."

Their story is more than thoughtful design plus hard work. It's a "two story" house steeped in local lore, family ties and a quirky assortment of good and bad luck.

The beginning: House #1. For the first six years after their wedding, Bill and Diana Hottell had wandered the world camping and exploring, and in 1972 they chose the Methow Valley to start their first real home. With a

local realtor—one of three, then—they looked at a simple, sturdy farmhouse, built right after the disastrous flood of 1949.

Ironically, the house in question was re-sited much closer to the river than its predecessor, which had burned down. But it was charming and affordable. "When we were halfway across the bridge, I knew it was perfect," said Diana recently. "We took one more night camping in our van to think about it, and the next day we made an offer."

And for decades, it was indeed a perfect home and a magnet for visiting friends. Of the 80 acres, about a third was flat, the rest timbered hillside. Neighbors grazed their cattle in the flood-irrigated pastures while the Hottells gardened and raised fowl and



Tracy and Mike Devany, geared up for a busy Saturday morning, have adroitly adjusted their careers, travel and family life to create their new best place near Twisp. Hyper, the dog, mostly likes fetching sticks.

The Devaney's house is seen here just about move-in ready. It's centered between irrigated pastures; the Twisp river flows at the far right and the trees to the left lead up a steep hillside.



Hyper gives a tour of the breezeway, one of the home's most striking features. From protected and warm, to wide open and windy, it's a walkway to the bedrooms and the entrance to two big porches.

sometimes sheep or pigs. They modernized the house sensibly and rarely.

The Big Transition: Tracy Devaney was Bill's mother Alice's cousin. On a lark, she paid a visit to those distant Twisp relatives with her husband Mike and three young sons. There was instant and continuing rapport, and the family often drove over from Seattle for short vacations with the Hottells and fell in love with the valley.

The Devanys remember the moment Diana said, "We're probably going to move into town someday. Why don't you think about buying this place?" They did, in 2010. The Hottells were delighted with their move into Twisp proper, and, after years of their own work-related travels, Mike and Tracy were thrilled to own a farm.

Mike wasn't yet retired as a Vice Admiral in NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Tracy worked as a primary care nurse in public health (and still does, while pursuing a geriatrics degree). But with tenants' help they actively kept up the

farmhouse and the land, even starting a small retail beef operation, Lightning River Ranch, while they dreamed of eventual full-time life there.

FIRE! In 2020, early in the pandemic, fire swerved the whole venture. It was accidental—a rototiller spark ignited trees at the river—and it was eventually quelled by local firefighters. But, buried cinders in the yard soon burst into flames and the unoccupied farmhouse burned to the ground.

[A significant side note is that the fire truck rushing to the first emergency broke through the single bridge to the property. That mishap prohibited any vehicles from crossing it immediately – and for an extremely inconvenient three more years.]

The Finale: House #2. The Devanys had mused about whether, and when, to take up residence in the old place or to start fresh close by on a higher piece of land. The fire made their decision for them. A full six years after flames took their sweet old farmhouse, they've built a sweet new one that fulfills



The master bathroom's south and west windows face green pastures and the peaks of North Cascades, a view which might lead to lolling about in the deep tub and the separate walk-in shower.



their dream of simplicity, sustainability and comfort.

Local talent built this house. The wait was so long that the initial architect Howard Cherrington retired, and the firm Serious Fun drew the designs. Over the course of three years, veteran Methow Valley craftsmen ably handled bridge replacement, excavating, and construction both inside and out, with Kris Erickson as the main contractor.

The hard jobs weren't all farmed out. With retirement's relative leisure time and his accumulated building skills, Mike has labored mostly solo for months laying flooring, installing electrical fixtures, building benches and making all the interior window trim. Most weeks Tracy commutes from her work in Seattle to help, and on the sunny east side of the house she's planted and tends an extensive vegetable garden and smaller orchard.

Tracy cautions that building a home "is way more expensive than you think it will be, and it takes longer when you do some of the work

Feature

yourself,” and the couple had to make small compromises to keep their sustainability goals intact. But she’s anticipating soon watching the cattle graze and the garden grow, from the comfort of the kitchen’s custom-made bench, with sunlight in the window, mug of tea in hand.

The Devanys are proud to be good stewards of this property. “Our goal was always to be a part of nature out here,” said Mike, who serves on the board of directors of Methow Conservancy. “And we want to make the smallest impact possible.” To that end they’ve collaborated with other non-government environmental groups to protect salmon and beaver habitat. Cattle are fenced off from the river, a water-saving irrigation system keeps pastures green, and they’ve placed the land, minus a four-acre footprint for the house, in a conservation easement.

The wood-framed structure itself is a masterpiece of responsible homebuilding. All the siding and roofing is metal, a logical fire-wise choice. Solar panels mean energy independence, and rockwool insulation, heat

pumps, triple paned windows and west facing shades moderate the interior temperature.

The most striking physical feature of the house is its full, glassed-in breezeway, abutted by matching porches, one open, one covered. With west and east views of mountains, pastures and woods, it not-so-subtly separates public (living, dining, kitchen areas) from private (the owners’ suite plus two bonus rooms and bath). Heated tile flooring, doors that open to full width and a fireplace create a functional four-season living space .

So, whether the house came from flame or arose from the ashes, “It seems like it’s been a long time coming,” said Tracy. “If not for the fire, we could have been in the original farmhouse six years ago, and things would be different; we may have remodeled that place or not. We were excited then and really excited now.”

She added, “I think it is gorgeous. I can’t wait to move in!” ■

[This story was written in late April 2026 in anticipation of a happy homecoming.]



Mike set up a small shop area inside and spent weeks not only making benches and laying floorboards but crafting the interior trim for his home’s triple-paned windows (and yes, he knows how many there are).

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“Hello. Are Those Roses?” Let The Connections Begin



Recently three of us lunched at Pybus Market in Wenatchee. One of my friends had brought flowers to share.

As we were finishing up, a couple walking by paused to admire them. The man asked a simple question.

“Are those roses?”

My friend smiled. “No, they’re peonies.”

Then she added that her husband’s parents had once grown a large field of peonies and that keeping these flowers around felt like carrying on a family legacy.

Soon we were introducing ourselves. Familiar places surfaced. Shared interests emerged. Stories followed. Before long, these strangers had become warmly familiar human beings with histories, passions, and surprising points of connection.

Driving home, I kept thinking about how easily that moment might never have happened.

They could have admired the flowers silently and kept walking. We could have smiled politely and returned to our lunch. Everyone could have remained in their tidy little social lanes. Instead, one simple question created an entirely different human experience.

Nicholas Epley, a behavioral scientist at the University of Chicago, would not be surprised.

In his recent book *Talk: The Science of Conversation and the Art of Being Ourselves*, Epley argues that many of us are living with a subtle but costly misunderstanding about other people. We think they want to be left alone. We think conversation with

strangers will be awkward. We think keeping to ourselves is the safer, more comfortable choice.

We are often wrong. Epley has the research to prove it. That finding is both charming and a little sad. Because it suggests many of us are walking around unnecessarily deprived of small moments of human joy.

Epley’s larger point is that modern humans have become under-socialized. Not anti-social. Not incapable of connection. Simply under-socialized. We have built lives of extraordinary convenience and curious isolation. We scroll while waiting. We avoid eye contact in airports. We stand in checkout lines inches from one

another while mentally inhabiting entirely different worlds. Phones have become emotional shields.

Human beings are relational creatures. Connection is not decoration. It is essential nourishment.

Epley’s particular contribution is showing how much connection may be available in ordinary life if we stop assuming the worst. Of course, not every stranger wants to chat. Not every grocery line should become a support group. Some people genuinely want quiet, and bless them.

But Epley’s research suggests we have tilted far too heavily toward social caution.

This reminds me of being in New York City years ago. John, my husband, started talking to those people on the subway with their heads down.

I was horrified. You can’t do that in NYC!

Well, I was wrong. Turned out that both the crusty and upper crust seemed to thoroughly

enjoy the friendly lunatic from Washington state. Everyone around us was talking and laughing by the time we came to our stop.

And there is another quiet benefit other than all this joviality.

When people become human to us, even briefly, they become harder to dismiss, stereotype, or fear. Those blue-collar-crusties become Sam and Jane. Those white-collar-upper crusties become Sarah and Jim. They became people with names, histories, interests, and stories worth hearing.

That is good for communities. Good for our country as we think about celebrating an upcoming Fourth of July. But even more immediately, it is good for our own hearts.

A hello. A shared laugh. A spontaneous conversation. A small reminder that the world contains friendly people. That we belong among other humans.

Epley’s invitation is surprisingly simple. Look up. Look around. Comment on the flowers or the hat or the weather. Risk thirty seconds of possible awkwardness. And even better, open up a bit more like my friend did about the legacy of the peonies. That will take you to a whole new level of connection.

And, by the way, according to Epley this effort toward more socializing turns out to be just as enriching and enlivening for those who consider themselves introverts. ■

How might we move up to the Good Life during these summer months by taking advantage of our little ordinary opportunities to start a conversation and become healthier, happier, and more connected?



By June Darling
journeytothegoodlife.net

Feature



Photos by Ken Reid

Gazing down from the middle of the bridge (where it swings the most!) this is what you see. The Bowl & Pitcher rock formations are on the left and the overlook viewpoint is on top of the second rock on the right.

We never tire of hiking this trail whenever we are at Riverside Park. Linda is in the lead, Mary and Dave are in the middle, and Jim is at the end. Ken is behind the camera lens, as usual.

Spokane's Remarkable *Riverside Park*

By **Linda Reid**
Good Life Contributor

We made our first acquaintance with Riverside State Park, just six miles northwest of Spokane, on our way from Priest Lake (in Idaho) back to our home in Wenatchee. Since we are addicted to picnics when we travel with our pop-up trailer, we planned to stop somewhere around Spokane and take a lunch break. Before I could even look up potential parks on the GPS, we saw a sign on Highway 2/Division Street, that pointed us to Riverside State Park. I am embarrassed to admit we didn't know there was a State Park in Spokane! We followed the signs and quickly arrived at the area of the park called "Bowl & Pitcher." We found a campground and a large day-use area. We parked, put our Discover Pass on the rear-view mirror, and set up at a picnic table overlooking the Spokane River with an amazing suspension bridge to cross as soon as we finished our lunch.

That was the beginning of our relationship with this love-at-first-sight campground. After crossing the bridge, back and forth, we hiked up to the Bowl & Pitcher overlook for a panoramic view of the bridge, the rounded masses of basalt in and around the river, and

the dramatic steep cliffs. It is a breathtaking sight. Before we left, we drove through the campground. Following a road down to the river we discovered 16 stunning campsites right at the river's edge. They are tucked away in a forest of Ponderosa pines, flanked by a tranquil part of the Spokane River. We have been camping there almost every year since our first visit. We always make reservations for a campsite on the river, and we have convinced two other couples we camp with to join us. We all love going in the fall when the colors add another dimension to the scenic beauty. The sites are spacious enough for us to have some very competitive corn-hole tournaments, and both Dave and Jim have been seen heading down to the river with their fishing poles.

The title of this story uses "remarkable" as an adjective because that word literally means "worthy of being noticed," which this place most certainly is. To prove my point, here are a few statistics. Riverside State Park covers over 9,000 acres of land with 200,000 feet of shoreline along the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers. This is the second largest land area of all the Washington State Parks. It was surprising to learn that the average elevation is over 1,800 feet. The Park was established in 1934 and many of the structures, including



Gathering around the propane firepit (since burn bans do not allow wood campfires) we relax and share highlights of the day. All six of us anticipate our evenings outside together. We make our campsite reservations in January to be sure we reserve three river view sites near each other. (Please note caps and jackets are mandatory for early October nights, as seen in the individual couple photos.)





Sitting in our campsite's "front yard," I often have a book on my lap, but the view and sense of place I experience usually wins my attention.

the iconic suspension bridge, were built by the Civilian Conservation Corp.

Distinctive features of the Park include the large basalt rock formation that resembles a "Bowl & Pitcher," created by basalt flows shaped by Ice Age floods and erosion. Other attributes include Ponderosa pine forests, meadows and fields, wetlands, viewpoints, and 32 trails. One of those trails is the Centennial

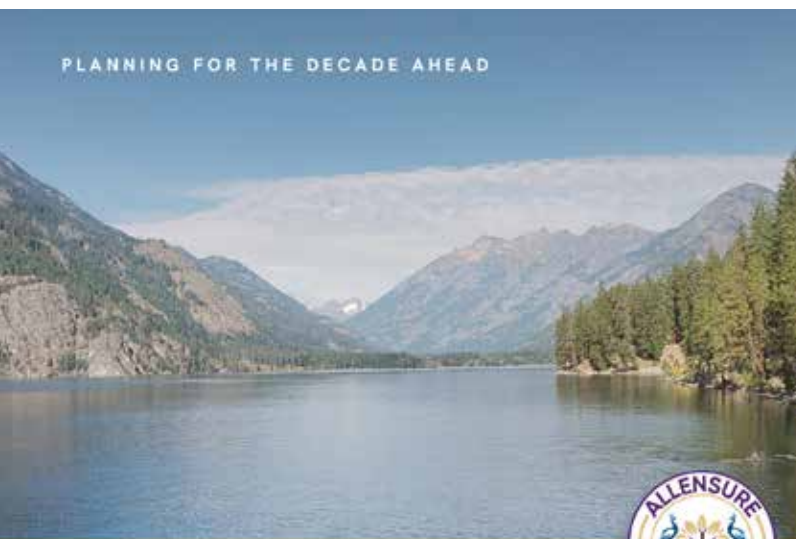


The basalt cliffs, photographed from the far side of the river, allow you to see how precarious the viewpoint looks. Don't worry... there is a rock wall around it. (It is on the flat-topped rock at the far left.)

Trail which starts in the Park and continues through Spokane all the way to the Idaho border (almost 40 miles in length). It is a paved multi-use trail for walking, running, cycling, and horseback riding. The mix of urban and natural scenery, with many access points, draws about 2.5 million people to use it over the course of a year. Speaking of numbers, in 2024 Riverside State Park hosted over a million visitors!

What did all these visitors find to do there? Here is a to-do list for when you visit the Park: hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, running, boating, fishing, bird watching, wildlife viewing, photography, and camping. If you aren't a camper, you may prefer to reserve one of two rustic cabins for rent right above the riverside sites in the campground. One more picturesque pointer involves a moderate hike. We do this walk every time we are in the park. From the main parking lot, walk across the swinging bridge and take the 2.1-mile loop trail. The walk through the forest is lovely, and you can enjoy views of the river from a new perspective.

If you have not been to Spokane's Riverside Park, we hope to inspire you to visit in person. It is a treasure for Spokane and within easy reach for those of us living in NCW. Ken's pictures are the most interesting and inspiring part of our story, so I will wrap up the narrative and encourage you to linger over the images he has captured from behind his camera lens. ■



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