

Unique to the Region

Toe Tappin' at Rockin' B

Melodrama, music, more laughs than should be legal and a chuck wagon barbeque make Rockin' B Ranch a memorable evening. Some claim it's the best cowboy supper show in the Northwest and it's definitely the only one in Eastern Washington. "How the West Was Sung" features Western hits from movies of the last 70 years and a shootout aimed right for the funny bone. Recently added, a 10-minute sketch of author Patrick McManus' comedies portrayed by actor Tim Behrens. The ranch is located in Liberty Lake, 20 minutes from downtown Spokane. www.rockinbranch.com

Up, up and Away

Internationally famous military aerial teams blaze across the sky, stunt pilots loop-de-loop and vintage aircraft sit on the tarmac at the Skyfest, the region's most impressive air show. Fairchild Air Force Base in Airway Heights (20 minutes from downtown Spokane) hosts the annual, free August event. Usually held every other year, next Skyfest is scheduled for 2012. www.fairchild.af.mil/news/skyfest2010

Thrill Rides, Wet Slides

Silverwood Theme Park, just 45 minutes northeast of Spokane in North Idaho, is the northwest's epicenter for spine-tingling roller coaster rides and adrenalin-rushing water park chutes. *Tremors* screams through four black-out tunnels at 60-miles an hour and *Timber Terror* is one of the West's few wooden coasters. Silverwood also offers plenty of sedate rides, shows and attractions plus Boulder Beach Waterpark with a wave pool, lazy river and high-speed water slides. Silverwood is an hour drive from downtown Spokane. www.silverwoodthemepark.com

Dam Fine Laser Light Show

The massive Grand Coulee Dam, a WPA project built in 1933, is a year-round destination where visitors learn how the largest concrete structure in the United States and third largest hydroelectric facility in the world supplies \$500 million worth of power to the western states and British Columbia. Come summer evenings, the dam itself becomes an enormous screen where colorful lasers move across the span accompanied by narrative, music and a patriotic finish. Optional additions include a stop at Whitestone Winery in Wilbur. www.grandcouleedam.com and www.whitestonewinery.com

The Big Meltdown

Imagine a prehistoric landscape covered in snow with a towering ice dam holding back tons of water. When that dam burst 18,000 years ago, it unleashed a cataclysmic flood that swept from eastern Montana through Idaho, eastern Washington and Oregon, finally dumping its freezing cargo into the Pacific Ocean. Follow the Ice Age Floods Geologic Trail and prepare to be awed by the sweeping plains, serrated cliffs and bus-sized basalt boulders, a testament to the forces of nature. www.iafi.org

See and Touch Farm Museum

Forty minutes from Spokane, the North Spokane Farm Museum, lovingly called the Red Shed, houses an authentically recreated 1920s kitchen, a 1940s bedroom, the largest collection of antique Ironstone China in the Pacific Northwest and thousands of farm

implements and antique machinery. Tour and chat with the farm's owners whose family homesteaded this land in the 1890s. www.northspokanefarmmuseum.com

Where's the Water?

A geological ghost of what was once the largest waterfall in the world, Dry Falls is a prehistoric testament to the catastrophic Ice Age Floods that carved and shaped the topography of this region. Three-and-a-half miles of sheer cliffs drop 400 feet, dwarfing Niagara Fall's one-mile width and 165-foot drop. Located near Coulee City, 95 miles from Spokane. www.parks.wa.gov/parks

Aviation, Innovation and Medicine

Dr. Forrest Bird, MD, PhD, and his wife, Dr. Pamela Riddle Bird, PhD, opened the Bird Aviation Museum to showcase their keen interest in aviation, medicine and their work as inventors and advisors. In medical circles, Dr. Bird is known as the creator of the BABYbird respirator and Pamela with shepherding and advising hundreds of inventors. Dr. Bird has been collecting and restoring airplanes for decades and the museum houses his 1927 Waco GXE-10 biplane, a 1940 Stearman and more. A collection of World War II uniforms, a display about women in the military and cockpit simulators immerse visitors in a world of air travel. Located 80 miles north of Spokane near Sandpoint, the museum is nirvana for airplane enthusiasts. www.birdaviationmuseum.com

Smokey Bear and More

Thanks to Spokane residents Ray and Rita Kresek, early firefighting techniques and memorabilia are preserved at the Fire Lookout Museum, seven miles north of downtown Spokane. The museum is spread over an acre in a park-like setting that features 30 indigenous conifer trees, a small stream and pond. See replicas of lookout towers that date back to the 1930s furnished with vintage telephones, radios, fire finder equipment and lightening protection devices; a 1953 Chevrolet fire truck complete with working siren, lights, pump and radio; USFS heavy-duty chinaware; vintage locks, posters, badges and uniforms; smokejumper gear and logging equipment; and possibly the largest Smokey Bear collection in the world. <http://www.firelookout.org/ffmuseum.htm>

"Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead"

North Idaho's Farragut Naval Training Station was created as a result of one war and named for the hero of another. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the American military hastily erected training facilities across the U.S. and Farragut came on line in 1942. With training facilities for 5,000 personnel, a 2,000 bed hospital, housing for 300 Navy families, five dormitories, officer's quarters, an auditorium, recreational building and two chapels, Farragut Naval Training Station became Idaho's largest town with a population of 30,000. Named for Union Admiral David G. Farragut, whose often quoted torpedo command was heard during the 1864 Civil War Battle of Mobile Bay, the base was decommissioned in 1946. Today a small museum dedicated to the naval station is housed at 4,000-acre Farragut State Park on the southern tip of Lake Pend Oreille, 55 miles north of Spokane. www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks

River Cruise and Garnet Hunting

Board a cruise boat at Heyburn State Park at the southern end of Lake Coeur d'Alene, and cruise up the St. Joe River. Listen to a lively history presentation and watch for herons,

eagles, osprey, river otter and deer. Lunch is a Native American-style barbecue cooked on the boat. First stop, Emerald Creek, one of two places in the world where you can find star garnets (India is the other). An excavation pit holds gravel mixed with deep red garnets, just sift through the mix and find your own treasures.

<http://www.stateparks.com/heyburn.html>

Saving the Family Farm

On a sweeping prairie in Eastern Washington, Karl Kupers and Fred Fleming, descendants of the region's first farmers, had a serious chat. Both men loved the land, wanted to sell their wheat at fair prices and knew there was a way to work their land so it would continue to be productive for decades. They took a relatively innovative step and adapted a sustainable agriculture model, a concept that puts environmental stewardship at the forefront by reducing erosion, eliminating some pesticides and establishing transparent pricing while maintaining economic profitability. The idea caught on and today 33 Eastern Washington growers farm wheat for Shepherd's Grain and the cooperative's artisan flour is sold area bakeries and restaurants. Tour a farm, learn more about this practice and sample a Shepherd's Grain treat. www.shephardsgrain.com

Birds Galore

Approximately 365 bird species call Washington home and the Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway features over half. Sandhill Cranes sweep in along the Pacific Flyway in spring and fall, Black-crowned Night-Herons and Great Egrets spend the summer, and Bald Eagles and numerous waterfowl winter over in this vast area that stretches from the Grand Coulee Dam area in the north to Othello in the south. Be sure to get The Great Washington State Birding Trail – Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway map which highlights species to watch for as you drive through the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, the Desert, Potholes and Banks Lake Wildlife Areas and the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area. www.wa.audubon.org

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