

Fall Bucket List: 10 Things to Do in the Pacific Northwest

So many reasons to love this region (and this season)



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Summer in the Pacific Northwest might possess a magical glow so potent we never want to let it go. But thankfully, autumn comes with perks aplenty as well.

We've rounded up some must-dos for your fall bucket list as we transition from one sensational season to the next.

1. Celebrate a good harvest in Hood Canal



CiderHood shows off local flavors and the bounty of the season — Photo courtesy of Alderbrook Resort & Spa

All year, kitchen staff at [Alderbrook Resort & Spa](#) (located in beautiful Hood Canal) take advantage of local findings, allowing visitors to experience firsthand the art of foraging. Think oysters, nettles, truffles and other delicious goodies.

In upcoming months, however, cider is the name of the game. On October 28 and 29, CiderHood honors the harvest season with a chef's dinner and celebratory lawn tasting that pairs locally crafted hard ciders with regionally foraged, farmed and harvested treats.

Guests enjoy goods from 15 Washington and Oregon cideries as well as samples of mushrooms, honey, breads and cheeses.

2. Pay a visit to San Juan + Victoria



Cruise in style to destinations like San Juan and Victoria — Photo courtesy of Clipper Vacations

There's great news for wildlife lovers; [Clipper Vacations'](#) whale watching adventures and sealife searches continue into early October, meaning there's still time to watch some of the Pacific Northwest's most beautiful residents glide across azure waters as hushed spectators look on in wide-mouthed awe.

Whether you choose to board the San Juan Clipper on a day trip or as an overnight in Friday Harbor (find convenient, retro-chic lodging at [Earthbox Inn](#)), this comfortable mode of transport proves the most efficient way to depart directly from downtown [Seattle](#) (and skip the ferry line in Anacortes).

Year-round, Clipper can also shuttle passengers to Victoria or provide the ultimate two-nation experience – an “Emerald City Loop” that follows a Seattle–San Juan Island–Victoria–Vancouver–Seattle route.

3. Adventure on Vancouver Island



The Queen of the Peak Women's Surf Competition comes to Tofino again this fall — Photo courtesy of Kyler Vos

Speaking of that lovely Canadian island, fall welcomes highlights from foraging adventures (hunt for wild mushrooms with the [Deerholme Farm](#) experts, for example) to the [Salt Spring Apple Festival](#) in a lovably quirky setting. From September 30 through October 2, head to Tofino to be wowed by women surfers who rule the [Queen of the Peak competition](#).

If staying in charming [Victoria](#) during your Vancouver Island visit, get in the Halloween spirit with packages like the Magnolia Hotel and Spa's "Room with a Boo" (throughout October), or stay in one of two holiday-decked rooms at the Inn at Laurel Point (between October 11 and 31).

4. Travel Olympia's byways by bicycle



Explore the Bountiful Byway near the Washington state capital — Photo courtesy of Courtesy Doug Walker Photography

The region surrounding Washington's state capital boasts a trove of locally-owned, family-run farms and businesses that can now be easily accessed on self-guided tours – by car or by bike – thanks to a brand-new map launched this summer.

Visitors can even bring their bikes aboard Amtrak trains to the Olympia-Lacey station and then hit the trails to navigate the farms, creameries, wineries, distilleries and lavender fields located along the 60-mile, scenic [Thurston Bountiful Byway](#).

Example itineraries include an exploration of the Lacey Libation District or a downtown tour of Three Magnets, The Spar – which brews a Spartesian Ale using artesian well water springing from its own basement – and Fish Brewing Company whose Fish Tale Ale was deemed the "World's Best Beer" in 2015.

5. It's not fall without Wenatchee



Delicious things await in Wenatchee and surrounding apple regions — Photo courtesy of Courtesy of Stemilt Growers LLC

Nestled between rolling foothills and the Cascades' majestic peaks, Wenatchee – the self-proclaimed “Apple Capital of the World” – ships and exports more apples than anywhere on the globe. If the timing's right, visitors pick their own goods at bustling [farms and orchards](#).

Otherwise, pop into [Stemilt's retail store](#) which stays stocked with delectable orchard-fresh fruit plus local products like Blue Star Coffee (from nearby Winthrop), honeys, jams and lotions. Be sure to explore the [Apple Capital Loop Trail](#) while in town, too.

6. Cozy up on Vashon



A quick ferry ride away from West Seattle, a lodge paradise awaits — Photo courtesy of Lodges on Vashon

Sure, [island adventures](#) abound in the Pacific Northwest, yet some seem to fly a bit under the radar. Take Vashon for example, an art-minded, subset-of-the-big-city community that's only a short ferry ride away from West Seattle (or Tacoma).

While summer activities here include paddleboard rentals from Fat Cat Paddleboarding and kayak rentals from Vashon Watersports, fall means hiking, biking, beach strolling, food foraging, bird watching, horseback riding and more.

For an overnight (or longer), check out the enchanting Scandinavian-inspired [Lodges on Vashon](#), where "modern style meets Mother Nature." On October 1, CiderFest brings two bands to the Lodges as well as cider makers pouring their alluring creations. Ticket proceeds support the Vashon Island Growers Association.

7. Explore wine country



The Festival of the Grape welcomes stomping revelers getting in the spirit — Photo courtesy of Oliver Osoyoos Wine Country, Hawksworth Communications

Cruise just beyond the border to the "Wine Capital of Canada" – Oliver, B.C. – where [The Festival of the Grape](#) returns on October 2.

The annual event draws some 3,500 attendees who gather to sip wine, groove to live music, peruse the wares of local artisans and compete in (or watch) the beloved Grape Stomp competition (just like it's done in the movies). While here in the heart of the Okanagan Valley appellation, get your tasting on at some of the [region's wineries](#).

If your flight connects through [Vancouver](#) with an overnight, consider staying at the [Opus Hotel](#) in Yaletown, a 20-minute door-to-door commute on the SkyTrain from the airport.

8. Feast on San Juan



Visitors feast all their senses in the San Juans this fall — Photo courtesy of Corinne Whiting

Some may peg the San Juans as strictly a summertime destination, but the 9th annual [Savor the San Juans](#) fest begs to differ. This "month-long medley of food, farms and films" allows guests to feast all their senses on the harvest explosion on Lopez, Orcas and San Juan islands from September 22 through November 12.

This year, more farmers than ever offer behind-the-barn-door glimpses of the thriving operations at some of the islands' most exquisite farms, creameries, wineries, flower gardens and shellfish farms.

Highlights range from the Orcas Island Film Festival (October 7-9) and Friday Harbor Film Festival (November 4-6) to celebratory harvest dinners and tantalizing deals on cozy places to stay.

9. Try out Tri-Cities



On the patio of J. Bookwalter, the Tri-Cities celebrates its finest varietals — Photo courtesy of Kim Fetrow

Autumn's a great time to head toward Eastern Washington, where the sun streams down on the [Tri-Cities](#) 300 days a year. Oenophiles delight in discovering 200 wineries within a 50-mile radius. Must-visit spaces include the dreamy patio of [J.Bookwalter](#) plus Barnard Griffin, which fetes its 40th harvest this fall.

The skies fill with vibrant hot air vessels during the Great Prosser Balloon Rally (September 23-25), and throughout the month of October, Pasco's [Country Mercantile](#) turns its neighboring field into an autumn-themed zone during its annual Harvest Festival.

The family-run emporium, known for its homemade tamales, sweet corn and cherries, chocolates and creative ice cream flavors like "asparagus," sets up a three-acre corn maze, petting zoo, hayrides, pumpkin patch, amusement park and stages for live performers.

10. Make music memories



Music lovers flock to the Crystal Ballroom's historic space — Photo courtesy of Kathleen Nyberg/ McMenamins

[Portland](#) boasts temptations galore – from its laid-back, quirky vibe to a highly impressive culinary and coffee circuit. But music magic has to be one of our favorite reasons to frequent this welcoming town, and cooler weather means shuttering outdoor stages and piling into friendly venues.

[Mississippi Studios](#), praised for its intimate vibe and killer acoustics, features a fall lineup that includes the Polyrhythmics (funk/jazz from Seattle, 9/17), Khruangbin (Thai funk/rock band, 9/23) and The Suffers (soul/rock/funk band, 11/11), to name a few.

Also, check out the schedule at [McMenamins Crystal Ballroom](#), where highlights range from Echo and the Bunnymen (9/25) and Dinosaur Jr (9/29) to Nahko and Medicine for the People (10/14), Ingrid Michaelson (10/21) and Rising Appalachia (11/11).

Since it's never too soon to look ahead to the return of summer, stay prepped for a can't-miss August festival just outside Portland city limits (Pickathon) that produces [awesome records](#) throughout the year.

Welcome, fall! We can't wait to bask in your golden goodness.