

PAUSE & PLAY

Washington state

Wine, wildlife and wilderness adventures await in the Puget Sound region, finds Ella Buchan

I'd winched myself 45 metres above ground before my legs gave up. Stiff and aching, I dangled in my harness and gazed at the tangle of branches above me, the last of the daylight glinting through the canopy of pea-green leaves.

"Nearly there," said my guide, Leo, whose company AdventureTerra runs tree-climbing tours. I had joined the sunset excursion, which involves scaling a 60m Douglas fir in Deception Pass State Park, at the tip of Whidbey Island in Washington state. Taking a deep breath, I heaved myself up to a broad branch with views over the water, just in time to see the sky swirl with soft shades of satsuma and lilac.

Such moments feel rare and precious, but they're remarkably easy to find in this part of the world. A visit

to Washington's Puget Sound region, in the Pacific Northwest, can be as challenging or as chilled-out as you like. Clients could start their day sipping coffee from the world's first Starbucks cafe in Seattle, and be sipping wine in Woodinville by afternoon. Or they could head to salt-sprayed islands, or the vast, forested Olympic National Park for outdoor adventures.

Direct flights from London to Seattle with Norwegian, Virgin Atlantic and British Airways make it easy to combine a city break with coastal exploration.

SEATTLE

The birthplace of Starbucks and Amazon combines cutting-edge culture with a laid-back, outdoorsy vibe. ➤

WHERE TO stay



SAVE

Captain Whidbey Inn, Coupeville

This Whidbey Island resort has rustic timbered cabins, with terraces jutting out over Penn Cove. The grounds, ringed by forest, are incredibly peaceful. Doubles from £150. captainwhidbey.com



SPEND

Kimpton Hotel Vintage, Seattle

Rooms in this downtown hotel are inspired by winery tasting rooms, blending neutral shades with plush furnishings in plum and emerald. Beds are backed by artworks made with recycled corks. Doubles from £175. hotelvintage-seattle.com



SPLURGE

Willows Lodge, Woodinville

It's a short walk from this cosy resort to Woodinville's tasting rooms – though guests may not want to leave. There's a tucked-away spa with outdoor hot tub, while rooms have marshmallow beds and views over pretty courtyards. Doubles from £215. willowslodge.com



FROM FAR LEFT: Pike Place Market; Fidelitas; Whidbey Island; AdventureTerra ropes course
PICTURES: Shutterstock; Tegra Stone Nuess

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- savorseattletours.com
- undergroundtour.com
- whidbeyislandkayaking.com
- deceptionpasstours.com
- adventureterra.com
- bonivanttours.com
- willowslodge.com
- whatsup.net
- adventuraplay.com
- southsoundadventures.com
- wolfhaven.org

BOOK IT

America As You Like It

has a 10-night fly-drive from £1,960 per person, including return flights with Virgin Atlantic from Heathrow to Seattle, three nights at the Motif Seattle, two nights at the Captain Whidbey Inn, three nights at Lake Crescent Lodge in Olympic National Park and two nights at Willows Lodge in Woodinville, plus fully inclusive car hire. Price based on two adults sharing in low season on a room-only basis. americasyoulikeit.com

Pause: Pike Place Market is home to the original Starbucks store (expect queues out the door) alongside traders selling cheese, chocolate and doughnuts, and fishmongers playing catch with wild Alaskan halibut, before wrapping them up for customers. Suggest clients explore the tastes and history of the waterfront landmark with Savor Seattle Food Tours, which offers a two-hour, guided grazing trip around the market for £35.

One of the city's prettiest and most chilled-out spots is Chihuly Garden and Glass, where artist Dale Chihuly's distinctively swirly sculptures vie with bold blooms for attention.

Play: Edgy Seattle has long had an underground scene – quite literally. The old downtown became a subterranean world when the city was rebuilt following the Great Fire of 1889, and its roads and surviving storefronts can be explored on Bill Speidel's Underground Tour, which costs about £17 for 75 minutes.

For clients seeking nightlife,

“The old downtown became a subterranean world when the city was rebuilt following the Great Fire of 1889

suggest bar-hopping in Belltown, where legendary spot The Crocodile has hosted bands including Nirvana. Elsewhere, LGBT+ spot Capitol Hill has plenty of hip hangouts, while the Fremont and Georgetown areas have more casual bars, breweries and seafood restaurants.

WHIDBEY ISLAND

A short drive and ferry hop from Seattle, the wild beauty of squiggly Whidbey Island attracts visitors looking for a slower pace – and there's plenty of opportunity for adventure, too.

Play: A tour with Whidbey Island Kayaking is the perfect way to

appreciate the rugged, salt-sprayed coastline. A half-day trip, priced from about £85, paddles past beaches and thick evergreen forests, while clients might spot harbor seals or scarlet-footed pigeon guillemots – dark-brown seabirds beloved by Whidbey locals.

Resident orcas are often sighted in summer, while spring brings migrating gray whales to Puget Sound. Deception Pass Tours runs jetboat trips to spot them between May and September, with prices from about £55.

Brave clients might even spy whales from atop a Douglas fir on the aforementioned tree-climbing trip with AdventureTerra, timed so participants reach the canopy for sunset (from about £130 for roughly four hours, including training and safety gear).

Pause: Langley, by the ferry terminal, is a pretty town that's perfect for pottering, with art galleries, glassblowing studios and waterfront restaurants. Suggest Prima Bistro, which serves French-inspired

dishes made with local ingredients on a rooftop deck, or Useless Bay Coffee Company for more-casual bites.

WOODINVILLE

Charming Woodinville is half-an-hour's drive from Seattle, making it a popular retreat for locals and a great add-on for clients visiting the port city.

Pause: The area is home to more than 100 wineries, many of which are in a compact, walkable area. Suggest clients explore the Hollywood district, where urban tasting rooms are clustered around a few streets. Fidelitas pours fragrant reds from Washington's Yakima Valley, while Obelisco Estate specialises in big, bold cabernets. Clients staying in Seattle can join a small-group tour of Woodinville wineries with Bon Vivant (about £70 for a full day, including transport).

Recommend ending a day of tasting with a meal on Barking Frog's patio. Attached to rustic-chic Willows Lodge, the restaurant serves up seasonal dishes such as black cod with green lentils, or local radishes served with goat butter, paired with more of those delicious Washington wines.

Play: The Sammamish River wiggles through Woodinville. A cycling trail follows part of the river, while WhatsUp provides stand-up paddleboarding and kayaking lessons and rentals.

Right by the water sits Adventura, an aerial adventure park offering ropes and ziplines with incredible views over the valley (from £55 for two-and-a-half hours).

OLYMPIA

South of Seattle, Washington's state capital has a cool, small-town vibe with craft breweries, farm-to-table restaurants and waterfront parks around Capitol Lake and Budd Inlet.

Play: The best way to explore Olympia's charming downtown streets and parks is by bike – which is an even better option when you throw in stops for coffee or beer. South Sound Adventures runs tours visiting the city's best cafes in the morning, switching to craft breweries in the afternoon (about £35 for three-and-a-half hours, including drinks). It's a great option for time-strapped clients, with the tours stopping at highlights such as the Tivoli Fountain and State Governor's Mansion, which looms elegantly on a hill overlooking the lake.

Olympia is also a gateway to Olympic National Park, filled with old-growth rainforest, glacier-topped mountains and rugged driftwood beaches backed by skinny pine trees.

Pause: A short drive from Olympia, Wolf Haven International is a serene sanctuary for about 50 wolves and wolf-dogs rescued from captivity. Visitors can tour a small part of the grounds, passing wolves' enclosures and hearing more about them (about £10; reservations required). It's worth spending some time wandering the grounds, where paths wind past a wolves' cemetery and prairie mounds, en route to the 'Grandfather Tree', a 300-year-old Douglas fir. **TW**