

Geological and Farm Tours

Man-made and Geological Wonders - Grand Coulee Dam, Dry Falls & A Private Farm (Day Trip)

A series of thundering floods 18,000 years ago created the dramatic Columbia Basin, a serrated, high desert landscape that stretches from the Washington/Idaho border to the Cascade Range (<http://iafi.org/>). Travel through this starkly beautiful landscape to the massive Grand Coulee Dam, a WPA project built in 1933 (<http://users.owt.com/chubbard/gcdam/>). Tour the visitor center – more than gears and turbines -- and 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. After a lunch stop, visit Dry Falls (<http://www.parks.wa.gov/parks/?selectedpark=Sun%20Lakes>), a geological ghost of what was once the largest waterfall in the world. Three-and-a-half miles of sheer cliffs drop 400 feet, dwarfing Niagara Fall's one-mile width and 165-foot drop. Depending on the time of year, a private farm is the last stop.

Add a stop at family-owned Whitestone Winery (www.whitestonewinery.com) on the shores of 150-mile-long Lake Roosevelt and sample big, bold award-winning estate wines, or visit the Buggy Barn (www.bubbybarnquilts.com), a quilt and antique shop in a century-old carriage house.

Visit the Hutterite community, a religious colony that originated in the 16th century in Austria, and learn about their unique potato farming and harvesting methods. By now, you're ready to join the students in the community school for a lunch that includes fresh baked bread and cinnamon rolls.

Growing Attractions - Green Bluff Orchards & Arbor Crest Wine Cellars (Half Day Trip)

With annual events like the Cherry Pickers Trot and Pit Spit contest and Pumpkin' Chunkin', it's obvious the Green Bluff Growers (www.greenbluffgrowers.com) cultivate a sense of humor right alongside peaches, strawberries, pumpkins and more on over 700 acres. Chug through the orchards on the Fruit Loop Express, savor a freshly baked fruit pie on a deck overlooking the fields, and if time permits, pick a fresh batch of whatever is in season.

Next, visit Arbor Crest Wine Cellars (www.arborcrest.com) where cliff top scenery, quirky history and award winning wine create yet another blend of memorable experiences. After sampling Arbor Crest's wine flight, tour the grounds where eccentric inventor Royal Riblet and his seventh wife lived in the 1920s in a Florentine mansion. The passenger tram he installed from his cliff top home to the Spokane Valley 450 feet below has been dismantled, but the square wheeled-tractor, giant checker board, croquet court, sunken rose garden and edge-of-the-world gazebo still stand.

A Paradise Called the Palouse (Day Trip)

Mother Nature laid a patchwork quilt across the Palouse Prairie, gave it a shake and the waves of color froze into a landscape of green and gold fields. The colors morph from season to season, but the rippling effect never changes. As you glide through the one of the most important farming regions in the United States, you'll hear stories of giant earthworms that grow to three feet in length, nomadic Native American tribes, and pioneer families who settled here in the late 1800s. A three-mile road winds to the top of 3,618-foot-tall Steptoe Butte, for a bird's eye view of the prairie.

Fittingly, Washington State University (www.wsu.edu), one of the nation's leading agriculture-related research and education facilities, makes its home in the Palouse region. A WSU professor will enlighten and entertain you with an agriculture presentation and you'll join students from around the world for lunch at the CUB.

Visit the university's creamery, producing cheese and milk products since 1902, including award-winning Cougar Gold Cheese. Enjoy a sample and learn why the yummy product is packaged in cans. Then top off the day with a stop at Ferdinand's Ice Cream Shoppe for a locally made ice cream or a milkshake. (Seasonal option.)

The Red Shed Farm Museum & Hay or Sleigh Ride at Rocking K Ranch (Half Day Trip)

Forty minutes north of Spokane, the North Spokane Farm Museum, lovingly called the Red Shed Farm (<http://greiff.net/museum/>), 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.

Continue your history, farm-oriented day with a visit to Rocking K Ranch (www.rockingk.com), an eclectic equestrian center and event facility 25 miles north of Spokane. Stroll the Storybook Garden, make some moves on the giant chess set, swim a few laps in the pool, then gather for lunch. Top off the day with a hay wagon ride (or sleigh ride, depending on weather) pulled by a pair of massive Belgian draft horses.

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