

Enjoy the spectacular view off the coast of Whidbey Island from Ebey State Park. Right: Ultra House is one of Langley's top restaurants. Bottom right: Vashon Island features several colorful murals, including at Nashi Orchards Cidery.



# ISLAND HOPPING

LEAPFROG AROUND THESE GORGEOUS SALISH SEA ISLANDS

BY GREG FREITAS & NATALIE COMPAGNO

**F**ew places boast islands as spectacular as those of the Salish Sea and Puget Sound. Our islands are majestic, mystical, stunning, and world-renowned, offering some of the country's best boating, fishing, hiking, and biking. They are gorgeous emeralds inlaid on a sea of azure, telling the history of the earliest Salish tribes through the arrival of settlers to the stories of our recent past.

By sea or by bridge, these are six of Washington's finest islands, with tips for visiting and experiences worth seeking.

## WHIDBEY ISLAND

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** THE ROCK

**GETTING THERE:** BY FERRY FROM MUKILTEO OR PORT TOWNSEND, OR BY BRIDGE OVER SPECTACULAR DECEPTION PASS

The largest island in the state, Whidbey offers travelers an abundance of choices, from historic **Coupeville**





to the windswept bluffs of **Fort Casey State Park**, to the hipster “haunts” of Langley (of course Whidbey is haunted) to the natural offerings of the island to the indigenous culture. Whidbey wows.

**Through the spyglass:** Hold on to your hats — Whidbey has so much going on this year, it’s head-turning. Check out **24 Culture + Heritage Experiences**, a printed and digital guide to help visitors access meaningful travel experiences with local historians and indigenous communities featuring fairytale forests, majestic beaches, and quiet spaces. **Whidbey Island Grown** is where to look for farm-to-table gatherings as well as foraging finds, and is also the place to slurp those briny Penn Cove mussels. Artists also flock here — be sure to check out **Whidbey Island Fine Art Studio**.

**Victuals & grog:** With a name like **Ultra House**, it better be just that. This ramen spot charms and satisfies, while also offering an array of imported Japanese curios for sale. For hands-on pasta experiences, sign up at **Wildly Beloved Foods** — a new place to buy or create handmade pastas — in store or at its workshops. **The Shrimp Shack at Cozy’s, Flyer’s Restaurant and Brewery, Callen’s, Front Street Grill, and Sunshine Drip** are all sure to please the palate. For a true Whidbey experience, duck into any of the myriad mercantiles or local farms and fill up a picnic basket.

**Hang your hammock:** **Captain Whidbey Hotel** dates back to 1907, with stories and legends free upon check in. The woods and water surrounding this resort are comforting and scenic. Dine at the on-site restaurant to chat with locals and visitors while feasting on Salish Sea clam chowder or a Pacific Northwest Bounty Board bursting with salmon and lingcod. Cabins, hammocks, kayaks, porch side cocktails and flower beds await.

## VASHON ISLAND

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** SQABABSH OR “DISTANT VIEWS” IN CHINOOK, ILAHIE OR “LAND OF MANY THINGS” IN SHAWNEE

**GETTING THERE:** BY FERRY FROM SEATTLE OR BY FERRY FROM TACOMA

Vashon is the yin to its close neighbor Bainbridge’s yang, more aloof and difficult to know. Bainbridge is a commercial powerhouse, while Vashon is known for creativity. Bainbridge celebrates its proximity to Seattle, while Vashon promotes its image as a refuge away from the city. Each sports a Thomas Dambo Northwest Troll.

**Through the spyglass:** **Vashon Island Visual Artists (VIVA)** has promoted studio tours for more than 30 years. The first two weekends in May, VIVA highlights about 200 artists around the island. Don’t miss it!

Hike or bike on **Maury Island**, formerly a distinct island which was joined to Vashon by an isthmus in 1913. If you make it out to **Point Robinson Park**, you just might spot a troll.

**Victuals and grog:** Dining on Vashon is as eclectic as its residents. **Snapdragon** has that vegetarian Vashon vibe, while **May Kitchen** serves great Thai food. **The Hardware Store** is the classic local diner turned gastropub. **Camp Colvos Brewing** is the perfect spot to sip a cold pint on a hot summer day.

Vashon is becoming increasingly known for its cider and perry (pear cider) orchards. **The Nashi Orchards Cidery** opened a new tasting room near downtown in 2022, with indoor and outdoor seating, a fire pit, lawn games, and snacks.

**Hang your hammock:** Vashon has a tiny community headed toward **Maury Island** — blink and you’ll miss cute little Burton. **The Burton Inn & Spa** offers pampering and relaxation, and an ideal location across from Burton’s main attraction, the coffee stand.





## BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

FORMERLY KNOWN AS: WINSLOW

GETTING THERE: BY FERRY FROM SEATTLE OR BY BRIDGE FROM THE KITSAP PENINSULA

It's hard to believe now while visiting Bainbridge's verdant farms, rolling hills, and bustling neighborhoods, that Bainbridge was an island divided as recently as 1991. The main town of **Winslow** wanted to govern the entire island, which rural locals opposed. Tempers flared, votes were counted, and progress prevailed. The entire town and island were renamed Bainbridge Island.

**Through the spyglass:** Aside from browsing Winslow Way's tempting boutiques, going on epic hikes and bike rides, visiting **BIMA** and **Bloedel Reserve**, and indulging in the best food west of Seattle — Bainbridge boasts a cultural history unrivaled in the Pacific Northwest. **The Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial** documents the shameful internment of United States citizens during World War II in a poignant and moving way.

This April, **Arts & Humanities Bainbridge** launches the **First Annual Spring Asian Arts Festival**. The all-island event will be unique to the Pacific Northwest and is expected to begin a new tradition of arts and culture on Bainbridge.

**Victuals and grog:** If you haven't been recently, don't miss **Ba Sa** for high-end Vietnamese, or **Seabird** for intriguingly imagined seafood. It was recently named among the top 24 new restaurants for 2023 by *Bon Appetit*.

**Hang your hammock:** If you walk or bike onto the ferry, **Eagle Harbor Inn** couldn't be easier or more convenient. If you drive, **The Inn at Pleasant Beach** couldn't be more peaceful and charming. Its pool is coveted in the summer and the restaurants underneath the inn are delicious. Catch a film across the street for a real throw-back experience.

## SAN JUAN ISLAND

FORMERLY KNOWN AS: RODGERS ISLAND. THOUGH AMERICAN EXPLORERS TRIED TO RENAME IT, THE ORIGINAL SPANISH NAME STUCK. SAN JUAN IS NAMED FOR JUAN VICENTE DE GÜEMES PADILLA HORCASITAS Y AGUAYO, 2ND COUNT OF REVILLAGIGEDO

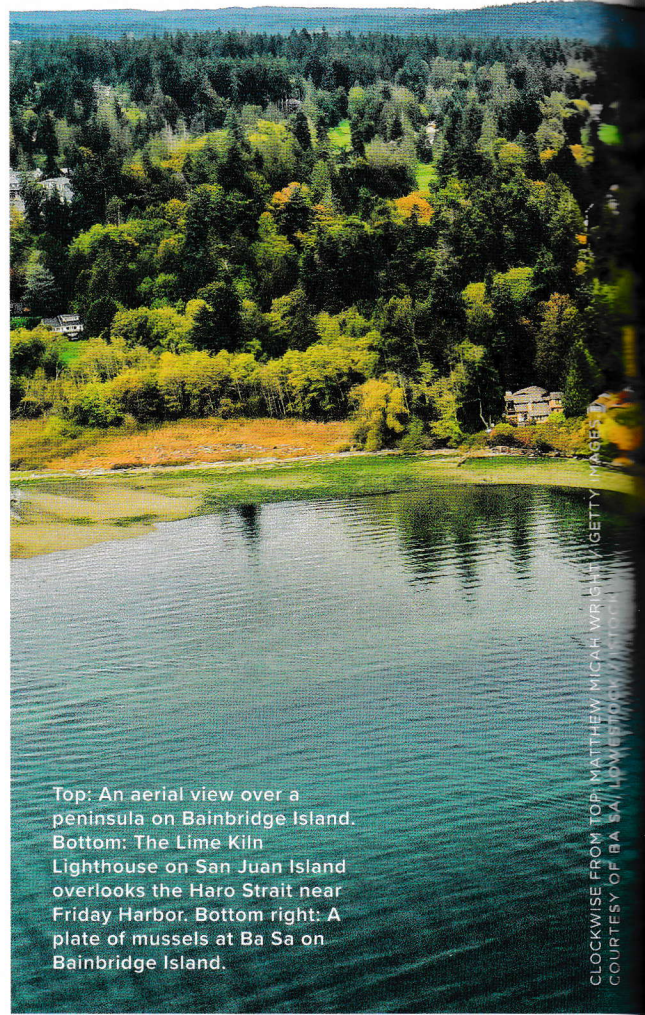
GETTING THERE: BY FERRY FROM ANACORTES

San Juan is more than just the gateway to the San Juan Islands — it is also its bustling tourist hub. Its main city, **Friday Harbor**, has its charms, with some great dining options and a stellar brewery, but the real character of the island is revealed by exploring its back roads.

**Through the spyglass:** Journey to the north end of the island to explore yachtie haven **Roche Harbor**. Along with a charming general store and a great pub (**Madrona Bar & Grill**), the area also has a 20-acre outdoor sculpture park with more than 150 unique pieces.

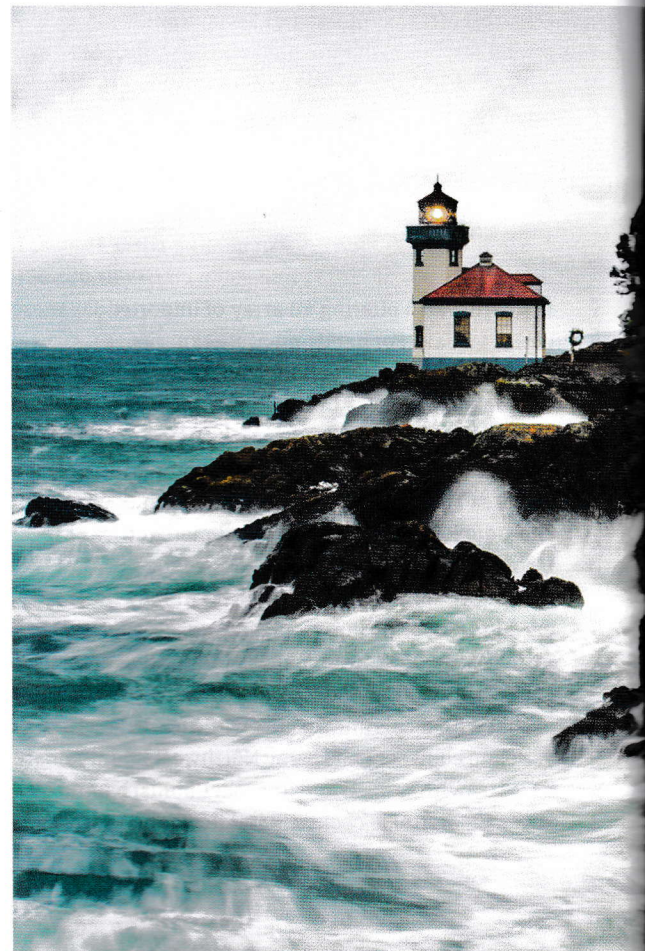
Sunsets on San Juan can be electrifying, with **Vancouver Island** looming in on the horizon. Hike the hills above British Camp for maximum west-facing views.

**Victuals & grog:** If the season is right, a visit to **Westcott Bay Shellfish Co.** is a must. Whether your oysters are cooked or raw, shucked by you or by the experts, the setting and seafood bounty make up the quintessential San Juan experience. Reserve ahead, as it gets packed in summer.



Top: An aerial view over a peninsula on Bainbridge Island. Bottom: The Lime Kiln Lighthouse on San Juan Island overlooks the Haro Strait near Friday Harbor. Bottom right: A plate of mussels at Ba Sa on Bainbridge Island.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MATTHEW MICHAEL WRIGHT/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF BA SA; LOWE/ISTOCK







TRAVEL

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: TOWN OF MICHIGAN, WHICH IS GETTING  
COURTESY OF BA SA, LOWESTOCK, 7 STOCK





# S TRAVEL

In the past year, three woman-owned restaurants either opened or relaunched in Friday Harbor with a commitment to pool resources and build camaraderie. Stop in at any or all to support, and to enjoy some tasty island fare. **Oystertale**, naturally, showcases the oysters and ocean bounty for which the region is famous. **Walden** is a supper club with seasonal menus, and **Tenth House** offers locally sourced food, with craft beer and wines in the town's only wine garden.

**Hang your hammock:** We love **Friday Harbor House** for its relaxed atmosphere in a bustling setting and epic harbor views. For a peaceful hang, **Lakedale Resort** gives a more rustic feel just off the main road to Roche Harbor.

## LOPEZ ISLAND

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** THE FRIENDLY ISLE, OR "SLOW-PEZ"

**GETTING THERE:** BY FERRY FROM ANACORTES

It's Slow-pez-time, and the livin's easy. Raise your finger (not that one) and get ready to salute locals and visitors alike on the San Juans' friendliest, flattest, sunniest island. The famous single-digit salute from other drivers is just the tip of the Lopez welcome mat.

**Through the spyglass:** Despite its reputation, Lopez has plenty of quirky forays worth making. For starters, every house is a potential farmer's market. Drive the island roads on the hunt for farm-fresh eggs, flowers, and vegetables. Put cash in the bucket, or even pay by check. The home farm stands are testament to the trusting, laid back Lopez spirit.

One man's trash is another's treasure. No island takes pride in its city dump the way Lopezians do. The reason is **TIOLI** (Take It or Leave It), which reimagines a city landfill as an eclectic secondhand store. The wild selection of items is fascinating.

Lopez isn't as flat as some claim. **Lopez Hill** rises 535 feet above sea level. Bring bikes or rent them in the village, then head around along the Spit to **Fisherman's Bay**. You will see abundant birds and deer.

**Victuals & grog:** **Ursa Minor** is still the island gold standard, with flavorful, creative farm-to-fork fare. From the owners of beloved food truck **Poutine Your Mouth** comes the newest restaurant in the Village, the **Blue Heron Bistro**.

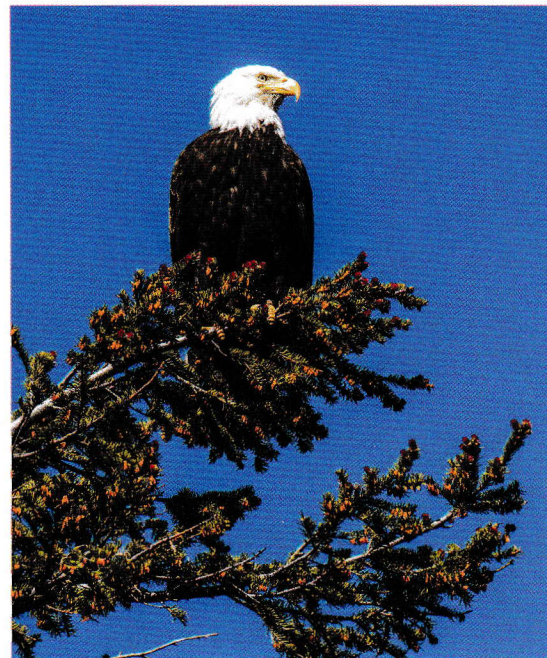
**Hang your hammock:** Lopez has fewer lodging options than the other ferry islands but makes up for it with character and variety. Channel your inner Flamingo Kid at the **Lopez Islander Resort**, with its 1960s Catskills vibe and energetic live music nights. For a more chillaxing rest, stay at **Edenwild Boutique Inn**. A newer option, **Lopez Farm Cottages**, features cottages and tent camping on 29 acres of forest for guests 14 and older.

## ORCAS ISLAND

**ALSO KNOWN AS:** ORCAS WAS NOT NAMED AFTER THE SHARP-TOOTHED DOLPHIN, BUT RATHER THE VICEROY OF MEXICO: JUAN VICENTE DE GÜEMES PADILLA HORCASITAS Y AGUAYO, 2ND COUNT OF REVILLAGIGEDO.

**GETTING THERE:** BY FERRY FROM ANACORTES

If the San Juans are the "jewel in Washington's crown," then Orcas is the shiniest diamond. The stunning views from **Eastsound** are the second most impressive in the state, surpassed only by those at the top of nearby



**Mount Constitution.** The 2,407-foot peak with the observation citadel atop is the second highest island point in the Lower 48, and reveals jaw dropping views to those who drive, bike, or hike.

**Through the spyglass:** From outdoor paradise to boutique shopping adventure to artisanal foodie trail, Orcas rises to every expectation. Hike **Turtleback Mountain**, or ride mountain bikes in **Moran State Park** (except in summer). Rent kayaks from **Orcas Island Kayaks** to paddle around secluded **Obstruction Island**.

Sip and savor a glass of wine at the idyllic **Orcas Island Winery**, or a hoppy pint of Elwha IPA at buzzing **Island Hoppin' Brewery**. Peruse the excellent selection at **Darvill's Bookstore**, then create your own custom leather goods at **Orcas Island Leather Goods**. There are many more delectable finds for those who meander and pause along the way.

**Victuals & grog:** Orcas has three distinct meals per day: brunch, happy hour, and dinner. Start the perfect lazy island day with mimosas and Bennies at **New Leaf Cafe**, **Island Skillet**, or **Gertie's**. Then mosey over to **White Horse Pub** or **Madrona Arms** for snacks and sundowners. Or gossip with the locals at **Lower Tavern**. Dine on excellent Mexican food at **Mijitas**, or enjoy a special night out at the reopened **Matia Kitchen**.

**Hang your hammock:** Orcas has lodging options to suit every mood. For maximum walkable fun in the thick of the action, lovely **Outlook Inn** lies just a stone's throw from Indian Island. To soak up history in a grand resort, check into **Rosario**, founded by shipbuilder and former Seattle Mayor Robert Moran. Or for yoga, yogurt, and yurts — and a sublime retreat — trek out to serene **Doe Bay Resort**.

There's so much to enjoy throughout the islands. What are you waiting for? **S**





Left: A bald eagle perches in a tree in Moran State Park. Above: The Ursa Minor pantry on Lopez Island offers a menu inspired by the Salish Sea.



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