

A South Whidbey Island Culinary Tour

The entire 55-mile long island of Whidbey Island, with its 196 miles of shoreline, is a culinary treasure-trove. The bounty of this island and the relaxed way of life here easily makes this a place to visit for a long weekend, week or longer.

But here, I've chosen just small southern part of the island, around the villages of Clinton and Langley and up into Greenbank, for an excellent overnight trip. It's perfect either for Seattle-area residents wanting to get out of the city or to take out-of-town visitors, or out-of-towners themselves without a lot of time to see this beautiful piece of Puget Sound.

Pack a cooler to bring home the many treats you'll find along the way.

The drive from Seattle to Mukilteo is less than an hour and the Washington State Ferry terminal that takes you to the island on a 20 minute crossing. *(If you're going mid-week and off-season, you may be able to drive right on the ferry, while weekends and high season will likely require a wait in the ferry line. Routes are frequent—usually every half hour from 4 a.m. to around midnight—but unfortunately, reservations can't be made for this route. Times change, so check the schedule.)*

Once on the ferry, sit back and enjoy the view—you're officially now on "island time."



Mukilteo Coffee Roasters

Drive off the ferry and head over to Mukilteo Coffee Roasters, just a few miles away, with cozy seating inside and out at their Café in the Woods. Wonderful coffee house aromas are extra prevalent because the roasting is done in the adjoining warehouse. Tucked away off the main road, you wouldn't necessarily expect that the company supplies to more than 500 stores and is an international wholesaler; they've been a major exporter to China for more than 20 years.

Owners Gary and Beth Smith have been in business for 30 years, are Fair Trade Certified and have built a business that works closely with their bean suppliers, who have become like family. Beth says, "We're really fortunate. We work hard, but the work is easy when you love the coffee and love the business." There's a full café menu, so have lunch or grab a baked item during your stop. The house-baked lavender-lemon scones are especially good. Don't forget the coffee beans on your way out.

Glendale Shepherd Farm: Gourmet Artisan Sheep Cheese

At Glendale Shepherd Farm, you have the chance to taste and purchase some of the freshest and best tasting cheese direct from where the sheep graze and the cheese is made.

Stan and Lynn Swanson's Grade A dairy farm, has been in the family for three generations. Fourth generation farmer Lynn Swanson makes the cheese and she's happy son Erik has decided to continue the legacy.

Enjoy a tasting and if possible, take a farm tour. Glendale Shepherd Farm sheep not only have space to roam and graze on rich, beautiful land, they also have fantastic water views. Happy sheep (and great skill and care) equals delicious cheese. Seasonally, you can purchase lamb meat from the Farm store. (They are Animal Welfare approved.)

The flagship cheese is their Island Brebis, which won a Good Food Award in 2014. It's got a great bite, slightly salty, and is semi-hard with a dry rind. Truly a complex, high quality cheese that will stand out on the cheese plate. Drizzle their yogurt with some good quality honey and savor the fresh and slightly bitter flavors you won't find in store-bought brands. My favorite though, is their Tallulah. This cheese has a flavorful and nutty rind that isn't at all course or dry. The interior is creamy and mild with a fabulous aroma. This is a complicated and delicious cheese, with a lot going on in front and end tastes.

Confetti Travel Cafe

Celebrate travel, culture, connection

<http://www.confettitravelcafe.com>



Take home your favorites—this is why you brought that cooler. (Call ahead for hours.)



British Tea at One Spirit Garden

For gardeners and tea drinkers, Glo Sherman's One Spirit Garden is a premier stop. Enjoy a British tea and spend some time in a garden that emanates joy, gratitude, solace and depth, as well as great beauty.

Sherman purchased the property in 2009 after the death of her husband. Their long marriage had taken the two to France, where they'd lived for three years and to England, for eight years. They especially enjoyed walking the gardens around their home and taking British high tea. Back in the States, Sherman wanted a place where she could bring that enjoyment to her new home and share it with others. She also wanted to create a tranquil space for mediation. Creating the gardens took time and effort and the upkeep is both good physical labor and a meditation of its own. Today, Sherman enjoys greeting locals who come regularly for tea and gardening tips and her mediation classes, as well as visitors from around the world.

Confetti Travel Cafe

Celebrate travel, culture, connection

<http://www.confettitravelcafe.com>



Choose the teacup set that's calling your name from a varied collection and choose a place to sit; there's a deck, patio tables and a gazebo with a marble table with mother-of-pearl inlay from India. I enjoy my Lord Wendell black tea (named for Poet Oliver Wendell Holmes, of course) with the Lemon Almond Streamliner cake and a gingerbread cake served with fresh whipped cream. Both are both delicious. A flavorful cold carrot soup with cucumber follows.

Take time to wander the paths, nook and crannies, sculptures, outdoor rooms, cottage, and other nooks and crannies of the garden. When it's time to leave, the resident peacock is often on hand, wandering the parking lot.

(Call ahead or make reservations online.)

Wine Tasting at Whidbey Island Winery

Not a tea drinker, or in the mood to visit a tasting room and vineyard rather than a garden? Then continue the trip north toward Langley to Whidbey Island Winery.



This winery has won a great number of awards, especially for their reds; Dolcetto, Sangiovese, Cabernet Franc, Grenache, and Barbera Port, made with grapes purchased primarily from the Yakima Valley and Horse Heaven Hills regions. While much of Whidbey enjoys being in the Rainshadow that means far less rain than nearby Seattle, the growing season here is still shorter

than Eastern Washington and the nights are often cool. The grapes they grow are augmented by grapes they don't have room for or can't grow well enough to make the wines they enjoy. They're having good results working with rootstock and are making progress with the goal to grow more of their own red wine grape varieties. If there's anyone who can do it, these folks can, because they already are crafting great reds.



Owners Greg and Elizabeth Osenbach love every aspect of winemaking. "We're very hands on and pretty much do everything it takes." They planted their first grapes in 1986 and have been selling their wines since 1992. On this warm summer day, I enjoy a glass of their estate-grown Island White; crisp, with a great aroma, and add a couple of bottles to take home. The tasting room is also a great place to pick up other local foods and wine accompaniments, including canned seafood and chocolates.

Vibrant, Downtown Langley

Leave county roads behind and head into the village of Langley. Town founder Jacob Anthes first purchased the land when he was only 15 years old and helped plat the town in 1891. Langley was incorporated in 1913 and First Street quickly grew with home and businesses.

Today, Langley is island's third largest incorporated area and home to just under 5,000 people, with just over 1,000 within town boundaries. The attractive downtown is right on the water, a popular stop for visitors, and has a vibrant fun vibe.

Downtown meets any shopping need. A must-stop is The Topsy Gourmet, a locally owned gourmet grocer and deli that carries locally made gourmet artisan treats, great wines, cheese and deli items. Swing by Sweet Mona's for locally produced chocolates, caramels and other confections. Their ginger dark chocolate truffles and salted caramels are marvelous. Peruse an eclectic assortment of cooking gear, clothing, décor, and other gift items at The Star Store Market and Mercantile. Get your mind off food for just a while and find something special at Gregor Rare Books; unless, of

course, you find an interesting cookbook! Try your hand at—or just watch—glassblowing at Callahan's Firehouse, located in the old Langley firehouse.

If you're visiting in the summer, you might get lucky and visit during the Island Shakespeare Festival, which runs from early July to mid-September. This professional, rotating repertory theater performs three plays over the course of the season. The quality of performances is wonderful and the organizers have stayed with their festival seating, no tickets sold, "pass the hat" form of payment since the festival inception. All performances are held in a large orange and white circus tent, affectionately known as Henry.

Choosing where to eat for lunch or dinner won't be easy, but you won't go wrong either. Useless Bay Coffee Company and The Braeburn Restaurant are two good breakfast or lunch choices.

Prima Bistro is a long-time favorite for lunch, happy hour, and dinner. This casual, quality-first restaurant serves a varied menu of French classics with Northwest spins under Chef Sieb's skills.

The menu is varied; there's a *salade* Lyonnaise, gravlax, house risotto, house-made patés and cured charcuterie, as well as plenty of seafood, fowl and red meat small plates and entrees. The service is excellent and the décor is casual and fun. (And their bumper sticker makes me smile: "Prima Bistro...so magical ferries take you there.")

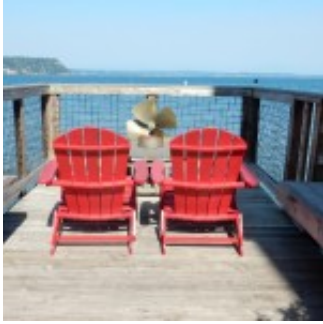
Spend the Night

There are plenty of good options for spending the night; the island has some 900 rooms available.

One great choice is the Boatyard Inn, just a block up the road from downtown Langley. All rooms in this contemporary, waterfront inn are large, comfortable, and well-appointed, with great views. Each room has an outdoor deck on which to enjoy the night lights and the morning sunrise over Saratoga Passage.

Confetti Travel Cafe

Celebrate travel, culture, connection
<http://www.confettitravelcafe.com>



Rooms vary slightly, but my living room has a gas fireplace, sofa, arm chairs, flat screen TV, a window seat and dining set. Kitchens have a ceramic sink and countertops, two-burner cooktop, microwave, dishwasher and small frig. There's complementary coffee and teas and a basket of complementary snacks that include nuts, chips, energy bars, cookies and bottled water. The king-size bed is a couple of steps up above the living room and kitchen, and allows a view of the sunrise while still in the comfort of my warm bed. A water view from your hotel room, looking right down off the beach and watching the tide come in and out from your deck is a treat indeed.

Greenbank Farm

In the morning, enjoy the view and be sure to notice tidal changes from off your deck, or take a walk around the wharf area. Linger over breakfast in your room or enjoy a hearty breakfast in town. Make a return trip to any shops that strike your fancy, then get ready for more great food with a visit to Greenbank Farm.



Confetti Travel Cafe

Celebrate travel, culture, connection
<http://www.confettitravelcafe.com>

Before heading north on Highway 525 to Greenbank, make a quick stop at Bayview Farm and Garden. Gardeners will love the selection of plants, foodies will love the selection of local food products. There's also a cafe for a quick snack, and classes and other events. Don't miss the laburnum arbor, which owner Maureen Murphy first planted some twenty years ago. The arbor is beautiful year round, but if you visit in late spring, you'll be treated to the highlight; when the arbor tunnel burst with the draping, brilliant yellows and golds of fragrant blossoms.



Greenbank Farm was initially established as a loganberry farm, and at one time was the nation's largest. Today, the non-profit farm is owned by the Port of Coupeville, and the 115-acre farm plays an important role in the area. Visit the walking trails and wetland, with wonderful views of the Olympic and Cascade mountains, keeping your eyes open for great bird viewing. Learn more about the community gardens, solar energy project, land stewardship programs, and classes and organic agricultural programs through the Organic Farm School. Enjoy wine tasting, shopping, art galleries, and the year-round farm stand, and with luck you'll be there for some live music or special event.

Confetti Travel Cafe

Celebrate travel, culture, connection
<http://www.confettitravelcafe.com>



Enjoy a delicious, fresh organic lunch at Whidbey Pies, saving room for that freshly baked slice of pie. Better yet, buy a whole pie for home--or the ferry ride back home.

Final Point: Plan A Return Trip

With any remaining time before heading home, visit one of the many beaches and parks South Whidbey has to offer. Continue your journey north, or plan a return trip soon, because you've seen just a portion of the island, and there's still so much more to do!



-All photos by Nancy Zaffaro.

For More:

- Washington State Ferry, Mukilteo, www.wsdot.com/ferries/schedule/ScheduleDetailByRoute.aspx?route=muk-cl
- Mukilteo Coffee Roasters, www.mukilteocoffee.com
- Glendale Shepherd Farm, www.glendaleshepherd.com
- One Spirit Garden, www.onespiritgarden.com
- Whidbey Island Winery, www.whidbeyislandwinery.com
- Topsy Gourmet, www.facebook.com/thetipsygourmet
- Sweet Mona's, Langley, www.sweetmonas.com
- Star Store Market & Mercantile, www.starstorewhidbey.com
- Gregore Rare Books, www.gregorrarebooks.com
- Callahan's Firehouse, www.callahansfirehouse.com
- Prima Bistro, www.primabistro.com
- Useless Bay Coffee, www.uselessbaycoffee.com
- Braeburn Restaurant, www.braeburnlangley.com
- Boatyard Inn, www.boatyardinn.com
- Bayview Farm & Garden, www.bayviewfarmandgarden.com
- Greenbank Farm, www.greenbankfarm.com
- Island Shakespeare Festival, www.islandshakespearefest.org