



# From Boots to Brews

By Brandon Fralic & Rachel Wood

Whatcom Falls Park, with forested trails and waterfalls a-plenty is just minutes from downtown Bellingham. Photo by Jake Johnson

**I**n the shadow of Mount Baker, where the Cascade Range soaks its feet in Samish Bay, Bellingham has long been a favorite for outdoor enthusiasts. Now, visitors are making the “City of Subdued Excitement” a destination not only for trails, but craft ales as well—the perfect ingredients for a Northwest Weekend.

The city of Bellingham lies 90 miles north of Seattle on the banks of Bellingham Bay, an easy 90-minute drive up Interstate 5. On arrival, begin your weekend at the **Farmers Market** (1; [bellinghamfarmers.org](http://bellinghamfarmers.org)), named the #1 market in the west by *Sunset* magazine. Since 1993, the market has been a favorite local destination for seasonal produce, quick meals, artisan crafts and entertainment. Park along Railroad Avenue and follow your nose to the market, located in Depot Market Square. Grab a bite for lunch, pick up some snacks for the weekend and wander between stalls, perusing local crafts. Visit during opening weekend in April to witness the mayor’s ceremonial cabbage toss.

**MARKET SEASON:** The Bellingham Farmers Market runs every Saturday, April through Christmas, and one weekend per month the rest of the year.

For a taste of Bellingham’s natural beauty, drive just ten minutes east along Lakeway Drive to **Whatcom Falls Park** (2; [cob.org/services/recreation](http://cob.org/services/recreation)). With miles of easy walking trails and several picturesque waterfalls, this park is one of Bellingham’s finest. If the kids are along, stop by Derby Pond to feed the ducks. From the parking lot, take the main trail down to an old stone



bridge and one of the park's most breathtaking views: Whatcom Falls. The bridge, constructed in 1939 from Chuckanut sandstone, looks down upon the wide, 20-foot-high waterfall, part of Whatcom Creek's journey to the Pacific. The falls are best viewed in winter and spring.

Continue along the trail, following Whatcom Creek to Whirlpool Falls. This is a popular swimming hole and cliff jumping area during warmer months. Bring a camera, but jump at your own risk. Further west, an observation area overlooks Whatcom Creek at the Olympic Pipeline explosion site. In 1999 a gas pipeline burst, spilling more than 200,000 gallons of gasoline into the creek, resulting in extensive fire damage. More than a decade later, regrowth is still a work in progress.

By now you've likely worked up an appetite—and a thirst. Head over to **Kulshan Brewing Co.** (3; kulshanbrewery.com), dubbed for Mount Baker's indigenous name, for a pint and some grub. Kulshan has a beer for everyone, from their easy-drinking Dude Man Wheat to the "burly, black bear of a beer," the Russian Imperial Stout. The brewery itself is kitchen-free, so Kulshan opens a space in its lot to local food trucks, including Bellingham favorite **StrEAT Food** (streetfood.me). Parked outside Kulshan on Thursdays and every other Saturday, StrEAT Food features a weekly rotating menu. You'll find familiar items like burgers, fries and hot dogs along with more adventurous fare like gyros, tofu banh mi, hummus and more.

Or, try **Chuckanut Brewery** (4; chuckanutbreweryandkitchen.com) for dinner and drinks. Chuckanut's high-tech brewing techniques consistently produce quality, award-winning beer. This is the place to go to enjoy crisp, clean lagers. Their kitchen features a full-service menu and all-ages restaurant, with seasonal "locavore" dishes that source ingredients from local suppliers. Try the light, slightly sweet German Kolsch Ale paired with field greens and seasonal scallop pasta—yum!

When you're ready to call it a night, Bellingham has its share of accommodation options, from camping to plush spa hotels and everything in between. How does one decide where to stay? Location, location, location. **Fairhaven Village Inn** (5; fairhavenvillageinn.com) sits neatly in Bellingham's historic Fairhaven district, between downtown and scenic Chuckanut Drive. A charming 22-room inn, Fairhaven is within walking distance of several cafes, bars, bookstores and quirky shops. As an added bonus, their continental breakfast features locally baked goods from Avenue Bread, organic coffee and hot Belgian waffles. If you've packed your tent and sleeping bags, **Larrabee State Park** (6; parks.wa.gov) is your best bet. The park has 51 standard tent sites, 26 utility sites and 8 primitive sites, all available year-round. If you do decide to stay at the park, be aware that passing train traffic may wake you during the night.

**SUNSET STROLL:** A scenic trail begins at Fairhaven Village Inn, meandering north along Bellingham Bay to Taylor Dock, Boulevard Park and downtown Bellingham.

Start off day two by packing up, pulling on your hiking boots, and heading downtown for breakfast at **Little Cheerful** (7; littlecheerful.com). Located on the corner of Holly and Railroad—the epicenter of Bellingham's downtown—Little Cheerful serves up great breakfast fare with plenty of spice. At this favorite of locals (and college students recovering from all-nighters), the eclectic decor ranges from can-can girl cardboard cutouts to thrift store coffee mugs. The cafe is best known for its unique take on eggs Benedict and a "pimped" hashbrown menu. Grab

PHOTOS, FROM TOP: Bellingham lies at the edge of the Pacific, under the shadow of Mount Baker; The statue of Dirty Dan, one of Bellingham's earliest settlers, relaxes in Fairhaven Village; Browse among crafts, flowers and local goods at the Bellingham Farmer's Market. Photos by Buff Black The Kulshan Brewing Co. is a favorite watering hole. Photo by Brandon Fralic

PHOTOS, OPPOSITE: Enjoy some sun and leisure time at Whatcom Falls Park. Sit back at the Derby Pond, or take a stroll to Whirlpool Falls. Photos by Brandon Fralic



a seat on the patio during the spring or summer, but come prepared, as Little Cheerful accepts only cash or check.

While downtown, take time to visit the Good Time Girls at **The Bureau of Historical Investigation** (8; thebureaubellingham.com) on Holly Street. Since 2011, the Good Time Girls have laced up their corsets and provided seasonal historical walking tours, and as of January 2014 they've opened a brick-and-mortar location. Their Sin and Gin Tour illuminates Bellingham's saucy history by giving a voice to the women "just outside society" who built the "City of Subdued Excitement." Public tours run from late spring to early autumn, but private tours are offered year-round. Due to the adult nature of this tour, you might not want to bring the little ones.

It's time to hit the trail again. Take a cruise south on Chuckanut Drive, a scenic coastal byway, to Larrabee State Park. Washington's first state park, Larrabee spans 2,600 acres with more than a mile of coastline. The park contains 15 miles of hiking trails, two lakes and Chuckanut Mountain. Park in the day-use lot and explore the rocky sandstone coastline and beach. Find a flat bluff to enjoy a panoramic view of the San Juan Islands and a picnic lunch. At low tide, venture out to discover tiny crustacea and bright purple sea stars making the intertidal zone their home.

Next, tighten up your laces and head across the highway to the **Fragrance Lake** trailhead. At 5.5 miles round trip, this hike is manageable for many kids. The trail meanders through a forest of Douglas-fir, cedar and hemlock, with a lush green undergrowth of sword ferns. There are a few sections of steep switchbacks, but plenty of flat stretches on this well-maintained trail to catch your breath. On a clear day, it's worthwhile to take the side trail to the Samish Bay viewpoint at the 1-mile mark. Take in a view of the bay, then head onwards to Fragrance Lake, a quiet and secluded loch that ripples only when disturbed by jumping fish.

**TRAIL TIP:** Extend your hike and check out the new WTA-built Rock Trail between Cyrus Gates Overlook and Lost Lake. There will be a trail-opening ceremony on April 26.

As the weekend comes to an end, there's no better finale than stopping in at **Boundary Bay Brewery** (9; bbaybrewery.com) for a frothy ale. Bellingham's oldest operating brewery, Boundary Bay has been an institution of Bellingham's community since 1995. Enjoy happy hour in the taproom, decked out in the style of an old boathouse. Try an award winning IPA, or the crowd favorite Scotch Ale. Or sample a beer from the new special edition series of beers inspired by the biking and hiking trails on Bellingham's Galbraith Mountain. Indulge in dishes like their unique yam "ale-chiladas" or go for some of Bellingham's best mac and cheese, and toast your weekend with a Bellingham brew—it's the closest you'll come to drinking the great outdoors.



**BRANDON FRALIC** and **RACHEL WOOD** are a blogging team focusing on Northwest trails and ales. Both lifelong Washingtonians, they grew up hiking, camping and loving the outdoors. After meeting in Bellingham, where they both attended Western Washington University, they began exploring their shared interests through collaborative photojournalism. They established their blog as a place to pair great hiking trails with nearby craft breweries. You can follow their adventures at [beersatthebottom.com](http://beersatthebottom.com).

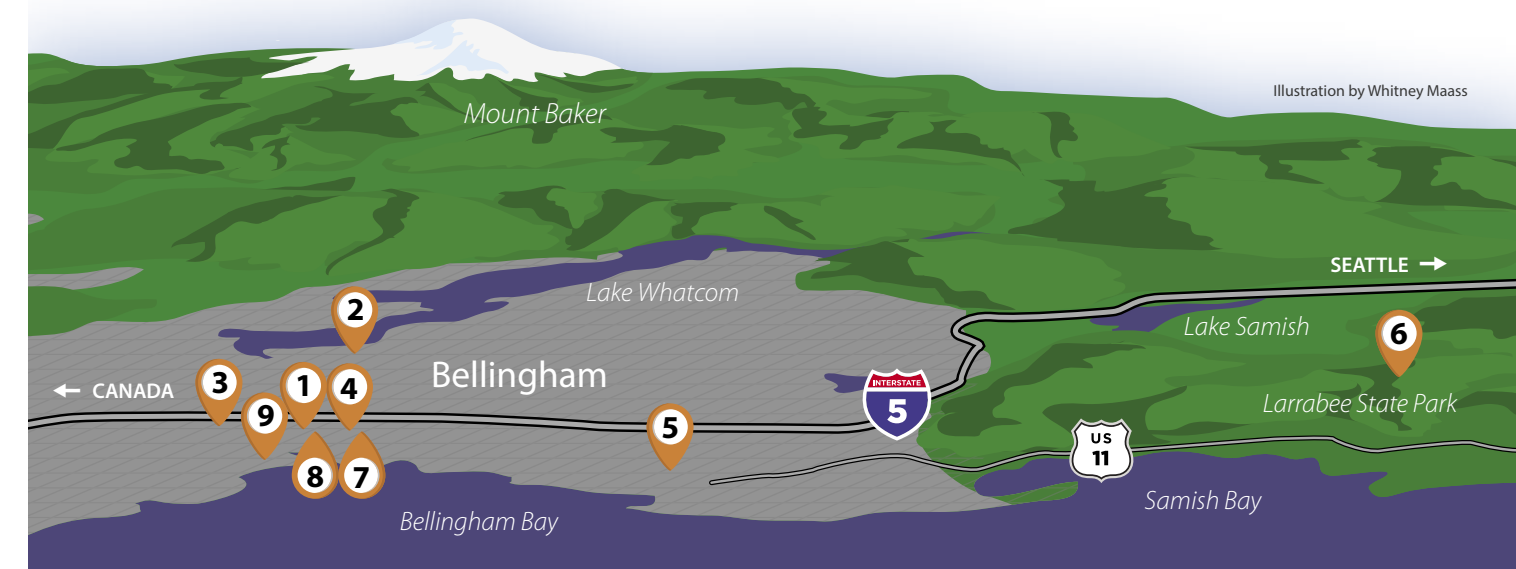
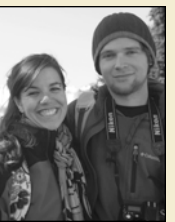


Illustration by Whitney Maass

# An Ounce of Prevention...

## ... Is Worth a Pound of Cure.

Hiking and camping in the outdoors naturally exposes you to the elements in a more extreme manner than what you're accustomed to during your normal everyday lives around home, work, school and running to the shopping mall. That includes the sun, plants, animals, insects, rugged and extreme environments, high elevations and above-average exertion. As such, taking the proper precautions for your health and safety should be at the top of your hiking checklist. You can sum it up in three categories: personal health, first-aid preparedness and emergency awareness.

Many of the things that should be considered when you venture outdoors should already be on you or in your pack if you're carrying your Ten Essentials. Here are some reminders—as well as a few other suggestions—to help ensure you have a safe and enjoyable time on the trail and that you are prepared to respond properly in the event of an injury or emergency.



Protect yourself from the sun and annoying insects with one of these trail-tested and team-approved sunscreens and insect repellents. \$6–\$13



Cover your head from the sun (and rain) with Tilley's LTM6 Airflo hat; and protect your eyes with sleek shades from Native Eyewear. \$79–\$159



Mountain Hardwear's Canyon Shirt will keep you cool on trail while protecting you from harmful UV rays. M/W \$65



Don't stay indoors. Get out, and keep the bugs off, with Columbia's lightweight Insect Blocker Mesh Jacket. \$90

## Sun Protection

Sun protection is something you're probably familiar with, but is surprisingly often overlooked. Unless you're hiking under the cover of dense rainforest, you're probably exposed to the sun, and the higher your elevation, the more harmful rays you're exposed to—to the tune of 4% for every 1,000 feet of altitude. Add in lots of rock or snow, and you have sun not only beating down on you, but reflecting back at you from all directions. And don't think you're safer on cloudy days. Those harmful UV rays can penetrate overcast skies and still give you a good burn.

The easiest way to protect yourself from the sun is by wearing protective clothing—pants, long sleeves, sunglasses and a brimmed hat—and applying a good sunscreen. Be aware that UV rays can penetrate most regular clothing, so look for outdoor apparel that offers sun protection. When choosing a sunscreen, select a product that is at least SPF 30 and waterproof or sweatproof, and carry it with you so you can reapply regularly as you're huffing up those mountainsides.

**COVER UP** A favorite of hikers everywhere is **Mountain Hardwear's Canyon Shirt**. Available in men's and women's styles, these lightweight, breathable shirts offer UPF 30 sun protection. Top that off with a protective hat. Baseball hats are a hikers' essential, but they leave the neck and ears exposed. The **Tilley LTM6 Airflo Hat** offers full shade for the head with UPF 50 protection. Not only will it keep the sun off your head and out of your eyes, but will come in handy in the rain as well. Finally, don't forget your sunglasses. Yes, you can get a sunburn on your eyes—it hurts and can cause permanent damage. Choose sunglasses that fit your face. If you do a lot of high-elevation hiking or mountaineering, you'll want a wraparound style to keep the sun from sneaking in on the sides, and polarized lenses will cut down on glares. **Julbo's Glacier Glasses** block 100 percent of UV rays and are tough enough for any mountain adventure, while **Native Eyewear sunglasses** also block those harmful UV rays in a variety of sleek styles.

**USE SUNSCREEN** Sunscreens are most commonly found in two blends, chemical and mineral. Chemical sunscreens are the classic goop that you spray or squeeze on from a tube or bottle, which disappears as it is applied and absorbed into your skin. A personal favorite is **ThinkSport's Livestrong SPF 50**. This organic chemical lotion uses a special formulation to ensure that UV-absorbing particles are not absorbed into the bloodstream. Mineral sunscreens work differently, creating a microscopic protective layer that doesn't penetrate the skin, but reflects the sun's harmful radiation. Due to the main ingredient in most mineral sunscreens, zinc oxide, it doesn't completely rub in—think lifeguards' white noses. The tradeoff is that it works instantly and lasts longer than chemical lotions and sprays. **Blue Lizard Australian Sunscreen SPF 30** is available in a variety of formulas for adults, children and sensitive skin types, plus this formula is uber-waterproof, lasting up to three times longer than similar mineral formulas.

## Bug Protection

We love hiking. We hate bugs. Not only are insects annoying when they bite and land in our oatmeal, they can also transmit a variety of nasty diseases or cause allergic reactions. But we're not about to let these tiny little buggers keep us from venturing to our favorite backcountry lakes, meadows and mountains. So just as we do to protect ourselves from the sun, we likewise need to armor up against the abundance of pesky pests that are looking to turn us hikers into their own backcountry buffets.

The obvious solution is insect repellent. There are two predominant kinds of bug repellent available today, natural and chemical. Natural repellents use a formula of essential oils to discourage insects, and are generally safer to use. The downside is that their effectiveness doesn't last long, so you'll be reapplying more often. The other kind is DEET-based repellents. These are usually more effective, especially in heavily buggy areas, but are toxic and should not be overused. You should never spray insect repellents directly on your face.

**ANTI-BUG APPAREL** The first step in discouraging insect bites is denying them access to your skin. The easiest way is by covering it up, best with light-colored clothing which they seem (some say) to avoid. An alternative is bug-repellent clothing. **ExOfficio's BugsAway** line of outdoor apparel offers shirts, pants and hats employing Insect Shield technology. Each article will repel bugs for up to 70 washes. A favorite of *Washington Trails'* editor, the **Columbia Insect Blocker Mesh Jacket** is an ultralight, ultra-breathable shell treated with a permethrin coating to help keep arms, back and shoulders bite-free. If you're not looking to purchase a new assortment of hiking apparel, you can treat your own outdoor clothing with **Sawyer Premium Insect Repellent** for clothing, gear and tents. Formulated with natural insect repellents, one spray-on bottle will treat two full outfits and will last up to six weeks. To avoid overexposure treat your products outside and follow directions closely. And don't forget, there's always the good old-fashioned bug net.

**INSECT REPELLENT** Even when fully covered, there are still parts of us that can remain exposed to biting bugs. When choosing an insect repellent, consider how long you will be outside and always wash your hands after applying. Under most conditions, repellent with 20-35% DEET should offer sufficient protection. One product that gets rave reviews is **3M Ultra-Thon Insect Repellent** with 34% DEET. It has a time-release formula that allows it to work for up to 12 hours and is water resistant. For an ultra-compact repellent **Ben's Wipes** are particularly handy. You can apply it exactly where you need it, especially in hard to spray places like behind the ears. Containing 30% DEET, the individually-wrapped packets can be stashed anywhere: pocket, pack and first aid-kit. For a natural alternative to DEET, pick up a bottle of **All Terrain Herbal Armor**. Available in spray or lotion, and utilizing five natural essential oils, this repellent is effective against most irritating insects—you just may need to apply it a bit more often.