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5 ADRENALINE-FUELED RECREATION HUBS

BY ADAM SAWYER

The Northwest is chock full of recreation hubs—places to set up a home base from which you can spend hours or days exploring and enjoying the great outdoors. And depending on the region and the season, every one of them brings at least a handful of options from surfing and skiing to biking and hiking. In this story, however, the focus will be on one particular adrenaline-fueled outing per hub, as well as a recommended spot to call home while you're there.

If you happen to be a soft-adventure aficionado like myself, don't let the "adrenaline-fueled" phrasing put a pause in your cause. Sure, you have the potential to dial any of these endeavors up to 11 on a 10-point adrenaline scale (and some lunatics out there do). But luckily for the rest of us, the fun-factor for all of these activities begins all the way down at bottom of the scale. And you can turn that up as much or as little as you are comfortable with.



Imperial River Co.
white-water rafting

SURF LESSONS IN WESTPORT, WA

Admittedly, surfing probably isn't near the top of the list when pondering outdoor recreation activities in the Pacific Northwest. While it is true that California has cornered the market on the public perception of beach-style fun in the sun, believe it or not, there's a place on the Washington coast that draws surfers from all over the globe—Westport.

Thanks to its location on a peninsula at the entrance to Grays Harbor augmented by a pair of jetties, Westport is blessed with consistently clean, surfable waves strewn between three main surf breaks with something to offer all skill levels. Because of this, Westport is unilaterally recognized as one of the best and most popular surfing destinations in the Northwest. The Bigfoot Surf School (bigfootsurf.com) is staffed by a team of coaches with extensive experience and expertise, offering private as well as group lessons. Beginners welcome.

For home base while in Westport, consider the thematically perfect LOGE Camps (logecamps.com). An upscale yet bohemian blend of camping and room options inspired by the outdoor adventure of the area. A casual, communal vibe courses through the property with firepits, an outdoor kitchen area, local art and rooms that come equipped with smores kits. And if you didn't arrive with your own arsenal of surf gear, the LOGE offers wetsuit and surfboard rentals as well, which you will need—while surfing in Westport might be comparable to other southerly locations, the climate is not.

RAFTING THE DESCHUTES RIVER, OR

Rivers, without a doubt, are the arteries through which the lifeblood of the region flows. Be it the fish that have nourished the flora and fauna for millennia (more on fish later), or the clean, life-giving water that doubles as a means of transport, our rivers are critical. Some also happen to be a load of fun to run in a raft or a kayak, with Central Oregon's Deschutes River being one of the Northwest's most well-known.

The 100 miles of river known as the Lower Deschutes affords a great variety of easy paddling mixed with bursts of class II-III whitewater rapids through deep, river-carved gorges. It's the perfect river for all skill levels and, depending on where you put-in and take-out, can be judiciously tailored to accommodate your adrenaline tolerance level. There's also a lot of human history in this area including occasional pictographs and sections of an abandoned railroad.

FEATURE | 5 Adrenaline-Fueled Recreation Hubs

Well downriver from Bend, the small town of Maupin is home to the Imperial River Company. (deschutesriver.com). The riverfront lodge makes for a cozy and comfortable home with everything you need and nothing you don't, including their own private rafting put-in. The Imperial River Company offers a bunch of different guided rafting packages from quick trips to multi-day. The lodge's firepit is a magnet for post-paddle relaxation and potentially whiskey-fueled conversation.

FLY FISHING IN KALISPELL, MT

In addition to paddling, Northwest rivers are some of the best places on the continent for fishing. Not to tarnish the shine of any other states, but when it comes to fly fishing, Montana might exist on a plateau unto itself. Aim your nose in any direction and you'll find world-class water to test your skill.

Flathead River fly fishing



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The Flathead River flows just outside the picturesque town of Kalispell and is arguably one of the best spots in the state to call home and cast from.

Because the Flathead is fed primarily by snowmelt and mountain lakes, the water stays cold year-round. In addition, numerous species of aquatic insects and stonefly species inhabit the water and surrounding area. The native westslope cutthroat trout and rainbow in the area aren't particularly choosy. Pair that with the wide, easy flow of the river and it's an ideal location for novice fly fishers.

Located in a renovated historic building in downtown Kalispell, the Sherman Lodge at the True Water Fly Shop (truewatermt.com) is an all-in-one fishing lodge experience. The second-floor lodging options are clean and luxurious, and the fly shop on the ground floor is brimming with all the equipment and knowledgeable insight you could hope for. They offer a free Fly Fishing 101 course as well as a handful of half-day and full-day guided trips on the Flathead and beyond.

MOUNTAIN BIKING IN NORTHERN IDAHO

With all due respect to the recent trail work and expansions being done in areas throughout Washington and Oregon, Idaho is the king of the Northwest mountain-biking hill. The northern part of the state, in particular, has become a haven, with the Silver Mountain Resort (silvermt.com) taking the lead.

Voted the #1 Bike Park in the Northwest four years straight, the Silver Mountain Bike Park is one-stop shopping of the highest order for mountain-biking enthusiasts. North America's longest gondola provides quick access to roughly 40 of Idaho's best lift-served bike trails. Novice riders can ease into things with wide double-track and mellow single-track options. For the more experienced, the Lower Mountain offers 3,400 vertical feet of descent on expert-level downhill trails and jump lines. A fleet of bikes and equipment are available for rent, as well as lessons.



Silver Mountain Resort
Bike Park, Kellogg, ID

© iStockphoto

The Morning Star Lodge at the base of the mountain is just steps from the gondola. In addition to the lodge's secure bike storage and bike wash stations, all of your non-bike related needs in the form of dining, bars and shopping are also steps away within the Gondola Village.

GLACIER HELI TOUR IN JUNEAU, AK

As outdoor recreation hubs go, Alaska requires a recalibration of your adventure scale. Juneau, in particular, has some spectacular offerings any time of year. But during the warmer months, some unique, Alaska-specific experiences are the ultimate adventure, not the least of which would be a helicopter tour of the surrounding glaciers.

After a briefing and assignment of glacier boots, the highly trained and knowledgeable folks at TEMSCO Helicopters (temscotour.com) will get you up and above some of the most breathtaking scenery found anywhere. You'll fly over verdant rainforests, high mountain ridges, and deep, carved valleys. And then comes the glacier: gaping crevasses, imposing ice falls and that stunning blue ice—a hallmark of Alaska's ancient glaciers. Once the helicopter lands, enjoy a walking tour of the glacier. Or if you really want to out-bucket your own list, they offer dogsledding excursions...on the glacier!

Once back in town, the Silverbow Inn (downtownjuneauhotel.com) lets you take that glacial adrenaline rush in any direction you choose. Enjoy a soak in the boutique hotel's rooftop hot tub, sip hot cocoa in the lobby or walk out the front door and directly into Juneau's vibrant downtown and keep the good times rolling. Just like the rest of these recreation hubs, Juneau lets you tone it down or dial it up to your heart's content.



WHEN YOU GO

For more about these adrenaline hubs, visit:

Westport, WA: experiencewestport.com

Maupin, OR: maupinoregon.com

Kalispell, MT: discoverkalispell.com

Kellogg, ID: silvervalleychamber.com

Juneau, AK: traveljuneau.com



TEMSCO Gilkey Glacier
Helicopter tour, Juneau, AK

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