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Display until February 28, 2021



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A woman and a young child are seen from behind, leaning over a vast field of purple lavender flowers. The woman is wearing a dark vest over a patterned long-sleeved shirt, and the child is wearing a dark jacket with a bright green stripe. They appear to be examining the flowers closely. The field stretches far into the background under a clear sky.

29 Basking in the Banana Belt

Sequim, WA

BY ALLEN COX

Plan Your Trip

To plan your visit to Sequim and find even more activities the area has to offer, go to visitsunnysequim.com.

The Pacific Northwest has earned a legendary reputation for its precipitation. Seattle gets about 34 inches of rainfall per year, and Portland gets 36 inches. But there is a city in Western Washington that receives only half that amount: Sequim (pronounced “skwim”). What’s the secret to Sequim’s pervasive sunshine? Location, location, location.

Sequim sits on a prairie between the Olympic Mountains and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, a region affectionately dubbed the “banana belt” but officially called the Olympic Rain Shadow. Rain typically heads into Western Washington from the southwest. When it hits the wall of the Olympic Mountains it rises, losing its moisture, and flows down the north side of the range—where Sequim sits—not as rain but as warmer, dry air.

Because of Sequim’s low annual rainfall, early farmers in the area dug a network of irrigation ditches to nourish what would become a bountiful agricultural region. The city of Sequim is surrounded by farms, and the history of its early irrigation is celebrated every October at the Sequim Irrigation Festival, the oldest continuous festival in Washington (125 years old in 2020). You name it and it happens at this family-friendly event, everything from a car show to a log show, arts and crafts and even a grand parade.

It just so happens that lavender thrives in dry eco-climates like Sequim’s. That’s why lavender farms dot the prairie. In July, the scent of lavender rides the breeze, and the Sequim Lavender Weekend takes place. Downtown Sequim is the hub of festival activities, but a highlight of the event is driving out to the countryside, visiting the lavender farms and strolling through rows of lavender in full bloom.

Attention birders: Another annual event in Sequim is the Olympic Peninsula Bird Fest, which takes place every April. Birding field trips, lectures and other educational events, art and photography workshops and more fill a weekend for both experienced and novice birders as well as those who are simply bird-curious.

One of the newest festivals in the Northwest is the Sequim Sunshine Festival, which takes place in March. At this festival, visitors can enjoy all things Sequim: fun runs, bike rides, a scavenger hunt, sports tournaments, a beach party, a restaurant romp and a few surprises.

Besides sunshine and festivals, Sequim is the gateway to some of Washington's most scenic and fascinating places to explore. Begin your exploration with a visit to the Jamestown-S'klallam Tribal Campus, just east of town, to view more than three dozen totem poles. Stroll the waterfront campus, located on beautiful Sequim Bay, and visit the 7 Cedars Casino adorned with seven red cedar totems. The Jamestown-S'klallam people were the original inhabitants of the region and remain a driving force of sustainable development and conservation in the Sequim region. The Tribe's newly opened 7 Cedars Hotel adjacent to the casino is great place for overnights to bed down.

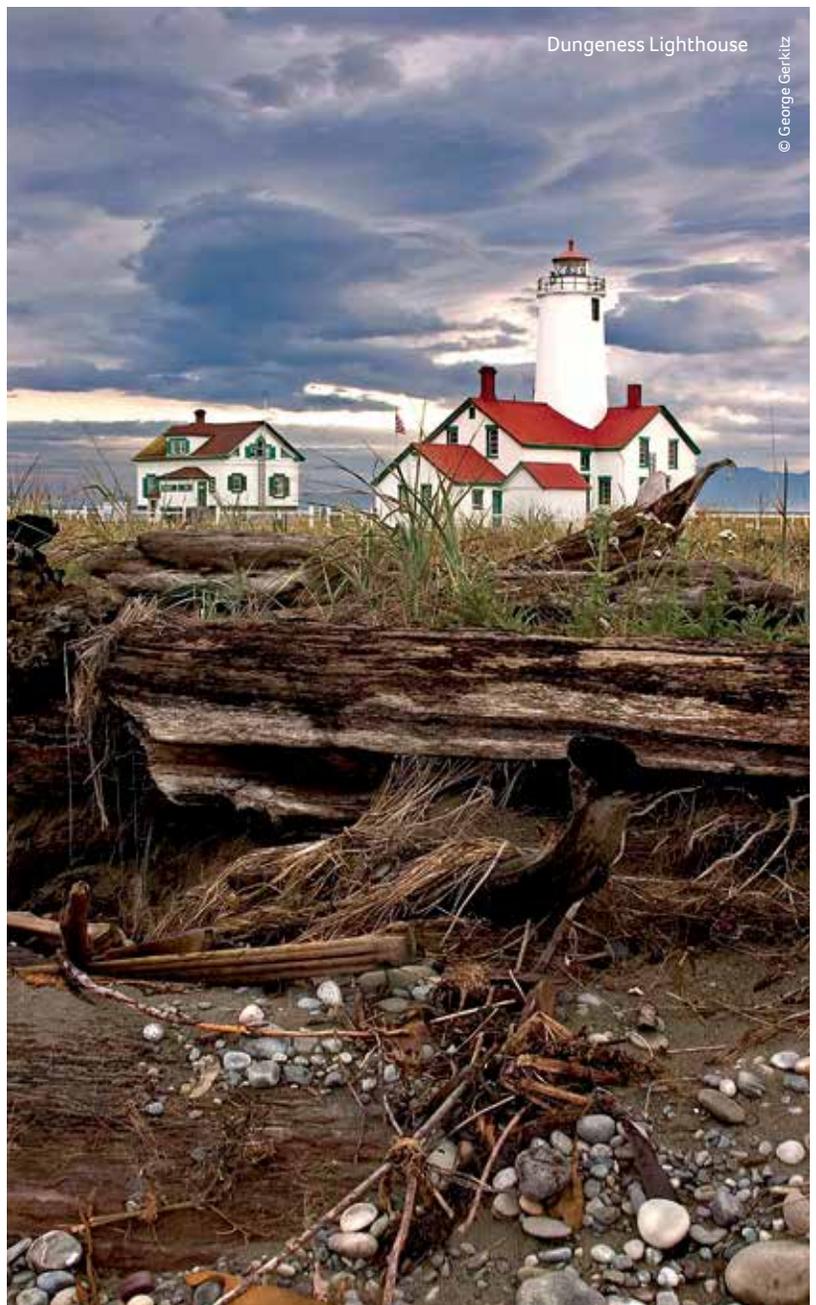
Those hungry for outdoor adventure can pack a picnic, drive the short distance north of the city to Dungeness Spit, take the long beach trek on the longest natural spit in the country to Dungeness Lighthouse. The view and setting of this unique 10-mile round-trip hike surrounds hikers with water and makes them feel like they are hiking into the middle of the ocean.

The Olympic Mountains rise above Sequim to the south, where more than a dozen trails perfect for day hikes spread out in the Olympic National Forest. Worthwhile moderate hikes include the Lower Gray Wolf Trail (7 miles round trip) through dense forest and a river canyon, the short and steep Ned Hill Trail (2.2 miles round trip) with alpine views and the Upper Dungeness Trail (3.9 miles round trip) with river and alpine scenery. These trails head into some rough and wild terrain, so good hiking boots, water, sun protection and bug repellent will come in handy. 🐛



Irrigation Festival

© City of Sequim



Dungeness Lighthouse

© George Gerkitz

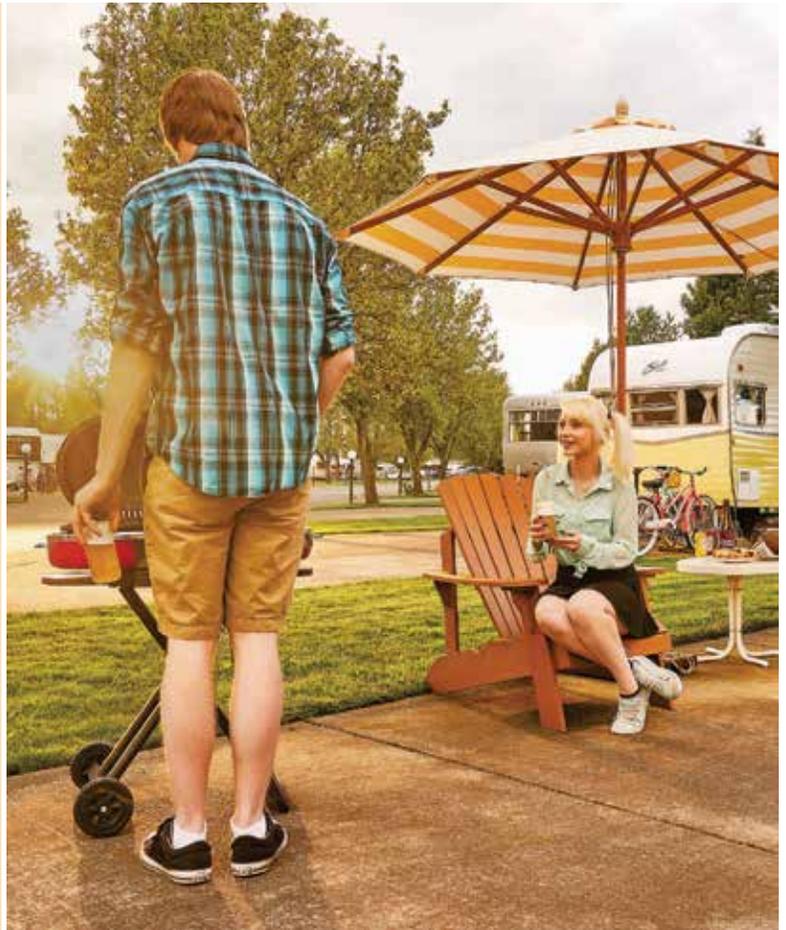
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