

NORTHWEST TRAVEL AND OUTDOORS

Best Northwest Lake Getaways: Lake Chelan

Sun-kissed bliss on the state's dry side.



Image Credit: Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce
At Campbell's Resort, activities center around the waterfront

Pristine waters, creature comforts, long, sunny days and an easy flip-flop vibe draw multigenerational families to Lake Chelan each summer. Carved from an ancient glacier and fed by existing ones, Lake Chelan offers 50 miles of deep, cool, azure blue waters, bounded by steep rocky outcroppings and beach homes both modest and extravagant. Under the soaring blue sky—it's sunny 300 days a year!—rugged cliffs of basalt ease down toward verdant valleys dotted with farms, where acres of lush apple trees and grapevines flourish.

And on the lake's eastern shore sits the small town of Chelan, where the population swells each summer from 4,000 year-round residents to more than 20,000, and mom-and-pop shops dole out ice cream and burgers as fast as they can. We recommend milkshake breaks at the beloved Lakeview Drive In, open since 1957; give the chocolate and peanut butter shake a try.

For many families, staying at Campbell's, the town's landmark 1901 resort, is a yearly tradition. Nestled in a prime location on the lake, the original 16-room hotel still stands, beautifully renovated and updated through the years to include a popular, family-friendly pub with coveted outdoor dining tables. The resort now boasts 170 lakeside rooms, a day spa and a large pool, and many families have standing annual reservations; kids grow up playing with their "summer vacation" friends year after year.



Photograph by Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce. Building castles on the sandy shoreline are popular low-key activities

It's within easy walking distance to dinner at Local Myth Pizza, and can be followed by dancing to live music on the roomy back patio at Tin Lilly. Days here are spent on the lake, which is filled with ski boats doing figure eights and often towing large inflatables carrying children screaming with pleasure. Stand-up paddleboarders cruise the shoreline, and large family groups lounge in shady spots on the wide lawn at Campbell's or nearby at Don Morse Memorial Park on the waterfront.

For many families, it's also a tradition to spend a day at the pristinely clean Slidewaters Waterpark. Adrenaline junkies can take on the completely enclosed Purple Haze water slide, while the littlest of kiddos can take it easy on the Lazy River.

It would be a mistake to visit Chelan and not spend at least a few hours tasting wine. In just a couple of decades, the area (which was designated as an American Viticultural Area in 2009) has become home to dozens of wineries. Among them are the sparkling-wine-focused Karma Vineyards, where lunch at the winery's 18 Brix Restaurant might include spicy prawns with mint sauce with a sampler of bubbly; Cairdeas, where Charlie Lybecker makes wines inspired by the Rhône Valley of France; Fielding Hills, to taste deep, lush red wines while taking in a sweeping view of the lake; and Nefarious Cellars, an award-winning winery that many would say put Chelan on the winemaking map. Its beautiful stone patio with Adirondack chairs is a perfect perch for sipping.

Lake Chelan is more than the town of Chelan, of course. Just 20 minutes away is the smaller and quieter town of Manson. Families looking for more elbow room (and a full kitchen) gravitate to nearby Wapato Point, where condos for rent sit on acres of lush lawns, and putt putt golf, tennis courts and snack shacks beget a free-roaming environment for kids.

Manson is convenient to the bountiful breakfasts at Blueberry Hills (be sure to take time for blueberry picking outside the restaurant from July through September), and several wineries, with plenty of signs pointing the way. We recommend following the winding road to Hard Row to Hoe Vineyards, where the tongue-in-cheek names of wine (Shameless Hussy, After Noon Delight) epitomize owners Judy and Don Phelps' carefree spirit. You might even luck upon one of their outdoor live music events and decide to stay awhile. Like everything else around Lake Chelan come summertime, you'll find that the best memories are made when you're just doing what feels like fun.



Photograph by Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce. Wapato Point near Mason offers family-friendly accommodations

Insider Tip

Forgot that inflatable mattress for floating on the lake? Like any small town worth its salt, Chelan has an excellent Variety Store (230 W Manson Highway; 509.682.0861) with everything from water toys to cowboy hats and bathing suits, in case you forgot yours.

GETTING THERE: The town of Chelan, in north-central Washington, is about a three-and-a-quarter-hour drive from Seattle.

The Coordinates

Locations are in Chelan unless otherwise noted.

- [Blueberry Hills Farms](#), Manson, 1315 Washington St.; 509.687.2379
- [Campbell's Resort](#), 104 W Woodin Ave.; 509.682.2561; \$270–\$550.
- [Cairdeas Winery](#), 3395 State Route 150; 509.687.0555
- [Don Morse Memorial Park](#), 485 W Manson Highway; 509.682.8023
- [Fielding Hills Winery](#), 565 S Lakeshore Road; 509.888.9463
- [Hard Row to Hoe Vineyards](#), Manson, 300 Ivan Morse Road; 509.687.3000
- [Karma Vineyards](#), 1681 S Lakeshore Road; 509.682.5538
- [Nefarious Cellars](#), 495 S Lakeshore Road; 509.682.9505
- [Lakeview Drive In](#), 323 W Manson Highway; 509.682.5322
- [Local Myth Pizza](#), 122 S Emerson St.; 509.682.2914
- [Slidewaters Waterpark](#), 102 Waterslide Drive; 509.682.5751
- [Tin Lilly](#), 229 E Woodin Ave.; 509.888.8101
- [Wapato Point](#), Manson, 1 Wapato Point Pkwy.; 509.687.9511; \$275–\$445.