

Seattle Refined



The Chelan You Didn't Know About

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VIEW GALLERY



In the dog days of summer, when the city is melting and Seattle's lack of air-conditioning is painfully apparent, lots of us contemplate making the trip through the Cascades to enjoy the crystal clear waters of Lake Chelan.

But there's another Chelan - a dreamier, even more beautiful Chelan - that emerges in the 'shoulder' seasons of spring and fall, when most of the tourists have gone, reservations are easy, lines are short, the sun is still shining and the community celebrates living in one of the most glorious corners of our state.

Spring is a particularly good time to go with the family, either for Spring Break or just for a weekend and there's plenty to do for both young and old alike. I was lucky enough to visit recently with my daughter, and here are our tried and tested tips for a splendid spring getaway.

Things To Do

- **Ferry to Stehekin:** Water sports are limited before Memorial Day, but if you want to get out on the water, this is the perfect time of year to take the venerable *Lady of the Lake* over some of the deepest lake waters in the US to tiny [Stehekin](#), at the furthest reach of the 55 mile lake. On a sunny spring day, with the waters sparkling turquoise, the snow gleaming on the highest peaks, and the vineyards and orchards wreathed in bright spring green, this trip is nothing short of magical. The upper reaches of the lake are too steep for a road, so Stehekin, home to just 98 people, can only be reached by boat, float plane or after a 50-mile hike. There is a restaurant, a general store, two free campsites, a tiny school, a [vegetable garden](#) , a [bakery](#) , and a small fleet of school buses, which carry visitors to visit the majestic [Rainbow Falls](#). The snow melt makes the Falls particularly impressive in springtime, and the kids in our party loved seeing how close, and wet, they could get. They were also fascinated by the old school building, a two room log cabin, which is now a tiny museum. It's a leisurely trip, so make sure everyone is equipped with books and screens (though cell phone reception is limited to the Chelan end of the lake). A faster boat is available after Memorial Day.
- **Manson Apple Blossom Festival:** The apple blossom in the orchards was very early this year, a fact which saddened my photographer's heart, but did nothing to temper our enjoyment of Manson's 96th [Annual Apple Blossom Festival](#). This small, lakeside community, close to Wapato Point, welcomes locals and visitors alike to this celebration of the very best of small-town America. The parade is a children delight with plenty of marching bands, fire trucks, classic cars, queens and princesses, and even a mariachi marching band and Mexican horsemen to reflect the area's Mexican community. We enjoyed the street vendors, community pancake breakfast, the Quilt Show, the Famous Chicken Noodle Dinner hosted by the ladies of the church, featuring a sumptuous array of homemade pies, and of course the frequent opportunities for wine and cider tasting, which may have contributed to the beaming smiles on everyone's faces.
- **Shopping:** Downtown Chelan is small, but features an excellent [bookstore](#), a superb [yarn shop](#), a [whole food shop](#), a gourmet [kitchen store](#), boutiques and gift shops, all clustered around Chelan's charming log church. Antiques are to be found out on the road to Manson and there is plenty of wine to be sampled and bought at the local wineries. The brand new Visitor Center in the heart of downtown is well-worth popping into.
- **Activities:** Chelan's cute, fun and funky bowling alley [Chelan Lanes](#) was a big hit with kids of all ages and if you're staying at [Wapato Point](#), there are kayaks, jet skis and bikes to be rented on the beach, where you will also find a kids' playground and a fiendish crazy golf course.

Where To Eat

Produce from the area's myriad farms, orchards and vineyards features heavily on Chelan's restaurant menus. The winery, restaurant and gift shop at [*Wapato Point Cellars*](#) serves great food in a family-friendly ambiance - I enjoyed succulent lamb chops and a perfect local salad - while the award-winning views from the Sorrento restaurant at [*Tsillan Cellars*](#) over the vineyards and down to the lake can't be beaten. [*Marcela's*](#) busy and buzzy Cocina Mexicana in the heart of downtown is another Chelan institution (Fun fact: Marcela's mother is Rosita from the eponymous restaurant in Green Lake)

On a more homely note, the burgers and fries from the [*Lakeview Drive In*](#) were almost as spectacular as the view from its garden as the sun set over the lake. [*Blueberry Hills Farm*](#) serves a stunning brunch among the vineyards and orchards behind Manson and the lines in spring are much shorter than in high season - try the pancakes and waffles with blueberry syrup or blueberry pie filling, or the superbly light and creamy eggs benedict. For breakfast the muffins and cinnamon rolls from the [*Lake Chelan Artisan Bakery*](#) can't be beaten, and for a picnic lunch try the deli at [*Lone Pine Fruit*](#) for tasty sandwiches and salads. [*Vogue Coffee House and Wine Bar*](#) in downtown Chelan is a great place to stop

Where To Stay

Our condo at [*Wapato Point Resort*](#) was spacious and perfectly equipped with a kitchen, balcony and fireplace and lovely views down to the beach and lake. The whole family will enjoy the indoor and outdoor pools, gorgeous beach and cyclable grounds. The [*Mountain View Lodge & Resort*](#) is close to the wine cellars and tasting rooms of Manson and has a pool, hot tub and outdoor grills available to guests, while [*Campbell's*](#) has been has a Chelan fixture since 1901.