

# Wanderlust

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## BEST FESTS

These annual gatherings show off all Washington has to offer.

**THERE ARE REASONS** to celebrate in Washington year-round with fun-filled fairs, festivals, and events.

**Lake Chelan** (map p. 98) transforms into an enchanting wonderland during January's Winterfest ([lakechelan.com/winterfest](http://lakechelan.com/winterfest)). Festivities include ice-sculpting exhibitions (45,000 pounds worth), a "polar bear" plunge, and a wine walk.

February's Great Northwest Glass Quest ([thegreatnwglassquest.com](http://thegreatnwglassquest.com)) is a 10-day treasure hunt in **Stanwood** (p. 46) and **Camano Island** (p. 70) that awards hand-blown glass spheres by local artists. Just across the water, Penn Cove MusselFest ([thepenncovemusselsfestival.com](http://thepenncovemusselsfestival.com)) in March spotlights one of **Whidbey Island's** (p. 70) most coveted delicacies. Throughout the weekend, the extravaganza honors the region's world-renowned bivalves with chowder tastings and mussel-eating competitions.

You'll know spring has arrived by April, when millions of tulip bulbs bloom during the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival ([tulipfestival.org](http://tulipfestival.org)). Join thousands of others to admire the brilliant display in **La Conner** (p. 64) and surrounding cities.

In late April and early May, one of the state's oldest festivals draws thousands to **Wenatchee** (p. 98), the "Apple Capital of the World." The Washington State Apple Blossom Festival ([appleblossom.org](http://appleblossom.org)) shows off local pride with a food fair (with caramel apples aplenty) and a riverside carnival.

Basketball is the highlight during Spokane Hoopfest ([spokanehoopfest.net](http://spokanehoopfest.net)). Every June, 250,000 players and fans flock to downtown **Spokane** (p. 118) for the biggest 3-on-3 street basketball tournament in the world.

In August, technicolor hot air balloons dot the sky during the fifth anniversary of the Olympic Peninsula Air Affaire & Fly In ([olympicpeninsulaairaffaire.com](http://olympicpeninsulaairaffaire.com)) in the small town of **Sequim** (p. 76).

In late July, music lovers flock to **Seattle's** (p. 46) Capitol Hill Block Party ([capitolhillblockparty.com](http://capitolhillblockparty.com)). Three indoor venues and two outdoor stages

welcome 100-plus artists. In early August, sweet sounds fill **Orcas Island's** (p. 70) Doe Bay Fest ([doebayfest.com](http://doebayfest.com))—a bluegrass-meets-camping gathering held in a magical waterside setting. Over Labor Day, Bumbershoot ([bumbershoot.com](http://bumbershoot.com)) takes over **Seattle** for one of the city's biggest music bashes.

For epic eats and sights, August's National Lentil Festival ([lentilfest.com](http://lentilfest.com)) brings legume lovers to **Pullman** (p. 126). There are cook-offs, fun runs, and the world's largest bowl of lentil chili. That same month, the Washington State International Kite Festival ([kitefestival.com](http://kitefestival.com)) in **Long Beach** (p. 76) brings hundreds of colorful kites to the sandy beach for a week of celebration and friendly competition.

Treasure hunters turn out in droves for Labor Day's Packwood Flea Market ([packwoodfleamarket.com](http://packwoodfleamarket.com)), when hundreds of antiques vendors line the streets of **Packwood** (p. 84) for up to a mile. And in picturesque **Port Townsend** (p. 76), the acclaimed Wooden Boat Festival showcases some 300 wooden vessels for a who's who of the boating world.

Come October, don your lederhosen for **Leavenworth's** (p. 98) Oktoberfest ([leavenworthoktoberfest.com](http://leavenworthoktoberfest.com)). This Bavarian-themed town hosts a massive beer garden, plus oompah bands and brats every weekend of the month. Other fall festivities include the Old Apple Tree Festival ([cityofvancouver.us](http://cityofvancouver.us)) in **Vancouver** (p. 92), which honors the oldest living apple tree in the Pacific Northwest with cider pressings, as well as Fall Release ([wallawalla.wine.com/fall-tasting](http://wallawalla.wine.com/fall-tasting)), the perfect time to explore the wine mecca of **Walla Walla** (p. 110). Many of the town's 140 wineries participate in the drink- and food-filled weekend.

By December, holiday celebrations bring out revelers across the state. Browse the festive stalls during Leavenworth's Christkindlmarkt ([christkindlmarkt-leavenworth.com](http://christkindlmarkt-leavenworth.com)), and be dazzled by more than one million twinkling lights during The Lights of Christmas Festival ([thelightsofchristmas.com](http://thelightsofchristmas.com)) in **Stanwood**. —CORINNE WHITING