

NORTHWEST

W A I O R I D I M T I A K I B C I W Y T R A V E L & L I F E

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LODGING
+
OFF-THE-GRID
ESCAPES

2025
Northwest
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To Explore

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SPECIAL SECTION
**CASINO
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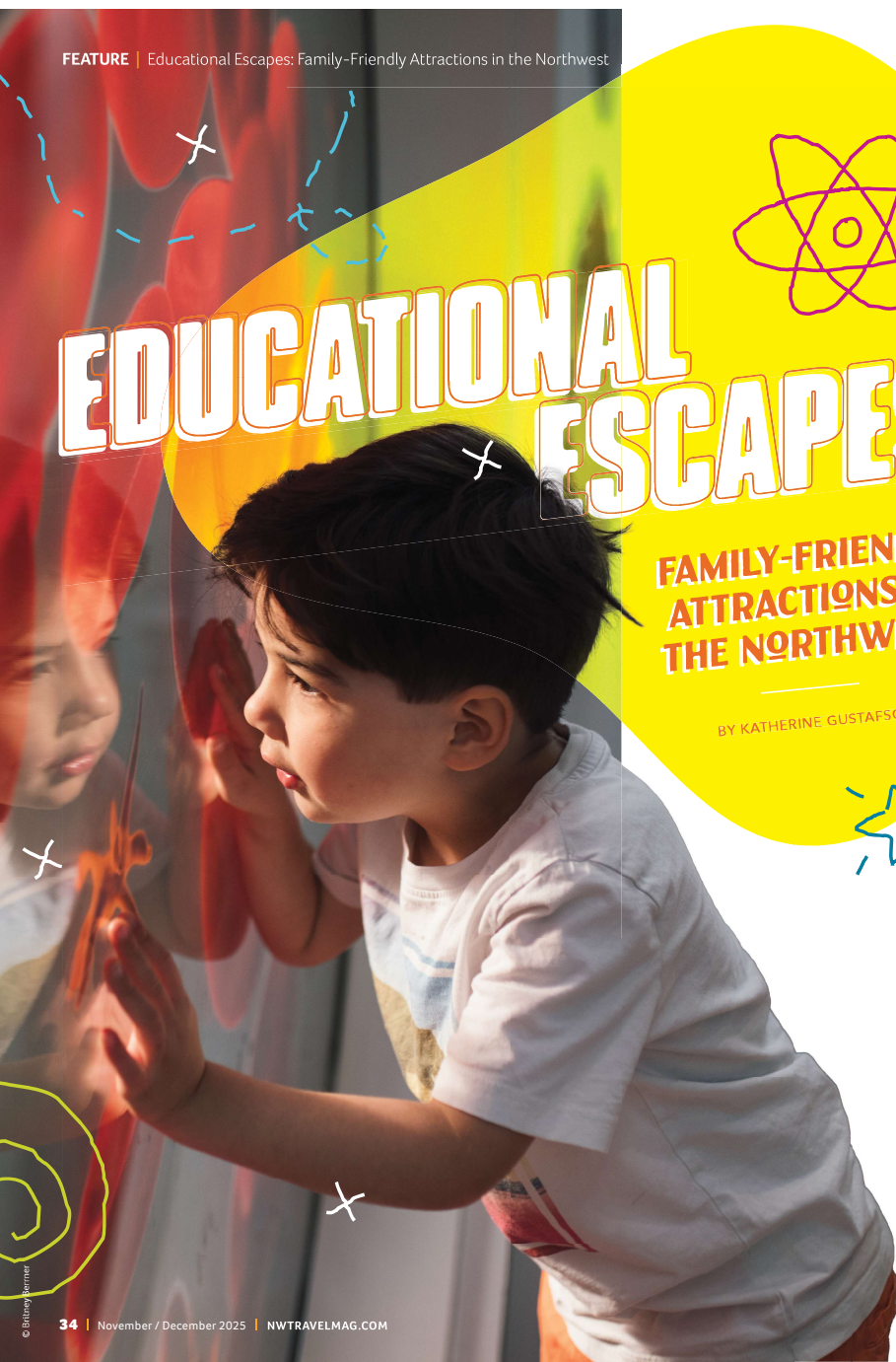


NWTRAVELMAG.COM

EDUCATIONAL ESCAPES

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ATTRACTIVEIONS IN THE NORTHWEST

BY KATHERINE GUSTAFSON



The Northwest offers a treasure trove of educational adventures that prove learning can be anything but boring. From towering glacial peaks to ancient fossil beds, from interactive science centers to living history farms, this region transforms education into exploration.

These carefully selected attractions strike the perfect balance between engaging young minds and satisfying curious adults, ensuring that family trips become journeys of discovery. Whether your family gravitates toward natural wonders, hands-on science or step-back-in-time experiences, the Northwest's educational attractions offer something to spark every child's imagination while creating lasting memories for the entire family.



JUNIOR RANGERS AT GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

MONTANA

Immerse your kids in the park ranger experience with the Junior Ranger program at Glacier National Park. Upon arrival at the Apgar, Logan Pass or St. Mary visitor centers, ask for a Junior Ranger workbook and watch your children work through puzzles, word searches and fill-in-the-blank activities designed to teach them about Glacier National Park's unique ecological makeup, history and conservation. Once completed, you can exchange the workbook for a junior ranger badge—a proud marker of the park's newest protector. Glacier also has a robust schedule of ranger-led programming that pairs perfectly with kids working away at their booklets. Designed for ages 6-12, this program promises discovery for the whole family and lets your child take charge. The combination of self-directed learning and expert guidance creates an ideal environment for young explorers to connect with one of America's most spectacular wilderness areas. Learn more at nps.gov/glac/index.htm. Make your Northwestern Montana travel plans at glaciercountymt.gov.



SCIENCE WORLD BRITISH COLUMBIA

For curious minds, Science World in Vancouver, B.C., is a foolproof activity for an unexpected rainy day. Housed in an iconic geodesic dome, families are free to explore hands-on exhibits that inspire curiosity about the world around them. For younger visitors, the Wonder Gallery features a soft crawling space, age-appropriate building materials and a splash area to foster wonder and experimentation. Backed by research, each area in the Wonder Gallery addresses different developmental skills like problem solving, cause and effect, and visualization. The rest of the

museum houses permanent exhibits that cover a wide range of STEAM topics (science, technology, engineering, art, and math). The BodyWorks Gallery walks you through all the processes in the body and how they work, from your largest organ to your smallest cell. For little thinkers, the Puzzles and Illusions exhibits will test their smarts with dozens of brain teasers and games. The Tinkering Space—The WorkSafe BC Gallery—provides a free space to experiment with building and designing your own creations. Science World promises a fun and engaging day for the whole family, rain or shine. Plan a visit at scienceworld.ca and plan your stay in Vancouver at destinationvancouver.com.



EVERGREEN AVIATION AND SPACE MUSEUM OREGON

In McMinnville, the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum is home to the world-famous Spruce Goose, the largest wooden airplane ever built. In this impressive museum, you'll walk through a timeline of aviation innovation, from some of the first biplane designs to modern technological marvels like the SR-71 Blackbird, which can reach speeds faster than a speeding bullet. For experiential learners, the MaxFlight Flight Simulator allows visitors to try their hand at flying the Spruce Goose, an F18 Fighter Jet or a WWII Fighter. Outfitted with an observatory, a 3D aerodrome theater, and incredible volunteer

staff—usually aerospace professionals—the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum is perfect for inquisitive minds or anyone interested in the incredible history of air travel. The museum's hands-on approach makes complex aviation concepts accessible to children while satisfying adult curiosity about flight innovation. Learn more at evergreenmuseum.org and plan your visit to McMinnville at visitmcminnville.com.



NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK WASHINGTON

Just 50 miles south of Seattle and tucked away in a tranquil forest, 435 acres of wildlife await exploration. Accessible through three different guided tours, you can drive through Northwest Trek's expansive wildlife refuge and see herds of bison, elk, moose, mountain goats and bighorn sheep grazing in their natural habitat. Most visitors take the electric tram throughout the area, although small-group Keeper Tours and personal vehicle tours offer a more premium experience. During an expertly led tour, you'll learn about the habits of the over 150 protected animals who reside within the free-range zone and their relationships to each other and their environment. Educational and exciting, each trip is unique, making this a great destination for repeat visits. Adjacent to the free-range area, walking trails

connect to enclosed exhibits featuring bears, wolves, birds and cougars. For the youngest visitors, the Kids Trek nature-inspired playground lets children experience nature on their own terms, building and climbing freely. The park also features daily keeper chats to satisfy all your wildlife questions. So, pack a lunch and prepare for an experience sure to spark curiosity and interest in our natural world. To learn more, visit nwtrek.org and visitpiercecounty.com.



BRUNDAGE MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE SCHOOL IDAHO

Boasting the "Best Snow in Idaho," Brundage Mountain offers unique programming for kids ages 7-12 not only to develop ski skills but also explore Brundage Mountain's ecosystem and foster curiosity in intermediate young skiers.

In addition to the Mountain Explorers program, Brundage offers private daily lessons available as full-day, half-day or 90-minute sessions. Conveniently located next to the parking lot is Beartopia, dedicated beginner and youth slopes perfect for dusting off the cobwebs before enrolling the kids in Adventure School or daycare for the day. The

lack of on-mountain lodging has fostered a unique parking lot community culture, where people eat, grill and stay—RV parking is available with registration. Or find lodging in nearby McCall. Independently owned, Brundage is a classic Idaho ski resort well known for its friendly, laid-back vibe, perfect for a family vacation that combines outdoor skills with mountain education. Plan your visit at brundage.com and visitmccall.org.



MUSK OX FARM ALASKA

Visit a land from before time, just 45 miles from Anchorage, and tour the Musk Ox Farm to learn about the cultivation of qiviut from these ancient, once-endangered animals. Known as the "Shaggy Survivor," the musk ox lived alongside woolly mammoths and saber-tooth tigers during the Ice Age. Qiviut, a material made from the undercoat of the musk ox, is softer than cashmere and warmer than sheep's wool and has been used for centuries by Alaskan Indigenous communities. The Musk Ox Farm is a nonprofit working to promote musk ox husbandry, qiviut production and

education for the public. Visitors are welcome to experience these prehistoric creatures up close and tour the picturesque farm while learning about the ongoing domestication and breeding projects. Perfect for little conservationists-in-the-making, a tour of the farm is sure to spark interest in the earth's storied past and current ecological circumstances. And, who knows? The musk ox just might become your child's favorite animal. Plan a visit to the Musk Ox Farm in Palmer, Alaska at muskoxfarm.org, and plan your visit to the Palmer region at alaskavisit.com.

