

A weekend in the Methow Valley with your outdoor-averse loved one

Got a nature-averse friend or boyfriend you want to share your passions with? The Methow River Valley has a great combination of outdoor adventures, cushy eateries, and abundant natural beauty to endear the countryside to even the most reluctant city mouse.

July 7, 2019

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If you've ever had friends or partners with little to no outdoor exposure (or enthusiasm), figuring out where to start can be tricky: while you don't want to throw them in the deep end with a 4-day backcountry backpacking trip, remote resorts and spas dilute outdoor exploration to the point of being unrecognizable.

Fortunately, the Pacific Northwest is home to some great destinations that combine the best of both worlds, like northeastern Washington's Methow River Valley. Grab your fishing pole, your rifle, some sleeping bags and a well-stocked cooler, and give your favorite cosmopolitan a weekend to remember.

LODGING: Rendezvous Huts

While many people often opt for Forest Service Cabins or even a hotel when looking to upgrade from a tent, the Methow Valley has a unique alternative: the [Rendezvous Huts](#). A collection of cabins placed along a cross-country ski trail, they are popular winter destinations that often go overlooked in the summertime as weekend getaways.

The Rendezvous huts have a couple of amenities and features that make them great for first-time campers, and make them the perfect home base for a weekend of outdoor adventure. The huts feature the same seclusion and stunning views of backcountry hiking, and also come with a gas oven, breakfast nook, wood stove, and beds with foam mattresses that are kept clean and dry. Each cabin *can* sleep about 8-10 people, but if you're traveling with a couple close friends it makes them feel extra spacious. The huts have ample seating (plus board games) for just hanging around, which can be great for new campers after sunset, when the temperature drops significantly in the mountains.

For your basic needs, there's an outhouse with TP, and a five-gallon barrel stocked with potable water that's left waiting on the stoop for every guest when they arrive. That being said, there is no plumbing, so let your friend know showering will have to wait for Sunday night. The only other drawback to the cabin (for some) is their open-doors policy. In all seasons, the cabins are intended to be used during the day as rest and warming areas for hikers and skiers, so the doors do not lock, and guests are advised to keep their things tidy for when folks drop by during the day. It's a good introduction to the trust and community that's so integral to camping communities, but I'd give your companion a heads up.

FRIDAY NIGHT: A hike, a home-cooked meal, and a sunset

If you're able to hit the road in the morning or at midday, I'd highly recommend it. Leaving from the Seattle/Tacoma area, Winthrop is about three to five hours away depending on traffic, and about three to four hours from Spokane, Yakima, and Bellingham. And once you're in town, the back roads up to the cabins take about 30 minutes.

Because there are some easy trails with gorgeous views that run right past the cabin, I'd recommend dropping your stuff off and setting out on a moderate hike to celebrate your arrival. The fresh air and spectacular views warm the hearts of even the slickest of city-dwellers. Used for cross-country skiing in the winter, the trails are wide and smooth, and wind around fields of wildflowers and groves of gorgeous pine trees.

When you get back to the cabin, take advantage of the stove and oven and whip up a homegrown northwest meal. While it cooks, open a bottle of wine, and take in the sun setting over the mountain ranges. (If you bring your own harvest, [garlic venison shanks](#) or [pheasant saltimbocca](#) are both made with a few ingredients and spices that are easy to bring up to the hut and, but for the meat, don't require much refrigeration.) Each hut also comes with a fire pit, so you can even give your guest the quintessential s'more experience outside, or opt for hot toddies inside by the wood-burning stove.

SATURDAY: Breakfast in bed, Methow Valley Ciderhouse, fishing in Pearrygin, & a DIY and dine-out dinner option

Your first morning in Methow is one to savor: the play of colors on the valley and mountains is a multi-hour show, as golden sunlight mingles with the deep emerald of the trees and bruised plum shadows of the valley. Whip up some local pour-over coffee on the stove, show off your wood fire cooking skills with a fresh morning [scramble](#), and take in the views. You'll want to have some food on board anyway before you visit the **Methow Valley Ciderhouse**.

Modest in appearance and simple in menu, the Ciderhouse sits just on the edge of town, near the road that leads up to the Rendezvous Huts. Established in 2007 by couple Lynne and Richard, the Ciderhouse grows its own apples just down the road, and offers a selection of local wine and beers and a standard pub menu. As with most craft beverage establishments, the flight is by far the best way to go, though most people end up choosing the Howling Wolf, their dry-hopped cider, for their second glass.

Now you have a couple choices at this juncture: you're welcome to spend your afternoon on the Ciderhouse porch, but if you're hoping to lure your friend further into the outdoor life, Pearrygin Lake is a favorite local fishing spot. The lake boasts 10-13' rainbow and some carryover fish, and also proves a very mellow spot to drop your canoe in and row idly about if you need some down time.

If you don't manage to catch your evening's supper at the lake, or want to class up the excursion and relieve your friend of the hardships of nature, you can venture to nearby Twisp for [Tappi](#)'s oven-roasted Italian-inspired fare, accompanied by a wine menu featuring some affordable and delectable options. Whatever you order for your main course, be sure you order a *cuscino*, or pillow bread, which looks like a golden brown nerf ball and tastes like the inside of the fluffiest pizza crust imaginable.

While there are a few bars in the valley (like [The Old Schoolhouse Brewery](#) or [Copper Glance](#)) nothing can beat watching the sunset over the mountains, so I'd recommend grabbing a bottle of bourbon at [The Wine Shed](#) and heading back up to your hut to enjoy the dusk and hushed babble of the forest falling to sleep.

SUNDAY: Brunch in town, Winthrop gun range, and some vegan burritos for the road

To make cleanup and re-loading your car a bit quicker, Sunday morning's a great time to skip the home-cooked breakfast and head straight to town. Winthrop has a slew of good options: [Rocking](#)

[Horse Bakery](#) has delicious sweet and savory breakfast pastries, and serve up a damn good cup of coffee with beans roasted next door at [Lariat Coffee](#). If it's standard greasy spoon fare you're after, pop into [Three-Fingered Jack's](#) for some enormous breakfast samplers. And if you're just looking for a small bite and some fine espresso, [Kind Grinds](#) is on the same main drag in town.

The Winthrop gun range is just a suggestion, but if you're a hunter and are trying, slowly, gently, to bring your friend or partner around, the Winthrop gun range has a few things that I think make the experience a lot more enjoyable. This range was where my partner first showed me how to shoot, and we had a blast (pun intended). Calling it no-frills is generous, since it's basically a long gazebo with tables facing a blank hillside. But as a woman who previously felt pretty alienated by the very masculine culture of bigger shooting ranges, it was exactly what I needed to feel comfortable, safe, and unscrutinized. The Winthrop gun range was quiet, outside, and sparsely used but for a few friendly locals—men and women alike—who clearly came there regularly. It was a much more convivial and approachable atmosphere, and I think very safe so long as at least one person in your party with is thoroughly knowledgeable about gun safety and firearms. But that just goes for *all* hunting and shooting excursions.

While hopefully your travelling companion will want to stay at the range all day, it's best to head out by about two or three p.m. to avoid getting stuck in weekend traffic. Nearby Mazama has a general store with so much more, including a little depot of quality outdoor clothing and gear, a gift shop (replete with coffee mugs, hydro flasks, and knit hats), and comprehensive deli with enough vegan burritos and kombucha to delight any urbanite looking to reacclimatize.

Hopefully, though, after a weekend of outdoor views, delicious food, and bedazzled mountain mornings, they won't want to.