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THE GREAT WASHINGTON STATE BIRDING TRAIL

A birding trail can become much more than just a great way to see wildlife in their natural habitats. It can be an immersive driving, biking or even kayaking trip, with selected stops that feature information about the area, seasonal changes and bird migration patterns.

There are plenty of loops along the Great Washington State Birding Trail. With more than 300 stops, there's sure to be one that fits your fancies, from the Olympic Loop to the Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway. When you purchase a birding trail package (\$4.99), it includes helpful maps to guide you and even original artwork to enhance your experience.

Audubon Washington has also rolled out Birding Trail WA, a mobile app that allows users to pick driving loops and features hot spots chosen by experts in the area. The app simplifies trip planning, directions and even on-the-trail bird referencing.

Buy your Birding Trail maps at seattleaudobon.org or purchase the Great Washington State Birding Trail app on your phone (available for iPhone and Android).



Snowy Plover

© Morro Strand

OR | PACIFIC CITY

Headlands Coastal Lodge & Spa

Highway 101 defines most destinations vacationers visit on the Oregon Coast. But if you get off the highway, you enter a more remote world with fewer fellow travelers. Pacific City, located at the south end of the Three Capes Scenic Drive, is one such place. And it's the home of the recently opened Headlands Coastal Lodge and Spa.

The visionaries behind Headlands, Mary Jones and Jeff Schons, long ago helped put Pacific City on the map with their Inn at Cape Kiwanda, Pelican Brewing and more. Headlands has been on the drawing board for years and is the first new luxury property to open along the 363-mile Oregon Coast in at least a decade.

"Luxury" is often an exaggeration, but at Headlands it is authentic. Not only did meticulous attention go into every detail of the building's warm yet stunning architectural design but also into every material element and guest service, including the staffed Adventure Center.

The backdrop? The massive sand dunes of Cape Kiwanda Natural Area, a beach where dory boats and surfers launch, and the monolithic sea stack, Haystack Rock. The view from the guest rooms (each with an ocean panorama) takes in all of this.

Headlands is all about curating your own experience, whether that includes planning outdoor adventures with the help of an on-site adventure coach, enjoying indoor indulgences in the spa and wellness studio or in the restaurant, Meridian, or lounging in your room in front of the fireplace. With only 33 guest rooms—each with its own bike and surf board rack and a glass-walled shower so you don't miss the view for a moment—it will feel like you have the place all to yourself.

To book your stay at Headlands Coastal Resort and Spa, visit headlandslodge.com. Find out more about this stretch of the north Oregon Coast at tillamookcoast.com.



© Coates Cokes



The Taste of Authenticity

SECRETS OF 3 HOTEL CHEFS

BY ALLEN COX

NO MATTER WHERE I TRAVEL, I like to find authenticity in the places I go. And I'm not alone; many modern travelers are looking for the real place behind a tourist façade. The travel industry has caught on; for many hospitality insiders, curating and delivering authenticity is becoming an art form. When it comes to food, chefs are taking a stab at authenticity by focusing on local flavors and even the heritage of the local cuisine. In my recent travels, I came across three individuals—each an executive chef at a distinctive Northwest hotel—who work hard to deliver their interpretation of local cuisine to their guests. Of course, these are not the only chefs on board with expressing local authenticity on the plate, but these are



some front runners to watch, and whose food you should eat if you're ever visiting their corners of the Northwest.

Chef Andrew Garrison,

HEADLANDS COASTAL LODGE AND SPA

The new luxury lodge, Headlands Coastal Lodge and Spa, opened in Pacific City, Oregon, and is home to Meridian, a welcome addition to the food scene on the North Oregon Coast. Andrew Garrison was presented with the honor and challenge of opening the new restaurant, with many critical eyes watching his every move, anxious to discover what he would bring to the table at the new hotel.

Garrison came to Meridian with his culinary philosophies intact. He is a staunch believer in using what's available and in its prime, whether foraged from forest or shoreline, fished from the Pacific right outside the restaurant or grown on local farms.

"I get my inspiration from the landscape and the seasons," says Garrison, who does much of his own foraging for wild edibles. "And I spend a lot of time reading about the area's cultural heritage." That cultural heritage includes Native American, Japanese and Scandinavian influences—a very broad palette from which to draw for an ever-changing menu.

Garrison is lucky: The coast has a year-round growing season that's a long string of endless micro seasons. He characterizes the fare at Meridian as "seasonal, technique-driven, unfussy and casual." It's a place where diners can show up in flip-flops and relax over a first-rate meal that's a perfect expression of their surroundings. The focus at Meridian is what's on the plate and the amazing view out the windows.

An ideal meal at Meridian includes fresh oysters on the half-shell from nearby Netarts Bay (the best on the West Coast, according to Garrison) with Champagne mignonette, a pasta course of Dungeness crab agnolotti, fresh catch of the day (no matter what it is), followed by a plate of regional artisan cheeses.

Book your reservation at headlandslodge.com.

Chef Matt Hale, SKAMANIA LODGE

Skamania Lodge is tucked away on the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge, less than an hour from Portland. It's a challenging process to

build an experienced staff there, but Matt Hale took on the challenge roughly three years ago, and a year later it paid off. He has become a culinary front runner in these parts, and his reputation is spreading beyond the Gorge.

Hale's culinary values were hatched on the farm; for him, farm-to-table has been a way of life since he was a child. He grew up on a family farm in California's Sierras; he learned to grow his own food as a young child, a practice he has brought with him to Skamania Lodge. His kitchen garden at the lodge is more of a teaching garden for staff than a production garden for the restaurant.

Farms in the Columbia River Gorge produce fresh abundance for Hale to choose from, and he has established relationships with local producers who bring a steady stream of supply to his kitchen door, from produce to meat, cheese and eggs. To supplement the scarcity of fresh, local ingredients in the colder months, Hale does his own canning and pickling on site. He embraces the Slow Food movement, as do many of his peers, and is active in Slow Food Southwest Washington.

What can diners expect in the Cascade Dining Room at Skamania Lodge? The flavors of the Columbia River Gorge. An ideal dinner that's Hale's authentic expression of local bounty might include a starter of skillet forest mushrooms, Chinook salmon chowder, radicchio salad with local Cloud 9 goat cheese, locally raised Muscovy duck breast with creamy farro, topped off with local huckleberry bread pudding.

Hale keeps it simple; why mask a good thing like quality fresh ingredients with unnecessary embellishments?

A good time to visit is during one of Hale's cooking classes or wine/beer-pairing dinners (make reservations). Check it out at destinationhotels.com/Skamania.

Chef Grant Hinderliter,

THE MARCUS WHITMAN

Walla Walla, Washington, has made its mark as a culinary destination worth seeking out. Of course, the region's acclaimed wineries helped establish that



© The Marcus Whitman

reputation. Local food plus local wine... well, you get it. The city's centerpiece has long been The Marcus Whitman, a historic and graceful hotel that's home to farm-to-table fine dining establishment, The Marc.

The Marc's executive chef, Grant Hinderliter, has established a reputation as an expert on what's grown in the fertile Walla Walla Valley. Lamb and beef from local growers highlight the menu's mains. He buys from local growers, he cans and pickles ingredients he sources locally for year-round bounty and he has turned the hotel's rooftop into a garden where he can grow his own fresh ingredients for winter and spring. Hinderliter even has a certification in food preservation, a passion he inherited from his grandmother.

Hinderliter describes his technique as "French-influenced with a Pacific Northwest spin." He has a passion for in-season wild ingredients, and he personally forages for mushrooms, nettles, edible ferns, elderberries and huckleberries.

In the summer, make reservations for one of Hinderliter's rooftop dinners for a memorable evening in the setting Walla Walla sun.

The ultimate dining experience at The Marc is a seat at the Chef's Table in the kitchen, which includes an evening of face time with Hinderliter and his team while they serve you a multi-course chef's choice dinner.

Book lodging and dinner at marcuswhitmanhotel.com.



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