



It's a good little walk across glaciers and snowfields to Camp Muir, 10,000 feet up on the shoulder of Mount Rainier.

**The twilight zone.**

You don't have to go into space to enter another dimension. Visit Gold Hill, Oregon, home of the 165-foot-diameter Oregon Vortex.

Within its circle, people "shrink" or "grow" depending on where they stand; animals shun the area. No one knows what causes the magnetic weirdness, but the eruption of Mount St. Helens apparently weakened its power. Call 503-855-1543.

## NORTHWEST

I was sitting on a mossy spruce log deep in Washington's Cascade Mountains, with Bill, a man in his fifties, and Jennifer, a woman in her twenties. We had just met, 40 miles from the nearest paved surface. Behind us, 110-degree Goldmyer Hotsprings leaked from bedrock into a steaming pool in which several people lay soaking. All of us were naked.

Bill pointed to a trough in the stream bottom, then spoke in a voice both placid and commanding, like a kung fu instructor. "You see where the water shoots over that little flume?" I nodded. "Well, stare at that point for a few seconds. Try not to look at the water, but at the green stone underneath." I did. "Okay, now look at the rock wall behind the stream."

"Wow," I said. As I raised my eyes, the wall seemed to shimmy and vibrate with the motion of water. It looked like an earthquake. I felt dizzy.

"Yeah," said Bill. "Your brain sees the relationship between the rock and the water, rather than seeing the two things separately. You pick up on the connectedness of things, the way all atoms follow a single pattern. You see the dance."

I tried to follow what he was saying, but just then the damp Washington sky broke for a moment; a shaft of sun shot through the trees, bounced from the green moss on the rocks and off Jennifer's green eyes. I was struck by the connectedness of nature and headed back for the springs, resolving to continue this conversation with Bill later, perhaps in Seattle over a falafel. In short, it was a typical day in the Northwest woods.



**ISLAND-HOPPING**

The Pacific Northwest is an intense combination of mountain and sea, rock and rain forest. Nowhere is this juxtaposition of land and water more striking than in Washington's San Juan Islands, which dot the Strait of Georgia at the extreme northwest corner of the 48 contiguous states.

The only way to experience the San Juans completely is by sea kayak, paddling from one secluded beach to the next. Every summer, Seattle-based Outback Expeditions (206-932-7012) runs three-day kayak/camping trips from Orcas Island to Sucia Island, a boat-only state park. The \$189 fee includes kayak instruction, all camping gear, and near-gourmet meals. My last Sucia trip was highlighted by a spectacular show of northern lights that I watched from my sleeping bag on an empty beach.

To camp on an Orcas Island cliff, sleep in a rustic cabin, soak in a hot tub, or listen to live bluegrass, try Doe Bay Village, a laid-back New Age resort on the far tip of the island. Cabins start for less than \$30 a night. The island is a 50-minute ferry ride from the port city of Anacortes. Call 206-376-2291.



**PACK A COMPASS**

Pay attention; this is good stuff. Pick up copies of two maps published by the U.S. Geological Survey in 1:100,000 metric scale: "Burgess Junction, Wyoming-Montana" and "Worland, Wyoming." Go to Sheri-