



Above: Lake Pend Oreille, viewed from the deck at Sleep's Cabins in Sandpoint

Right: Spokane's cultural high point, the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture



artsy and inviting attitude.

From Spokane, it's an easy 90-minute drive to Sandpoint if you take Interstate 90 east to Coeur d'Alene, and then U.S. 95 north, but as is my usual tendency, I opted for a slightly longer scenic route up winding U.S. 2, much of it along the rippling Pend Oreille River. Once again, I arrived as the sun was setting, this time checking into a beautifully appointed little bungalow at Sleep's Cabins (sleepscabins.com), situated on the southwest shore of 150-square-mile Lake Pend Oreille (pronounced "PAHN-dor-ay"). Each of the six rustic cabins at this circa-1930s family-owned compound has a kitchen, and they sleep from 2 to 10 guests. Most of Sandpoint's accommodations are independently owned—other good bets include the upscale Lodge at Sandpoint (lodgeatsandpoint.com) and the modern Dover Bay Bungalows (doverbaybungalows.com), both of which enjoy frontage along this dramatic mountain lake.

I drove into town for dinner at Eichardt's Pub (sandpoint.com/go/eichardts), a casual place with live music, a notable wine and craft beer list and hearty food (you won't go wrong with the elk burger and addictively tasty garlic fries). Back at my accommodation, I sat out on the dock admiring Lake Pend Oreille in the moonlight, and I wondered how such a stunning little town has remained relatively undiscovered outside the region.

After a morning jog along the lakefront, I spent a good bit of the day poking around Sandpoint's downtown. At the flagship of the outdoorsy yet stylish women's apparel company, Coldwater Creek—which is based in Sandpoint—I ascended a flight of stairs to the store's rustically elegant wine and coffee bar, where I enjoyed a leisurely lunch while pecking away on my laptop. I also dropped by Sandpoint's excellent Pend d'Oreille Winery and Tasting Room (powine.com), where I snapped up a couple of bottles of terrific Sangiovese Reserve—you can also dine here on sophisticated tapas at the dapper Bistro Rouge Café. I popped inside two other restaurants of considerable local acclaim, Sand

Creek Grill, which specializes in small-plate regional cuisine, and Joel's, a first-rate Mexican restaurant. There's enough good eating in this town to keep you happily noshing for several days.

I wasn't in town long enough to partake of any of the outdoorsy activities for which Sandpoint is known, but there's no shortage of ways to get your blood flowing. From spring through fall, you can rent sailboats and kayaks, fish for trout, play golf or ride horseback. And in winter, just 10 miles north of town, Schweitzer Mountain (schweitzer.com) ranks among the country's better secrets among downhill skiing enthusiasts (during the warmer months it's ideal for mountain biking, disc golf, hiking and huckleberry picking).

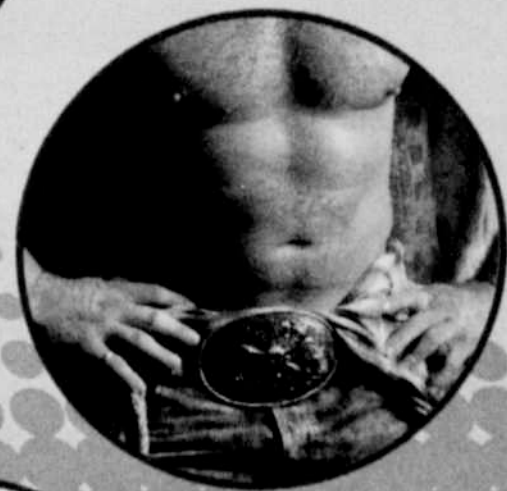
By late afternoon, I was ready to continue my journey—motoring up U.S. 2 to Bonners Ferry, and then across into Western Montana, where I'd eventually make my way that evening to the town of Kalispell. I broke up my "Across America" trek with frequent trips back to Portland (leaving my car in strategic spots around the country), and in early April, I finally drove the last leg of my journey, returning home from the Rockies by way of Salt Lake City and Boise. After 20,000 miles of vigorous exploring, with plenty of great adventures along the way, I can honestly say I'm already looking forward to a return trip to Spokane and Sandpoint. **JO**

Read more about ANDREW COLLINS' travels at thecountyhunter.com and gaytravel.about.com.

Q Doc

Portland Queer Documentary Film Festival

June 2-5, 2011
Clinton Street Theatre



Films At a Glance

~ Thursday June 2

7pm Arias with a Twist: The Docufantasy
9:30pm Opening Night Party at Mother's Bistro

~ Friday June 3

7pm Hit So Hard
9:30pm The Ballad of Genesis & Lady Jaye

~ Saturday June 4

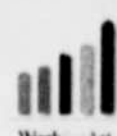
2pm On These Shoulders We Stand
4pm I Am
6:30pm The Adonis Factor
9pm The Advocate for Fagdom

~ Sunday June 5

Noon Passionate Politics
2pm Youth Speak Out
4:30pm Inspired: Voices Against Prop 8
7pm Becoming Chaz

All screenings at the Clinton Street Theater
2522 SE Clinton Street

Info & Tickets
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