

Fall is the perfect time for a visit to the Columbia River Gorge

POST CARD

By KC Cowan
The Southwest Portland Post

If you're looking for a quick getaway this fall, consider a trip up the Columbia River Gorge. With lots of good restaurants, lodging and activities, it's the perfect place to head for two to three days of fun exploration.

My husband and I just spent three days in the Gorge, making Stevenson, Wash. our base. Skamania Lodge and golf course is a great resort with fine dining and beautiful rooms, but we opted to stay at the Riverside Lodge right in downtown Stevenson.

At \$89 a night, we saved enough to pay for most of our other activities and one lovely meal at Skamania Lodge.

The Riverside Lodge offers cozy knotty-pine log cabins at the edge of the Columbia River.

Each cabin has a theme (ours was

Caribbean culture) and features a small kitchen, even smaller bathroom, and outdoor hot tubs.

The upside is the river location and price. The downside is they only had double beds and the cabins are right by the railroad crossing and the train horns are extremely loud. Earplugs are provided.

There are many good hiking trails around Stevenson, but if you want a less strenuous walk, tour downtown Stevenson and enjoy the historic placards on many buildings.

Then, head west and stroll around the cove. You might see geese or a blue heron, and the trail takes you to the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center Museum – well worth a visit.

Taking a leisurely drive up Highway 14 is a fun way to explore Skamania County. One day, we "followed our noses" to the old Carson Hot Springs hotel and spa.

They're building a brand new spa pool, so we'll make a note to return next year to try it out. From there, we headed to White Salmon for lunch.

No trip to the Gorge is complete without a stop at the Maryhill Museum, one of my personal favorites.

It has a world-class collection of Native American artifacts and baskets, Rodin sculpture, and items donated by Queen Marie

of Romania to her friend, Sam Hill.

The views of the Gorge are stunning and we happily spent three hours enjoying all they have to offer.

Crossing over to the Oregon side of the Columbia River, the town of Hood River is another good day trip from Stevenson, and it offers lots of shopping and culture.

We always stop in at the community art gallery at the Columbia Center for the Arts and our visit coincided with a brand new show with the theme: Farm to Fork – Art of the Harvest.

We fell in love with a painting of figs and pears by Sally Reichmuth and so we bought it. We were even able to pose with the artist, who was volunteering at the gallery that day!

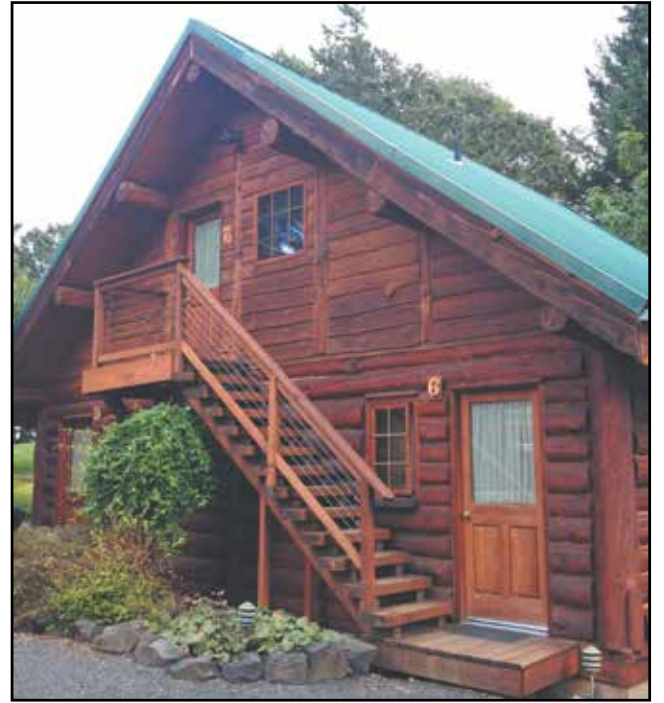
Our trip to Hood River included a well-earned stop at the Full Sail brewery and pub. It was warm enough to sit outside to enjoy our ales, and their hamburgers are simply the best!

September and October are great months to view salmon swimming up the Columbia River to their spawning grounds.

You can watch Native Americans fishing in the river, but the Visitor Center at the Bonneville Dam lets you get up close just west of the Bridge of the Gods.

The fish viewing room has enormous windows in which you will see salmon, shad, lampreys and steelhead swim by.

Helpful forest rangers will teach



Riverside Lodge in Stevenson is affordable and charming. (Post photo by KC Cowan)



KC Cowan, artist Sally Reichmuth, and Glenn Micallef at Columbia Center for the Arts in Hood River. (Photo courtesy of Laurel Bushman)

you how to identify wild salmon from hatchery born, and there's an excellent display of the history of salmon in the Gorge.

If you have time, take a tour of the Bonneville Dam. I was amazed that we were allowed to actually walk on one of the turbines!

After all that touring, you might need a break. We did, so we scheduled two massages and a swim at the Bonneville Hot Springs. It was a wonderful way to wind up our getaway trip. The Gorge offers so much and is such an easy drive from Portland. We'll be back!

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