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house Park across the street.

Another hidden gem in the Warrenton area is Mé Latte Espresso, a small roadside coffee stand off Highway 101. Mé Latte is notable not only for its reasonably priced espresso drinks, smoothies and teas, but also its friendly service.

If you're in the mood for ethnic cuisine, head to Nisa's Thai Kitchen, located in a simple, unassuming building — which more closely resembles a house — near the Warrenton Marina. The restaurant is currently take-out only but that doesn't stop you from dining on traditional and inventive Thai dishes at a nearby park.

Before starting your day of exploring in the Warrenton-Hammond area, you can also fill up on a hearty breakfast at Arnie's Café. Whether you order chicken fried steak with eggs and home fries, traditional eggs benedict or a stack of pancakes, you are almost guaranteed to receive an unpretentious breakfast that's easy on the wallet and satisfying to the stomach.

Places to stay

Lodging options are not as abundant in Warrenton as they are in nearby coastal cities. Warrenton, however, has something special in Fort Stevens State Park, which offers camping on its sprawling 4,300 acres in

addition to several miles of walking and biking trails, beach access and a military history museum.

The fort was formerly a part of the three-fort, Harbor Defense System installed at the mouth of the Columbia River. It was used for approximately eight decades from the Civil War to the end of World War II and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Now the park hosts approximately 170 full-hookup camping sites, 15 rustic yurts and 11 deluxe cabins, not to mention access to Coffenbury Lake, which has two swimming areas, a boat ramp and a picnic area. Two smaller lakes also provide opportunities for canoeing and fishing. KOA in Warrenton also offers a bounty of space to camp.

For more traditional accommodations, you can get a room at Shilo Inns' Warrenton location on East Harbor Drive, just south of the New Youngs Bay Bridge. The hotel offers the expected assortment of rooms and suites, some of which have a small kitchenette.

Finally, the South Jetty Inn, in Hammond, gives off a vintage vibe from its charming exterior to the cozy interior. The no-frills budget motel is under new management and offers conveniently located lodging. You can also pop over to the Buoy 9 Restaurant & Lounge, situated next to the inn, for a drink or a meal.



Katherine Lacaze

Cullaby Lake County Park.

Evening activity: Picnic at a park

BY ALYSSA EVANS

It's no surprise that Warrenton is a hub for great parks to visit. Many are great for walking, hiking, swimming and fishing.

On a weeknight or evening, going to one of Warrenton's parks often offers the perfect retreat for picnicking.

Some of the town's parks offer great views of the Pacific Ocean, others of the Columbia River or Youngs Bay. Others are located near smaller bodies of water, like Smith Lake County Park, Carnahan County Park or Cullaby Lake County Park.

If you're looking to watch the sunset along the ocean's horizon, consider bringing your picnic to Fort Stevens State Park or the Sunset Beach State Recreation Site. If you'd rather get a view of the river, there are more options to choose from, including Seafarer's Park, the Warrenton Dog Park, Carruthers Memorial Park, the Warrenton Waterfront Trail and Lighthouse Park. Skipanon River Park and Lewis and Clark National Historical Park are other worthwhile stops.

When deciding what to pack for your picnic, consider purchasing take-out from a local restaurant. If you head out for your picnic before 8 p.m., you can likely get food from Trina & Ron's Place, Fultano's Pizza, El Compadre Restaurant, Nisa's Thai or El Catrin Mexican Cuisine. Each spot offers a variety of delicious meals to choose from.

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