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# This Small Washington Town Offers Fun for Families All Year Round

Take a family getaway to Lynden for small-town pleasures and rural recreation

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER (/AUTHOR/GEMMA-ALEXANDER) |

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PHOTO: Courtesy Visit Bellingham

**Editor's note:** This article was sponsored by [The Inn at Lynden \(https://innatlynden.com/promotions\)](https://innatlynden.com/promotions).

You can drive to Canada and never know this gem of a town is there. But head 15 minutes northeast of Bellingham and you'll find yourself in another world. Far from the madding (and infectious) crowd, Lynden, Washington is a cozy agricultural community tailor-made for a relaxed, all-ages, socially distanced getaway.

“The thing about Lynden is that for recreation it’s the place to be. The Lynden community is really safe, very walkable, great for biking, very friendly – it’s really terrific for families,” says Teri Treat, general manager of [The Inn at Lynden](https://innatlynden.com/promotions) (<https://innatlynden.com/promotions>).

Whether you’re looking for an uncrowded small-town weekend, want a more rural experience, or need to spend unmasked time in the great outdoors, Lynden makes a good base.

## Small-town pleasures

Lynden is a quaint, compact community founded by Dutch settlers in the late 1800s. That Dutch heritage is still subtly reflected in the community’s historic architecture. Lynden lacks the touristy vibe of a [certain other European-flavored town](https://www.parentmap.com/article/leavenworth-washington-families-kids-fall) (<https://www.parentmap.com/article/leavenworth-washington-families-kids-fall>) – it’s still the hub of a working farm community – but its walkable downtown has plenty of attractions and amenities for an affordable family getaway.



*Inn at Lynden front desk; photo by Lee Eberhardt*

Listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, the Waples Mercantile Building on Front Street was built in 1914 as the Lynden Department Store and still anchors downtown. The building was remodeled in 2015 to serve as a mixed-use boutique inn and specialty shops. [The Inn at Lynden](https://innatlynden.com/) (<https://innatlynden.com/>)’s 35 rooms combine modern comforts with design that highlights the building’s history. The Waples Mercantile Building also houses two restaurants ([Avenue Bread](https://avenuebread.com/) (<https://avenuebread.com/>), which serves breakfast and lunch, and the [Overflow Taps](https://overflowtaps.com/) (<https://overflowtaps.com/>) pub), a bookstore and clothing stores for women and children.

Front Street offers an abundance of other restaurants and shops. An old-time roller rink and the [Lynden Pioneer Museum](https://www.lydenpioneermuseum.org/) (https://www.lydenpioneermuseum.org/) – with volunteers in period dress and the largest collection of horse-drawn vehicles west of the Mississippi – are both within walking distance. The former city hall now houses [Jansen Art Center](https://www.jansenartcenter.org/) (https://www.jansenartcenter.org/), which hosts rotating classes and exhibits that showcase ceramics, fine art, jewelry, textiles and performances.



*A young visitor enjoys an ice cream treat at Lynden's City Park's Million Smiles Playground; photo courtesy Visit Bellingham*

The flat landscape of Lynden – so much like Holland – makes cycling an easy way to explore beyond downtown (guests at the Inn at Lynden can borrow Dutch-style bikes for free). Kids will love City Park's Million Smiles Playground with its climbing wall, castle maze and treehouse. Afterwards, cool off with a sweet treat at the [Edaleen Dairy Store](https://www.edaleendairy.com/our-stores) (https://www.edaleendairy.com/our-stores), which crafts more than 40 different flavors of ice cream.

## Rural recreation

Thanks to the abundance of farms and dairies in the area, Lynden is a foodie's dream and an eye-opening destination for kids who think milk and fruit grow in the refrigerator.

"You've got the mountains and the water close by, but it's farmland. It's just a different feel," says Treat of North Whatcom County.



Photo courtesy Visit Bellingham

Whatcom County grows 60 percent of the United States' raspberry crop and produces more milk per cow than any other farming community in the country. To appreciate its bounty, visit the Saturday farmers market, or use the annual [Whatcom Food & Farm Finder](https://sustainableconnections.org/programs/food-farming/) (<https://sustainableconnections.org/programs/food-farming/>) to plan a menu from 121 local food-related businesses. There are farm and food itineraries for every season, but kids will especially enjoy [tracking down summer berries](https://www.bellingham.org/things-to-do/farms-agriculture/#gallery-3) (<https://www.bellingham.org/things-to-do/farms-agriculture/#gallery-3>). [Bellewood Farms](https://bellewoodfarms.com/) (<https://bellewoodfarms.com/>) and [Barbie's Berries](http://www.barbiesberries.com/) (<http://www.barbiesberries.com/>) are kid-favorites for U-pick apples and berries. Tour [Appel Farms](https://appelcheese.com/) (<https://appelcheese.com/>) dairy farm or [Twin Sisters Creamery](https://www.twinsisterscreamery.com/) (<https://www.twinsisterscreamery.com/>) to get a glimpse behind the cheese. In addition to seasonal celebrations on individual farms, there are [community-wide food- and farm-focused festivals](https://www.bellingham.org/things-to-do/farms-agriculture/) (<https://www.bellingham.org/things-to-do/farms-agriculture/>) every month throughout the growing season.

[The Northwest Washington Fair and Event Center](https://nwwafair.com/) (<https://nwwafair.com/>) is an activity hub for the region, with year-round events that peak in August with the fair and the rodeo. Its equine center hosts spectator-friendly equestrian events just about every week throughout the summer. A new "Farming for Life" education center, currently under construction, will teach kids (and maybe parents, too) all about farming and where their food comes from.

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## Wilderness adventures

There is a lot of nature to be explored in Whatcom County, too. The Nooksack River, which passes just outside of town, is great for fishing, canoeing or floating lazily down in an inner tube. The Inn at Lynden is the closest full-service lodging near Mount Baker, where of course there is skiing and snowboarding in season. But the area offers plenty of opportunities for hiking, camping and mountain biking the rest of the year.



Photo courtesy Visit Bellingham

For a gentler nature fix, visit [Birch Bay or Semiahmoo Spit](https://www.mountaineers.org/activities/routes-places/semiahmoo-spit-birch-bay) (<https://www.mountaineers.org/activities/routes-places/semiahmoo-spit-birch-bay>) at low tide for beachcombing, clam digging and building sandcastles. Check out [Berthusen Park](https://www.bellingham.org/insider-blogs/berthusen-park-is-filled-with-great-trails-and-history/) (<https://www.bellingham.org/insider-blogs/berthusen-park-is-filled-with-great-trails-and-history/>), which has several easy hiking trails, including a children's interpretive trail with educational stations.

Wherever else you may roam, a scenic drive to take photos at Nooksack Falls is a must. "The backroads are beautiful in Whatcom County," says Treat. Consider pairing a bike ride or drive with a local foods picnic. After a year of lockdown, we're all going stir-crazy. While it's too soon to let our guard completely down, the quiet pleasures of a walk in the woods and an outdoor snack away from urban crowds may be just what the doctor ordered.

## If you go:

The Inn at Lynden [Fun for All promotion](https://innatlynden.com/promotions) (<https://innatlynden.com/promotions>) offers 20 percent off the seasonal rate for all rooms on all stays from April 1, 2021 to September 31, 2021. Before you go, confirm [Whatcom County COVID-19 closures and guidelines](https://www.bellingham.org/travel-advisory/) (<https://www.bellingham.org/travel-advisory/>) to plan your responsible visit.