



STAYCATION FUN ON PET FRIENDLY SAN JUAN ISLAND

Washington state friends - If you are looking for a pet-friendly vacation spot in your own back yard, the San Juan Islands should be at the top of your list. Enjoy a staycation that truly feels like a vacation.





WHERE ARE THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS?

There is a pretty good chance that you may have heard of the San Juan Islands and thought that it was some exotic and tropical far off place. But did you know that it is actually a not-so hidden gem that we are lucky enough to call ours right here in Washington state? While there are more than 170 named islands in San Juan county, there are four that can be accessed by the Washington state ferry systems – San Juan Island (Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor are here), Lopez Island, Shaw Island and Orcas Island.

HOW TO YOU GET TO THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS?

There are a few different ways you can get there, but we opted to drive and then ride over on the ferry. From where we live, it is about a 3 hour drive to the ferry terminal in Anacortes. For there were boarded the ferry in our vehicle and enjoyed the sights on the hour and a half ride over to San Juan Island. The pups aren't allowed to be in the upper decks without kennels, so we just stayed in the car with them. This was best anyway because Chewy gets pretty nervous in the car and leaving him alone wouldn't have felt right.

WHAT MAKES SAN JUAN ISLAND SPECIAL?

Listing what doesn't make it special would be far easier. San Juan Island is refreshingly unique in a lot of ways. Here are a few key points to showcase what life on the island is like.

Preservation and Conservation: When it comes to land conservation and preservation efforts, they are definitely ahead of the curve. You will find a lot of protected and undeveloped land on the island. It makes for beautifully scenic drives, synchronicity between humans, flora, and fauna and a feeling of connection with our planet.

Environmentally Friendly: This is another area where San Juan Island feels light years ahead of the rest of the nation. There are recycling receptacles next to every garbage can and all of the restaurants use paper straws,

Focus on Community and Self-Reliance: Everything on the island is locally sourced whenever possible. The restaurants are serving food that comes from the farms right on the island. Even the dinnerware on the restaurant tables are locally made. Many of them are made by local potters on the island. I wish this model of community and self-reliance was the norm and not the exception. Not only would it be better for the environment, but it would also support local small businesses instead of supporting giant chains.

No chains: If you are looking for a McDonalds or a Starbucks, you won't find them here. There isn't a single chain business on the island. It was incredibly refreshing to see.

No stop lights: The driving routes on the island are very streamlined. You can drive for miles and miles, admiring the beautiful landscape, wildlife and sweeping views of the water. But what you won't encounter are any stop lights. Like not even one. I can't even tell you how amazing it feels to get out of the hustle and bustle of rush hour traffic, angry drivers and traffic jams.

Whale Watching: This is one of the best places in the entire world to get shore-based views of the Orcas during whale season. While there are several whale watching boat tours that you can take, you can also see a lot of action right from the shoreline.

WHERE TO STAY ON SAN JUAN ISLAND:

We stayed at the **Island Inn** for this trip. They are a pet-friendly hotel right on front street in Friday Harbor. Not only is it the perfect location to be able to walk to just about everything, but the views from the upper balconies are incredible. They upgraded our room from one of their pet-friendly suites to one of their penthouses. The rooms are truly amazing. It was like having our own private condo. But before I tell you about the place itself, I want to take a minute to gush about how they treated our furbabies.

When places say that they are pet-friendly, there is always some question about what exactly that means. For example, the hotel we stayed in the night before in Anacortes was technically pet-friendly, but all it really meant was that we were allowed to have them in the building if we paid a fee. We paid an extra \$50 to have them there overnight and we couldn't even leave the room because we had to stay with them and there was no where else besides the guest room that they were allowed. So while we were able to bring them, I wouldn't exactly call that a pet-friendly experience. Island Inn on the other hand, catered to our pups like the VIPs they are. They truly went above and beyond.

When we entered our room, the first thing that I noticed were the preferred puppy pass stations that they set up for the dogs. Chewy and Prin were so spoiled that they each had their own – complete with beds, blankets, bowls, waste bags, lint rollers and locally made artisan dog treats. The human bed could have been a pile of boulders and they still would have won me over with how they accommodated the pups.



But Island Inn doesn't just spoil dogs, they spoil their human guests as well. In addition to a welcome package for the pups, there was a fruit bowl set out for us each day, along with locally made granola, chocolates, and coffee. But I think my favorite part of the accommodations is the kitchen. I am guessing that doesn't surprise many of you given the fact that my own kitchen is my happy place. But it isn't often that you travel and walk into your accommodations to see a Subzero refrigerator in your unit. What can I say, while others might be dazzled by thread counts, I am impressed by appliances.

We stayed in **Penthouse 7** (my second favorite number, next to 11) a one bedroom, two bathroom unit. It had a full kitchen, fireplace, washer and dryer and was so comfortable that we almost didn't want to leave to explore – almost. Outside of the appliances, the first thing I noticed is how environmentally friendly they are. There were notices everywhere about recycling and reducing waste and water usage. They even had wool dryer balls for the laundry. We were really pleased to see this and wish more places would take this approach.



WHAT IS THE WEATHER LIKE IN THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS?

While Seattle is the butt of every rain joke ever told, it is a lot nicer here than you might imagine. I always tell people that the rain is a lie we locals tell people to keep them from moving here. But in all honesty, it doesn't rain nearly as much as people think it does. We definitely have our share of gray days, but we don't get nearly as much rain as people believe we do. If so much as one drop of rain falls at SeaTac International airport, it is considered a day of rain. In fact, over the last 5 years or so our weather has changed so much that I told Jon that I wouldn't be surprised if palm trees started sprouting up around Mt. Rainier. I'm kidding obviously, but it has definitely been a lot dryer in recent years. But the weather in Seattle isn't what we are even here to talk about. While the San Juan islands are technically a part of Washington State, they are in a rain shadow known as the "Banana Belt" and they get 300 days of sunshine per year. A banana belt is not a term referring to fruit, it is any segment of a larger geographic region that enjoys warmer weather conditions than the region as a whole, especially in the wintertime. This makes it the perfect staycation destination for those wet, gray PNW days. While we were enjoying the sunshine on the island, it was much cooler and drizzly at home.

PET FRIENDLY SAN JUAN ISLANDS

It wasn't just the Island Inn that was pet-friendly. There were dogs everywhere you looked and many of the restaurants even had bowls of water out or places where you could dine with your pup. Any place that

BEST RESTAURANTS ON SAN JUAN ISLAND

Here's the thing about keeping it Keto while traveling... it isn't so much about the restaurants you choose as it is about the decisions you make once you get there. With the right questions and substitutions, you can eat keto just about anywhere. That being said, we found a lot of keto-friendly options in the restaurants here with little to no modifications required. We didn't have a bad meal the entire time we were here. All of the restaurants use locally sourced, quality ingredients and have very reasonable price points. Nearly everywhere we ate, we commented on how we could have the same meal in Seattle and it would likely be half the portion and twice the price. Superior value!



CASK AND SCHOONER

Cask and Schooner is located right on the corner on Front Street. It is one of the first places you see after getting off the ferry. It also happened to be right next to our hotel - **Island Inn**. This was one of our favorite meals on the island. It was so much more than we expected. We had the impression that it would be a simple bar food menu, but were so happy to be wrong. The steamed clams were the best I have ever had. The broth was incredibly flavorful and could have been a wonderful **soup** all in its own right. I also got the crab risotto. Risotto is always a special treat for me and any time I see it on the menu, I have to order it. It is worth it every time. I would visit San Juan again just to eat here, it was that good.

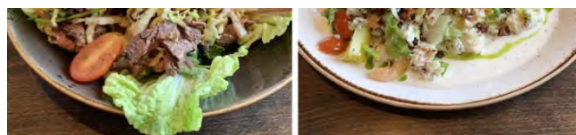


DOWNRIGGERS

Downriggers was the first place we went when we got off the ferry. We dropped our bags, got the pups settled in and headed across the street to grab lunch. Everything is so walkable in that area. We started with the Roasted Cauliflower. It was tossed in buffalo sauce and was served with pickled red onions (which I think we all know how much I love) and then drizzled with ranch dressing. It was so simple, but so good. You can definitely expect to see a version of this with my own spin on it here on the blog soon. I got the Seafood Cobb Salad – fresh Dungeness crab, whole shrimp, romaine lettuce, cherry tomatoes, gorgonzola cheese, avocado, bacon, green onion, ranch dressing. OUT OF THIS WORLD! Hands down the best Cobb salad I have ever had. Historically when I have ordered seafood salads in the past, I am always disappointed in the amount to seafood and it never seems like a good value. This was definitely not the case here. They were more than generation with the portions. Jon

DUCK SOUP

This was our favorite dining experience in terms of overall ambiance. When you first pull up to the restaurant you feel as though you are arriving at a private home and not a restaurant. It is quite literally a little cottage in the woods – tucked back from the road and surrounded by trees and beautiful ponds. [Duck Soup](#) is a farm to table restaurant with an inspiring and innovative menu. They use local produce, meat, seafood and foraged edibles. I don't have a lot of pictures from our meal here as it was dimly lit in the restaurant and we were just enjoying ourselves so much that we really wanted to be present in the moment. The staff was incredibly knowledgeable about the menu and about food as a whole. We could tell that they really wanted their guests to feel like they were right at home and taken care of.





FRIDAY HARBOR HOUSE

Friday Harbor House was a quick walk across the parking lot from our hotel. It was a beautiful deck with views of the entire harbor. They use all locally sourced ingredients and have an ever-changed menu. You could dine here frequently and have a completely different experience each time. I got the Woodstone Halibut – roasted halibut, burnt citrus oil, yuzu beurre blanc, celeriac, sautéed chanterelle and Jon got the Ribeye Cap Steak – slow-roasted sweet onion, umami bomb butter, forbidden rice, grilled mushroom. We finished our meal off with their house-made donuts and bananas foster. The desserts were out of this world good. We don't splurge on dessert often, and these desserts were really worth it.



THINGS TO DO ON SAN JUAN ISLAND:

- Pelindaba Lavender Farm
- Krystal Acres Alpaca Farm
- Whale Watching Tours
- The Whale Museum
- Explore Friday Harbor
- Explore Roche Harbor
- American Camp
- English Camp
- Afterglow Vista
- San Juan Island Sculpture Park
- Lime Kiln Point State Park



SAN JUAN ISLANDS SCULPTURE PARK

The sculpture park is a lot of fun. You could get lost there for hours, exploring all 20 acres. It is beautifully landscaped and has lots of little trails and offshoots. You can choose your own adventure and make your own route through the park. There are more than 100 sculptures throughout the park and many of them are made by local Pacific Northwest artists. The park gets more than 30,000 visitors annually and is really something to behold. While entry to the park itself does not cost anything, a \$5 donation per person is requested.



EXPLORE FRIDAY HARBOR

We loved just being able to leave our hotel and explore with the pups. There are so many little local shops, coffee shops, restaurants etc. all within walking distance. The weather was beautiful so we just set out without a plan and walked until the pups were tired. We took them out on the dock while we trying to get a glimpse of Popeye, the famous resident harbor seal of Friday Harbor. While we didn't get to meet Popeye, we did see several other harbor seals swimming around the boats.



LIME KILN POINT STATE PARK

Lime Kiln Point is a 42 acre state park on the shores of San Juan Island. There are places for barbecuing and picnicking, as well as hiking. The lighthouse in the park was built in the early 1900's and is still in use today, providing a navigational beacon for ships in the Haro Strait.

With just a short walk into woods, you can visit the old lime kilns. First you will come upon the one that has been preserved and restored. But if you continue a little farther back you can see one of the older original lime kilns. They were put into use in the late 1800s and continued operations until the 1920's. For more than 60 years, San Juan county was the principle lime production area for the whole state of Washington. Large quantities of limestone were available right along the shoreline. The limestone is heated in the limekilns at high temperatures to convert it to quicklime. The quicklime was then used for building and construction materials.

ROCHE HARBOR

We were able to enjoy Roche Harbor almost all to ourselves. Since we were not there during peak travel season, we were able to enjoy everything crowd free. It made for a really relaxing and peaceful trip. The harbor was packed with huge yachts, and yet it still felt like we had the place all to ourselves. We just walked around and explore the shops and took in all the views.





AFTERGLOW VISTA - JOHN S MCMILLIN MEMORIAL MAUSOLEUM

Afterglow Vista is formally know as the Mcmillin Mausoleum. I first heard about in the Lore Podcast. If you have a chance to visit here, I recommend listening to the podcast on the way up. It just so happened to be the exact length of our drive over from Friday Harbor. We finished listening and then with eager eyes and hearts made our way through the woods to the mausoleum. John Mcmillin owned lime works in Washington, was a mason, and a devout Methodist. He constructed this mausoleum to house the remains of his entire family. Inside this open air rotunda is a huge limestone table with chairs. Not only do the chairs represent the members of his family, but they also hold their ashes and serve as headstones. It was meant to represent the family dinner table. There is one chair missing and it is said to represent the loss of their son as he went off on his own, leaving the Methodist church behind. Maybe people have reported strange sighting or odd, unexplainable sensations when visiting the mausoleum.