



Skamania Lodge's new treehouses are nestled in Douglas firs. PHOTOS BY PATRIK ARGAST/SKAMANIA LODGE

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BY KARI BODNARCHUK | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

BELOW RIGHT: A cozy nook in one of the treehouses.

STEVENSON, Wash. Staying in a rustic treehouse appeals to some travelers, but others hold dear to the modern amenities and creature comforts of a hotel room. Skamania Lodge on the Washington-Oregon border won't make you choose. The property's new treehouses, nestled in the Douglas firs and overlooking a golf course and wooded hiking trails, have heated floors, hand-tufted wool rugs, Pendleton blankets, smart TVs, and double-side fireplaces that can be enjoyed from an inside sitting area or from the large deck.

"Treehouse" may not accurately describe these cozy abodes: They really resemble elevated cabins, each held aloft by supportive beams, a central column (that hides all the necessary piping and wiring), and a set of sturdy wood-en stairs.

We discovered the lodge on a family trip to the area, and our treehouse proved perfect for a family of four: It had a king-size bed in the main room, a large bathroom with room for drying wet clothes (we visited during rainy season), a small fridge for snacks and kids' leftovers, and a microwave and Keurig. A cozy nook — just big enough for a queen-size bed — lay behind a zippered canvas tent-like

door. It jutted off the side of the treehouse 30 feet above ground and had three walls of windows, making it feel like a nest tucked in the branches — perfect for curling up to read or bird watch. Skamania has two of these "family tree-houses" and two king treehouses, which have one room with a king-size bed.

Skamania sits in an idyllic setting: Below the Red Bluffs, which formed more than 200 years ago during one of the world's largest landslides (don't worry, it's safe now), and above the Columbia River, which carved out the massive gorge and created the surrounding mountains during the last Ice Age. It's also located in an 85-mile protected area — the nation's only National Scenic Area — and just 45 minutes from Portland, Ore.

The lodge has 175 acres of greenspace and forests, a main building with standard hotel rooms, and several restaurants overlooking the Columbia River. You'll find locally sourced meats, produce, and ingredients in the Cascade Dining Room — you can't go wrong with Dungeness crab cakes and the Columbia River steelhead, but vegetarians may struggle for choices here. River Rock serves up more modest portions and shareable plates, and offers a good selection of salads, starters, burgers, and brick-oven pizzas.

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HERE

CAMDEN WINTER FESTIVAL AND TOBOGGAN RACES

Jump in the ocean, see an ice-carving contest, watch vaudeville performances, and more at the Camden Winter Carnival, Feb. 2. Take the polar plunge into Camden Harbor at 11 a.m., see live music and performances at the public library, and demo snowshoes and fat bikes at Harbor Park. The following weekend, Camden Snow Bowl hosts the U.S. National Toboggan Championships with toboggan rides on Feb. 8 and racing Feb. 9-10. Grab a costume (optional) and your fastest two-, three-, or four-person toboggan and compete in this fun event — or just show up and cheer. *Free to watch; \$30 per person to race (space limited; register early).* 207-236-3438, www.camdensnowbowl.com.

EAT WITH YOUR HANDS IN WEBSTER

Samuel Slater's Restaurant hosts a traditional Blatter dinner on Jan. 30 that includes plenty of beer and meat, but no plates, napkins, and forks. The lakeside restaurant, which opened at Indian Ranch last fall, will offer a big banquet with beef tenderloin, grilled pork tenderloin, smoky lamb meatballs, and other dishes, along with craft beer from Hopkinton's Start Line Brewing Company. *Can't make the event? The restaurant now offers a prime rib special on Monday nights (\$15.95 for a 10-ounce prime rib with sides), live music on Wednesdays, and brunch on Sundays. \$90 for Beefsteak dinner; a portion of the proceeds helps local children.* 508-943-1639, www.samuelslaters.com.



RON HAWKES/CAMDEN SNOW BOWL

THERE

EURAIL EXPANDS ACCESS FOR LESS

Buy the updated Eurail train pass and you can visit more countries for less money and have better access in some regions. The company, now 60 years old, has expanded its all-in-one train pass to include Great Britain, Macedonia, and Lithuania, meaning it now takes travelers to 31 countries. It has also added five new train carriers in Europe and replaced its multi-country passes with new global and one-country passes. These changes provide savings for anyone up to 27 years old (23 percent off adult fare), over 60 (10 percent off adult fare), or traveling with the new 2nd Class Adult Global Pass (25 percent less than first class). Eurail has also added a new Greek Islands Pass that helps travelers access 53 of the Greek islands. The cheapest global pass starts at \$257 (adult 2nd Class for three days of travel in one month); one-country passes start at \$150 for the Italy Pass. www.eurail.com.

LEARN TO COOK LIKE A TUSCAN

While in Europe, consider joining a weeklong culinary-immersion program in Tuscany, called Tuscan Women Cook, which takes place in the medieval village of Montefollonico from May through October. Each day, participants cook authentic Italian recipes taught by the local village "nonnas" (grandmothers), many of whom run Michelin-starred restaurants and will share techniques, ingredients, and family recipes handed down for generations. Spend six nights at a charming restored farmhouse, Agriturismo Bela-



TUSCAN WOMEN COOK

gaggio, and enjoy full-day sightseeing tours with a private guide who has a doctorate in Siennese history. Rates start at \$4,150, based on double occupancy, and include all meals, visits to local artisans, cheese and wine tastings, private guide, and transportation to all activities by private Mercedes minibus. Book early, since tours typically sell out. www.tuscanwomencook.com.

EVERYWHERE

SENSOR DETECTS PEANUTS, GLUTEN

A San Francisco-based company has created peanut and gluten sensors that help take some of the stress out of eating for travelers with food allergies or sensitivities. The lightweight and portable Nima Peanut Sensor can detect peanut protein down to 10 parts per million (ppm) with a 97.6 to 99.2 percent rate of accuracy, while the Nima Gluten Sensor can detect gluten down to 20 ppm with a 93.3 to 98.6 percent rate of accuracy. To use, place a small food sample into a disposable



capsule and screw on the top. Then insert the capsule into the sensor and press the power button. After about five minutes, the sensor will display a "Peanut Found" or "Gluten Found" message, or else a smiley face indicating no trace of peanut or gluten appeared — easy enough for kids to use, too. *\$289 sensor and 12 test capsules; \$72 for 12-pack of test capsules.* www.nimasensor.com.

EXTRA WHEELS FOR ROAD TRIPS

Kuat's new Highline trunk rack makes it a breeze to take your bikes on an adventure. The rack holds two or three bikes and mounts on almost any vehicle (except some with a rear spoiler). The remarkable lightweight and slim design makes the rack a cinch to hold in place while you secure it to your car, and easy to fold up and store (it weighs just 13 to 15 pounds, depending on the model). The built-in anti-sway bike cradles and ratchet-style rubber straps help keep your ride in place (no banging against neighboring bikes), and the straps' integrated design means they won't pop off accidentally and get lost. The rack even comes with clear plastic film for sticking on your car at the rack's points of contact, to help protect your car's finish — a nice touch. *\$219 (two bikes) \$249 (three bikes).* 877-822-5828, www.kuatracks.com.

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