

SHORELINE OF THE SPIRIT  
BY LINDA HAGEN MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT  
BROWN

We're standing on a cedar platform at the edge of the continent. Or so it seems. Tatoosh Island and its 147-year-old lighthouse anchor the horizon and the Pacific Ocean beyond. This is Cape Flattery on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula and you can't get any farther northwest in the continental United States.

Wildlife sightings are promised—from migrating whales to more than 200 bird varieties. As if on cue, stealthy bald eagles glide on the wind and comical tufted puffins dive in the surf below.

Washington resident Melissa Magnuson's attention has strayed from puffins to a charter fishing boat heading for the coastline. She waves at one of the fishermen. He reaches into the ice chest, pulls out an enormous king salmon, and waves back.

"I'm sure that's a sea lion," says Ed Villanueva, his binoculars trained on a distant rock. Ed and his wife, Marilyn, are visiting from Richmond, Virginia, and the world travelers pronounce this faraway peninsula a highlight of their Pacific Northwest vacation.

The isolated place between the Pacific's jaw and the Strait of Juan de Fuca may seem like the land's end, but the native Makah Indians see it differently. Our people think of Cape Flattery as the beginning of the world," says Makah tribal member and Makah Museum interpretive specialist Kirk Wachendorf.

The Makah have inhabited this remote tip of the peninsula for thousands of years. For the rest of us, the newly improved Cape Flattery Trail provides easy access through second growth forest. Five observation decks on the gravel and cedar-plank trail offer strikingly different vistas. On the first, we feel the earth shudder as waves crash into the sea caves below. From the salal- and fir-lined cubbyhole of another lookout, the rocks jutting into the ocean below us resemble dinosaur feet decorated with orange sea stars.

Cape Flattery's nearest community, Neah Bay, is home to 1,500 people, mostly Makah descendants. The Makah Cultural and Research Center and Museum, the eclectic 103-year-old Washburn's General Store, three restaurants, an espresso stand, a tiny gallery, and a busy charter fishing center make up the town hub.

The Makah Museum transports visitors to the homeland of the *Kwih-dich-chuh-ahtx*, a traditional name that means "people who live by the rocks and seagulls." This treasure house includes dioramas, canoes, and artifacts from the archaeological discovery of the Makah coastal village of Ozette, 15 miles south. A tidal erosion 30 years ago revealed a portion of the 500-year-old village, perfectly preserved by an ancient mud slide.

The dig reconfirmed the Makah as people who fished for salmon and halibut, harpooned whales and seals, hunted deer and bear, and wove intricate cedar baskets. The museum has re-created a longhouse with packed dirt floors, sleeping platforms covered with bear skins, and the sounds of native chanting.

Waterfront Neah Bay makes a perfect centerpiece for a weekend visit to the Cape Flattery



area, and the cape itself gives Pacific vistas. But for tide pools and a walk on the sand, hike to Shi Shi Beach along the new Shi Shi Trail.

Its remoteness ensures that Shi Shi will remain one of the most pristine shorelines in America: two miles of beach studded *with* sea stacks, laced with tide pools, and practically devoid of human intervention. Just the wave-punctuated ocean, swooping sea birds, and scattered driftwood logs. The few visitors we run across keep their distance. Their goal is solitude, too. \*

#### NORTH BY NORTHWEST

Cape Flattery is a five-hour scenic road trip from Seattle. To get there, you'll ferry across Puget Sound (Washington State Ferries, 206/464-6400 or [wsdot.wa.gov/ferries](http://wsdot.wa.gov/ferries)), cross Hood Canal Bridge, and pass through several coastal towns.

In Neah Bay, stay at King Fisher Inn. Rates range from \$150 to \$250; 888/622-8216 or [kingfisherenterprises.com](http://kingfisherenterprises.com).

To drive into the Makah Nation, you'll need a recreational use permit (\$7 per vehicle), available at the Makah Tribal Center or Washburn's General Store (a good spot for picnic food). The Makah Museum has hiking maps and is open daily during the summer; seasonal hours from September through Memorial Day. Admission: \$5 adults, \$4 seniors and students, children free; 360/645-2711 or [northolympic.com/makah](http://northolympic.com/makah).

The Makah Café serves hearty breakfasts as early as 4 a.m. and burgers till 10 p.m. in summer months; 360/645-2924. Enjoy great homemade soups and chowders at the Breakwater Inn Restaurant, 18 miles east of Neah Bay in Sekiu, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily; 360/963-2428.

To break up the trip from Seattle, stop in Port Angeles and stay at BJ's Garden Gate. Rates range from \$125 to \$210; 800/880-1332 or [bjgarden.com](http://bjgarden.com). Or drive 20 miles west of Port Angeles to Lake Crescent Lodge. Rates range from \$60 to \$165; 360/928- 3211 or [lakecrescentlodge.com](http://lakecrescentlodge.com).

For more information, call 800/942-4042 or visit [northwestsecretplaces.com](http://northwestsecretplaces.com) and click on "Cape Flattery Trail."