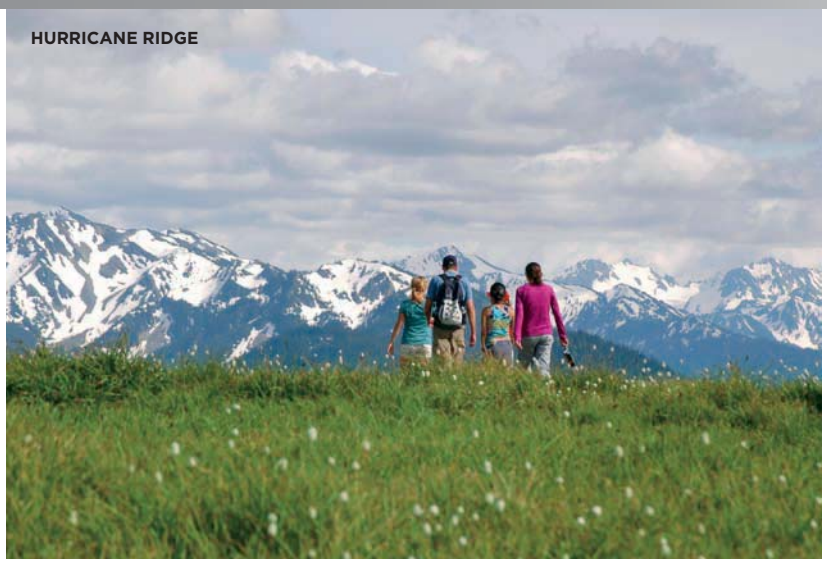

HURRICANE RIDGE

# PEAK EXPERIENCES

*Take a spin up any of these mountain paths for unrivaled (and no-sweat) views.*

**WHILE ABOUT 5,000 CLIMBERS** reach Mount Rainier's summit every year, most vacationers approach Washington's mountains with a more modest goal: finding a great view. To that end, these spectacular vistas are only a short walk from the car. (Remember to check for weather-related road closures before heading out.) **—MIKE GREENSTEIN**

**Erie Mountain Drive, Anacortes** The highest point on Fidalgo Island offers views of the San Juan Islands, Mount Baker, the Skagit Valley, Whidbey Island, and Mount Rainier. *www.cityofanacortes.org/parks/parks.htm*

**Hurricane Ridge Road, Port Angeles** The 17-mile drive from the Olympic National Park entrance to a 5,200-foot-high meadow has views of towering peaks above and the Strait of Juan de Fuca below. *www.nps.gov/olym*

**Paradise and Sunrise, Mount Rainier** The new Paradise Jackson Visitor Center and Sunrise Visitor Center offer stirring views and idyllic picnicking spots, the latter at the highest drivable point in the park (6,400 feet). *www.nps.gov/mora*

**Mount Baker Highway, Whatcom County** The last three miles of the 58-mile route (SR 542) from I-5 to Artist Point climbs 3,200 feet to reveal postcard views of Mount Baker. *www.wsdot.wa.gov/Northwest/Baker/ArtistPoint/default.htm*

**Mount Constitution Road, Orcas Island** The windy 4.9-mile road through Moran State Park leads to the 2,409-foot summit, where the view extends from Mount Rainier to Vancouver, BC. *www.parks.wa.gov/parks*

**North Cascades Scenic Highway, Newhalem–Winthrop** This 70-mile stretch of SR 20 through America's Alps includes overlooks at Ross Lake and Washington Pass. *www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes/northcascades*

**Mount Spokane State Park Drive, Mead** A six-mile paved road leads to the 5,883-foot summit—and views of Idaho and Canada. *www.parks.wa.gov/parks*

**Spirit Lake Memorial Highway, Mount St. Helens National Monument** This 54-mile route from I-5 to Johnston Ridge Observatory offers incredible views of a recovering landscape. *www.wsdot.wa.gov*

**Steptoe Butte, Colfax** A 3.5-mile paved road winds to the summit—and awesome views of farmlands and the Selkirk, Blue, and Bitterroot ranges. *www.parks.wa.gov/parks*

PHOTOGRAPH RIGHT BY LYNN SUCKOW

# Our Towns

*What these burgs lack in size, they make up for in visitor-friendly personality.*

**IN WASHINGTON,** every community has its own story to tell. Here are the short versions of a few of those yarns. **—PETER BELAND**

**Prosser** Home of the Great Prosser Balloon Rally in September, this 5,000-resident town west of Tri-Cities is also home to dozens of Yakima Valley wineries. *www.cityofprosser.com*

**Omak** For over 70 years, this town of 4,700 in Okanogan County has hosted the "World Famous Suicide Race" every August, in which horse riders charge down a 225-foot hill, cross a river, and race to the finish line. *www.omakstampede.org*

**Centralia** Founded by the son of a former slave who wasn't allowed to homestead in Oregon, this town of 14,700 south of Olympia is home to a charming historic district. *www.centraliaguide.com*

**Coupeville** Explore Puget Sound's past in this historic seafront farming village of 1,900 on Whidbey Island. The Island County Historical Society's museum is a perfect port of landing for curious visitors. *www.cometocoupeville.com*

**Snohomish** Located near Everett, this town of 9,600 is known as the "Antique Capital of the Northwest." Visitors in search of the perfect treasure may just find it on First Street, which is lined with antique shops. *www.cityofsnohomish.com*

**Northport** This humble northeastern hamlet of 300 residents offers the first stateside glimpse of the mighty Columbia River as it meanders south from British Columbia. *www.northportwa.us*

GREAT PROSSER BALLOON RALLY