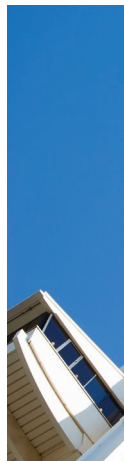




The Emerald City Trolley (right) offers narrated tours of downtown (above), with stops at Pike Place Market (center) and the Space Needle (far right)



## waterfront wonder

Rain or shine, **Seattle** offers a slew of entertaining attractions for the author and her family. • By Joanna Nesbit

**AS MY KIDS AND I** step inside Pike Place Market, color bursts from every corner. Hundreds of bouquets bloom amid the rows of farmers' stalls. We were expecting to see an abundance of seafood, produce, and crafts at this downtown Seattle landmark, but the flowers are a wonderful surprise. As we've

discovered over the years, this town is full of them. My family lives an hour and a half north of the Emerald City, so named for its lush greenery, and we've been visiting since Leah and Ty, now ages 16 and 14, were small. Yes, it's famous for coffee, software, and airplanes—Starbucks, Microsoft, and Boeing were founded in the area—but Seattle's outdoorsy

vibe also makes it welcoming to families. With Elliott Bay and Puget Sound to the west and snow-capped Mount Rainier to the south, Seattle is set among natural wonders that offer truly stunning views on sunny days. And sunny days are not as rare as you might think. Despite its reputation for





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Pike Place Market's intriguingly disgusting gum wall (top) and an impressive display of crabs for sale (right)

deariness, the city receives just 36 inches of rain a year (less than New York City!). Summer and early fall are sunniest, but even in winter it doesn't rain so much as mist, and the city's many indoor attractions make it easy to foil the weather. The off-season crowds are smaller, too.

On this visit, we're blessed with sunshine. After exploring the market, we head to the waterfront, thrumming with trolleys and tourists, to ride the Great Wheel and stop in at Ye Olde Curiosity Shop for a peek at novelty trinkets and museum

oddsities, such as shrunken heads. After a narrated tour on the new Emerald City Trolley, we end the day strolling Lake Union Park as floatplanes buzz in for lake landings.

### what to do

**Seattle Center:** It's easy to spend the better part of a day at this 74-acre indoor-outdoor complex, home to the Space Needle, Seattle Children's Theatre, Seattle Children's Museum, Bill & Melinda Gates Visitor Center, International Fountain, and more. We especially love the Pacific Science Center, with its tropical butterfly house, robotic dinosaurs, and exhibits on the human body. *Separate fees for individual attractions; [seattlecenter.com](http://seattlecenter.com)*

**Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI):** This novel interactive museum provides a great introduction to the city's industrial past, from pioneer days to the recent tech boom. Don't miss the musical film on the Great Fire and the hazards of the lowly glue pot. *\$17 adults, free ages 14 and under; 206-324-1126; [mohai.org](http://mohai.org)*

**The Center for Wooden Boats:** Rent a rowboat or canoe to paddle on Lake Union or, on Sundays, take a free 45-minute lake tour on a historic vessel. Even if you don't venture out on the water, stop in to explore the wooden docks and floating boathouse. *Rentals start at \$30 per hour; 206-382-2628; [cwb.org](http://cwb.org)*

**The Museum of Flight:** Try your hand at landing a space shuttle or tour the Air Force One that carried Presidents Nixon and Kennedy. This immense facility is packed with exhibits on the history of aviation, from the Wright brothers to space stations. *\$19 adults, \$11 ages 5-17, free ages 4 and under; 206-764-5720; [museumofflight.org](http://museumofflight.org)*



### WHERE TO EAT

After hoofing it around Seattle's hills, we love relaxing in the easygoing **Pike Brewing Company**, which features seafood, gourmet sandwiches, a kids' menu, and of course, craft ales ([206-622-6044](http://206-622-6044); [pikebrewing.com](http://pikebrewing.com)). At **Pike Place Market**, the abundant lunch options include steaming seafood stew in crusty sourdough bowls at **Pike Place Chowder** ([206-267-2537](http://206-267-2537); [pikeplacechowder.com](http://pikeplacechowder.com)). For a special treat, visit **Three Girls Bakery**, a Pike Place institution for more than 100 years ([206-622-1045](http://206-622-1045)). Seattle Center's updated **Armory Food Court** is convenient and pleases all palates. We especially like **Kabab's gyros** and **Skillet Counter's** locally sourced burgers ([seattlecenter.com/food](http://seattlecenter.com/food)). In South Lake Union, hip **Tutta Bella** offers authentic Neapolitan pizza and great streetcar viewing ([206-624-4422](http://206-624-4422); [tuttabella.com](http://tuttabella.com)).



Clockwise, from below:  
A Washington State Ferry  
on the move; entertainment  
on a large scale at Pike  
Place Market; shells for sale  
at Ye Olde Curiosity Shop;  
what to do next? Ask the  
swami in Pike Place Market.



## WHERE TO STAY

Downtown, consider a splurge at the plush but kid-friendly **Hotel Monaco Seattle**. Check for off-season rates and package deals (from \$249 a night; parking \$39 a day; 206-621-1770; monaco-seattle.com). In South Lake Union, **Residence Inn by Marriott Seattle** and **Silver Cloud Inn** both offer indoor pools and free breakfast. Residence Inn suites include kitchenettes (from \$139; parking \$27 a day; 206-624-6000; residenceinnseattlelakeunion.com); Silver Cloud Inn has free parking (from \$209; 800-330-5812; silvercloud.com). Both give you easy access to downtown via **Seattle Streetcar** (\$2.50 adults, \$1.25 ages 6-17; free ages 5 and under; seattlestreetcar.org).







Seattle Great Wheel lifts riders high above Elliott Bay, an experience worth the wait in line (below)

**Woodland Park Zoo:** We love this 92-acre urban oasis, with its award-winning native animal habitats. Don't miss the elephants. *\$12.75 ages 13 and up, \$8.75 ages 3-12, free ages 2 and under; 206-548-2500; zoo.org*

**Seattle Great Wheel:** Enjoy breathtaking views of the bay and downtown from enclosed gondolas that seat up to eight people. *\$13 ages 12 and up, \$8.50 ages 4-11, free ages 3 and under; 206-623-8600; seattlegreatwheel.com*

**Pike Place Market:** See the employees at Pike Place Fish tossing salmon, gawk at the gum wall (an alley stuccoed with chewed wads), and put a coin in Rachel, the 550-pound bronze piggy bank, at this historic market. *Free; pikeplacemarket.org*

**Hiram M. Chittenden Locks:** We've watched boats of all sizes navigate this complex of locks between Puget Sound and Lakes Union and Washington. Check out the fish ladder, designed to provide salmon safe passage, too. *Free; nws.usace.army.mil*

**Emerald City Trolley:** Narrated, hop-on/hop-off tours cover a downtown route as well as a northern loop that stops at the zoo and offers stunning views



from Kerry Park Overlook on Queen Anne Hill, one of Seattle's best-kept secrets. *Operates April to September; \$28 adults, \$15 ages 3-12, free ages 2 and under; two-day and family rates available; 855-313-3456; emeraldcitytrolley.com*

meet the family



Joanna Nesbit and her family live in Bellingham, Washington.