



AUTO TOUR

AAA Washington Travel Services

Columbia Basin – North *Canyons, Coulees & the Columbia*

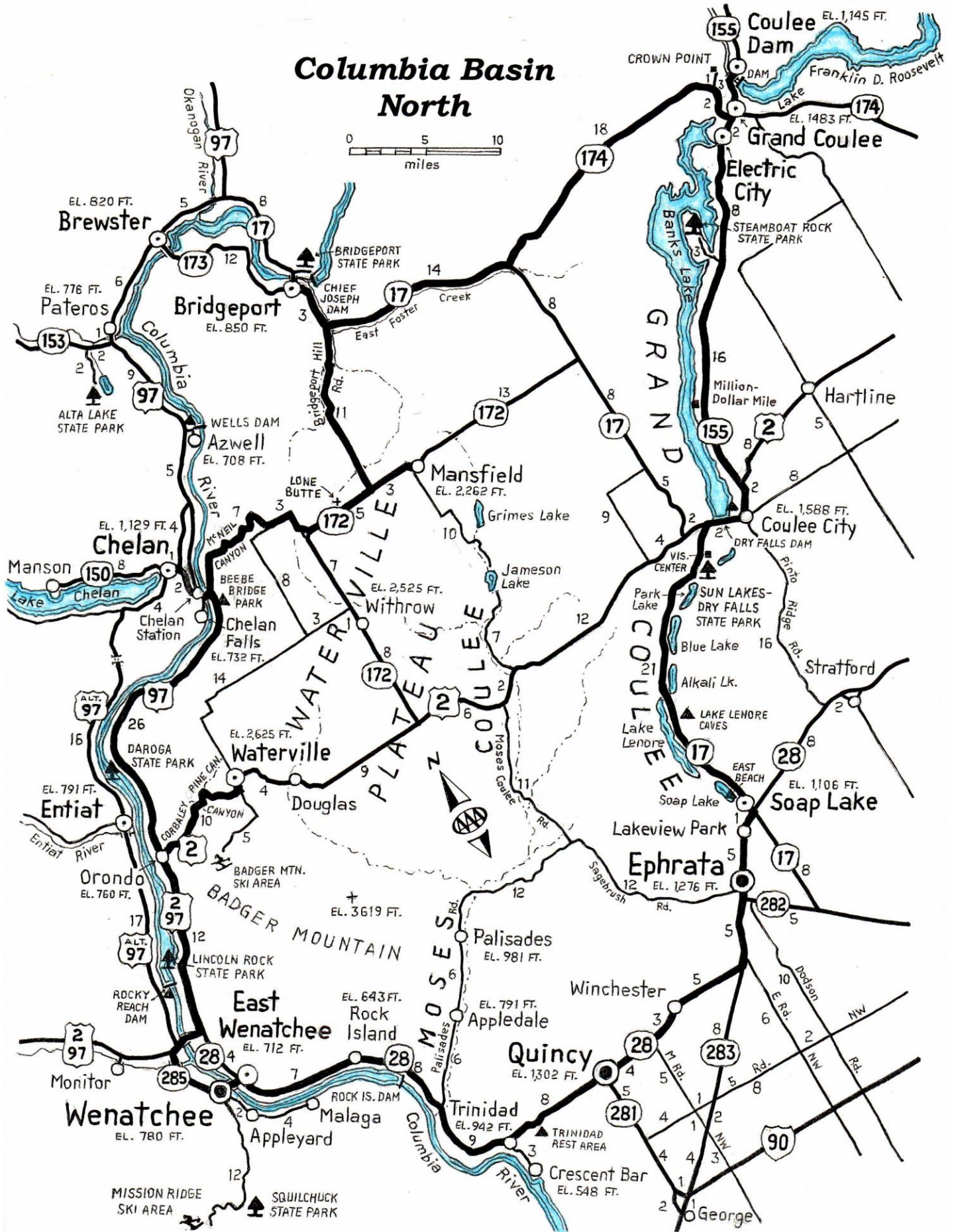
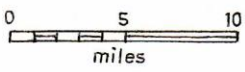
The Columbia Basin forms the geographic heart of the Evergreen State, yet it hides in plain sight from tourists who blindly stick to major highways. Rocks and rivers take on an epic quality in north-central Washington – a landscape that showcases the results of an ideal blend of natural forces and the iron will of civilization.



*Clockwise from top left: Grand Coulee Dam, one of America's largest concrete structures (photo courtesy Wikipedia);
A spectacular view of Lower Grand Coulee, just north of the Million Dollar Mile;
The Apple Blossom Grand Parade, part of Wenatchee's annual festival (photo: Washington State Apple Blossom Festival);*

The **North Columbia Basin Auto Tour** is best traversed either as a day-long loop trip from Wenatchee, or broken into two half-day segments with an overnight near Grand Coulee Dam. The full-circle route (excluding side trips) covers 219 miles and takes 4½ hours to drive without stops.

Columbia Basin North



1. Wenatchee, the Center of North-Central Washington

Our auto tour begins at the north end of Wenatchee Avenue, the namesake route of **WENATCHEE** (pop. 33,260, alt. 780 ft.) where State Route 285 diverts south from the combined alignment of US Highways 2 and 97. A large sign greets visitors to **The Apple Capital of the World**. The area encompassed by Wenatchee, East Wenatchee and the rest of the valley is home to nearly 60,000 people.

Before treading down the main drag to downtown, follow signs from US-2 to the **Washington Apple Commission Visitor Center** on Euclid Avenue. The story of the valley's burgeoning fruit industry is told via several visual exhibits, and samples of the current year's crop are handed out to every visitor.

Continue south on Euclid and follow the road towards the water through a fruit-packing industrial quarter – ahead is the entrance to **WENATCHEE CONFLUENCE STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required, see below*), perched on both sides of the Wenatchee River as it pours into the Columbia. The park features a large campground with tent and RV sites on an open plain – reservations are usually needed a month or two in advance for space during the peak summer season. Additionally, the park is the best access point to the 11-mile **Apple Capital Loop Trail**, a wide strip of pavement for cyclists, joggers and walkers connecting the entire public waterfront on both sides of the Columbia.

Retrace your steps to the highway and head into the heart of the Apple Capital's core, Wenatchee Avenue. Restaurants, retail shops and other consumer-based businesses line the way in plazas and malls – this is the center of services for all of north-central Washington, the biggest city for 100 miles in any direction.

At the first major light, keep left to remain on Wenatchee Avenue – the road parallels the river on its course to the old section of downtown and there are several AAA Approved restaurants and hotels en route. Closer to the waterfront, the **Town Toyota Center** arena, home to hockey and performing arts, sits across the street from **Walla Walla Point City Park**. **Pybus Public Market**, in a former warehouse at 3 N. Worthen Street, contains restaurants, shops and the seasonal Wenatchee Valley Farmers Market. A quick right-hand jog at Second Avenue takes you to the local **AAA Office** at 221 North Mission Street – open weekdays to provide helpful advice for road trips, insurance, a Travel Store and reservation services for hotel stays and car rentals.

The AAA office is found at the edge of the downtown core. Wenatchee's convention center occupies several blocks centered at Second & Wenatchee Ave. Behind the convention center facing the water is **Riverfront Park** (*accessed at Fifth Street*), home to the city's signature annual event – the **Washington State Apple Blossom Festival** – held over the first and second weekends of May. Though the valley's fruit bounty has diversified in recent years, King Apple is still feted with entertainment stages, pageants, pie-eating contests and a Grand Parade that draws thousands of visitors.

Wenatchee Avenue passes through one of the country's textbook Main Street areas with old, red brick façades adorned with hanging flower baskets. The nine-block historic district extends up to the twin one-ways of Mission and Chelan. The valley's story is told at the **Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center**, 127 S. Mission, which features a model railroad, silent films with accompaniment by an authentic Wurlitzer organ, and exhibits on apples and aviation.

Seeking an alpine detour? Mission Street leads south to Squilchuck Road, which climbs into the mountains. **SQUILCHUCK STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required, see below*) offers picnic tables and miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking. In winter, the park has a snow play area (sledding and tubing) and cross-country skiing. Four miles beyond the park is **Mission Ridge Ski Area** (el. 4,600 ft.), beckoning downhill skiers and snowboarders with four chairlifts. The season usually extends from late November or early December into early April.

Note: As of July 2011, a **Washington Discover Pass** is required for admission to day-use areas of state parks, as well as areas administered by the state Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources.

The fee is \$10 per car for a one-day pass, or \$30 for an annual pass. Purchase the pass from any State Parks regional office or at the park itself when staff is available. Discover Passes can also be purchased as part of Washington State vehicle license renewals.

Click www.discoverpass.wa.gov for details on other methods of purchase, including over 600 locations where hunting and fishing licenses are sold (transaction fees apply). A \$99 fine can be levied against drivers of street-legal vehicles caught without a Pass.

Overnight campers in state parks need not purchase the Discover Pass for the nights they're camping.



East Wenatchee to Ephrata (via WA-28)

The tour continues by following signs to Highway 285, the bridge leading to **EAST WENATCHEE** (pop. 13,505, el. 712 ft.). The **Wenatchee Valley Mall** stands adjacent to the east end of the bridge. Follow around to the right as we merge onto Highway 28. Scenic views of the valley can be had via two short routes after taking a left on Grant Road:

- Make the next left on Eastmont Avenue and follow it as it climbs out of town becoming Badger Mountain Road, then use the pullouts near the top for wonderful vistas, or
- Follow Grant Road uphill for three miles to Pangborn Memorial Airport.



*Herndon and Pangborn
(Photo: National Air & Space Museum)*

East Wenatchee is part of aviation lore as the landing site for the **first successful trans-Pacific flight**, completed on 5 October, 1931 by 35-year-old American stunt pilot Clyde Pangborn (*a native of nearby Bridgeport, Wash.*) and his English co-pilot, Hugh Herndon. The voyage departed from Japan and was over 2,000 miles longer than Charles Lindbergh's historic Atlantic crossing four years before.

Bad weather forced Pangborn and Herndon to eschew top choices Seattle and Spokane, and the plane was damaged upon landing over 41 hours after takeoff. Pangborn received far less notoriety in the press than Lindbergh and did not reap a financial windfall from the feat, though East Wenatchee's airport (EAT) is now named for him. Horizon Air runs daily scheduled service to Pangborn Airport.

Our tour instead proceeds east-southeast along Highway 28 following the Columbia River's course through north-central Washington. **Kirby Billingsley Hydro Park** extends over a mile providing adventures for aquatic admirers and land-lubbers alike. Seven miles from East Wenatchee is **ROCK ISLAND** (pop. 865, el. 643 ft.), a town featuring basic services and a golf course. A dam of the same name is directly across the highway but does not provide visitor facilities.

The highway remains in sight of the river for another 13 miles before reaching the village of **TRINIDAD**, (alt. 928 ft.), home to little more than a trading post and a convenience store. Turn right here to get a panoramic view of **Crescent Bar**.

The road leads to the resort community of **CRESCENT BAR** (pop. 140, alt. 578 ft.), located on its namesake island in the Columbia River. **Crescent Bar Resort** offers golf, tennis, jet skiing, water skiing, wakeboarding and pontoon boat rentals.



The Columbia River at Crescent Bar

From Trinidad, the highway ascends sharply for two miles and passes a rest area en route to **QUINCY** (pop. 7,355, el. 1,302 ft.) which welcomes travelers with the motto *Opportunities Unlimited*. Large food processing and packing plants line the highway to the left. Since 2006 Quincy has become a hotbed for data centers. These computer server farms consume gargantuan amounts of electricity and more than half a dozen companies like Microsoft, Yahoo, Intuit, Dell and CenturyLink have been attracted by the area's low electricity costs, mild climate and inexpensive land. Quincy also serves as an efficient services stop and acts as a fulcrum point for other excursions within a half-hour drive to Moses Lake and the Gorge Amphitheater (both covered in AAA's *South Columbia Basin Auto Tour*).

Stay on Highway 28 heading east through Grant County. Helpful markers in the fence lines aid in distinguishing types of crops to drivers zooming past – field corn, sweet corn, potatoes, alfalfa and more are produced here. Dust storms are frequent occurrences during dry summers.

Eighteen miles farther, **EPHRATA** (pop. 7,664, el. 1,276 ft.) stands as the largest city remaining on our Auto Tour and is the seat of Grant County. At the entrance to town, **Oasis Park** greets visitors with miniature golf, a pitch 'n' putt course plus a kiddie fishing pond. Services of all stripes can be found here as the highway slows considerably through town, and Amtrak's *Empire Builder* line stops downtown at Division Avenue. The **Grant County Historical Museum and Village**, located on the highway at the east edge of town, features three dozen outdoor exhibits and artifacts from the Wanapum and Sinkiuse tribes.

2. Coulee Country (via WA-17 & WA-155)

The tour continues northeast from Ephrata along SR-28. Four miles onward turn left onto Highway 17, which bisects the town of **SOAP LAKE** (pop. 1,585, el. 1,106 ft.). The town and its eponymous lake get their name from a formation of sudsy foam up to a foot high that occurs when the wind kicks up in cooler-weather months.



Over the first four decades of the 20th century, prior to the advent of drugs like penicillin and sulphas, the lake was renowned for the healing properties of its mineral-rich black mud. Several hotels sprang up along the shoreline and attracted travelers from across the country. During the Great Depression, a prolonged drought evaporated the water and took the town's fortunes with it. But in the 1950s, the Columbia Basin Project's irrigation canals breathed a second life into Soap Lake.

Today, signs along the lakeshore are inscribed in English and Spanish as well as Russian – a nod to the significant portion of the clientele for whom the lake is evocative of the great public baths of Eastern Europe. RV resorts bookend the lake.

Native Americans have camped here for centuries and refer to the lake as *Smokiam*, or “Healing Waters” in the local vernacular. In 2009, a fifteen-year effort culminated in the unveiling of a large sundial shaped in a human figure known as *Calling the Healing Waters* (pictured at left). Located at East City Beach, the fifteen-foot-tall sculpture was created by renowned Northwest metal artist David Govedare.

Highway 17 forms the southern half of the **Coulee Corridor National Scenic Byway**, a road tracing an ancient riverbed cleaved over thousands of years from the basalt plateau. Soap Lake sits at the southern end of a 60-mile string of lakes formed by the Grand Coulee. Just 2½ miles north of the end of Soap Lake is **Lake Lenore**, a six-mile long body of water popular with anglers. The basalt walls tower over 1,000 feet above the road along this stretch and have an epic, scalloped shape along their slopes.

Across the highway from the lake is a parking area leading to a series of seven caves used by Native Americans for shelter over millennia. Summertime visitors to the **Lake Lenore Caves** should keep a sharp eye out for rattlesnakes and other reptiles which prefer the caves to cool themselves during the heat of day.

As the highway continues north a number of small RV parks and boat launches come into view, first along Alkali Lake and then Blue Lake. This is where Washingtonians come to play in the water – speed boats, skiers and kids on inner tubes are a common sight during the summer. Gravel pullouts along the road's edge provide ample access to the lakes.

Five miles ahead SR-17 encounters a steep grade heralding the entrance to **SUN LAKES-DRY FALLS STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required, see p. 3*). Situated along the shoreline of Park Lake, this popular park is the only one in Washington to feature a golf course within its boundaries – the 9-hole **Vic Meyers Golf Course**. With a breathtaking view of the lakes facing south, the campground here sells out weeks in advance. Launch sites for power boats as well as canoes and kayaks are available. Kids have a playground and a dedicated swimming area about which to frolic. Sun Lakes Resort, a private area with cabins and more creature comforts, is located within the state park's gates.

Continuing uphill on Highway 17, be sure to snap a photo of Blue Lake and beyond from one of the roadside pullouts. Just after the top of the climb, pull into the parking lot for the **Dry Falls Interpretive Center** (*Discover Pass required, see p. 3*) on the right for a panoramic view of what was once the world's largest waterfall, **DRY FALLS** (*see below, photo: Wikipedia*).



The escarpment across from you is 3½ miles long and nearly 400 feet tall, twice as tall and three times as long as Niagara Falls. The landscape-altering Missoula Floods at the end of the last Ice Age unleashed a torrent of water across Washington, Idaho and Oregon. The floods actually deluged the area around Soap Lake first before carving its way through the basalt like a hot knife through butter to create Dry Falls. Upon successive floods, an amount of water up to ten times the flow of the entire world's rivers *combined* went over the falls' edge!

The highway reaches its junction with US-2 one mile north of Dry Falls. Our tour turns east and traverses Dry Falls Dam, an earthen structure that marks the south shore of **BANKS LAKE**. This 27-mile-long reservoir is a key component of the Columbia Basin Project's network of irrigation across Grant and Adams Counties. During spring and summer the lake maintains a steady depth. As the Columbia Basin begins to dry out annually in August, a coordinated drawdown of the lake redirects water from the lake to farms as well as to rivers downstream aiding the return of spawning salmon.

Overlooking the east edge of the dam is **COULEE CITY** (pop. 575, el. 1,588 ft.), a spot where canyons and farmlands merge into small-town America. At the edge of Banks Lake is the city's public park and campground with space for tents, RV's and boats. The annual highlight in town is the ironically-named *Last Stand Rodeo* (it's actually the first of the season in the Northwest) held over Memorial Day weekend.

Two miles east of Coulee City, our auto tour joins State Route 155 for the second half of the Coulee Corridor Byway. The road dives down to the shore of Banks Lake for five miles before approaching a stretch blasted straight through the rock by dynamite force – the **Million Dollar Mile**. Finished in 1948 to complete the highway link to Grand Coulee Dam, the project cost nearly \$1 million – a fantastic sum at the time.

Keep your eyes peeled on the green mile markers ... after passing Milepost 7, get the camera ready for a photo op that'll make you feel like a million bucks! The one suitable pullout appears on your left immediately after clearing the last bit of rock. A vertically-sheer face frames the lake to your left while a winding ribbon of pavement rolls whimsically downhill into the flats below.

As the miles click by through shrub-steppe landscape heading north, a massive stone monolith comes into view towering over 800 feet above everything in sight. When the Columbia ran wild through this area post-Ice Age, **Steamboat Rock** was an island in the middle of the river. **STEAMBOAT ROCK STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required, see p. 3*) is a desert oasis and a favorite for boaters, rock climbers, horse enthusiasts, campers and day-trippers. A large playground, boat launches, hiking and biking trails, wildlife habitats and a camp store (open seasonally) are the park's highlights. Several units of the park are further up SR-155 – most of them contain boat launches and primitive campsites. Note: The annual drawdown of the lake in August causes boat launches to dry up and mosquitoes become quite prevalent along its shores.

The highway veers away from Banks Lake and climbs back toward civilization. Turnoffs for the civil-aviation Grand Coulee Dam Airfield and Banks Lake Golf Club appear. Wheat fields materialize for the first time in a while and ranch homes dot the approach to **ELECTRIC CITY** (pop. 1,020, el. 1,650 ft.), one of four towns built to support one of the largest concrete structures ever made.

Grand Coulee Dam – The Legend

GRAND COULEE DAM was one of the crowning achievements of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and ultimately settled a 20-year regional debate on how to unlock the hydroelectric and agricultural potential of the river and its sprawling fertile basin.

Originally constructed between 1933 and 1942 and employing up to 8,000 people at any given time, the dam stands 550 feet tall and is 500 feet wide at its base. Its length stretches a mind-boggling one mile across, blocking the path of the mighty Columbia and forming a reservoir that extends 150 miles upstream to the Canadian border. Containing more than 12 million cubic yards, the dam is the largest concrete structure in North America. The act of construction was hazardous work – landslides were common and 77 workers lost their lives. All told, the original dam cost \$270 million to taxpayers of the 1940s and 1950s (over \$2.5 billion in today's dollar).

The landscape behind the dam was irrevocably reshaped once it became operational. Federal officials spent over \$10 million (\$150 million modern-day) to buy up land due to be inundated over a 151-mile stretch northeastward from the dam to the Canadian border. Eleven towns were relocated and several rail lines and state highways were flooded out. Traditional fisheries and sites of the Colville and Spokane tribes along the Columbia's shores were wiped out by the reservoir that came to be known as **ROOSEVELT LAKE**.

Economic benefits from the project have been incalculably huge. The dam is among the five largest hydroelectric power-producing sites in the world. It's also the linchpin of the **Columbia Basin Project** – water pumped nearly 300 vertical feet

from the dam to the storage reservoir of Banks Lake, which in turn feeds a network of canal that irrigate an area twice the size of Delaware. Roosevelt Lake has 660 miles of shoreline and is visited by a million tourists annually, drawn to its ideal setting for water and jet skiing, camping and roaming aboard houseboats.

Travelers to the dam congregate at the excellent **Visitor Center**, which features recently refurbished exhibits and excellent views of the dam's spillway. The Center is open from 9am to 5pm daily with expanded hours in the summertime (closed for major holidays in winter). Across the river from the Visitor Center is the **Third Powerplant**, built between 1967 and 1974 at a cost of \$730 million (over \$3.5 billion today). This building nearly tripled the dam's power-generation capacity and is the one part of the complex available for free, one-hour tours during spring and summer.

For folks who are staying overnight nearby, the **laser light show** at Grand Coulee Dam is an informative treat. The 35-minute program is presented nightly from Memorial Day weekend through the end of September on the dam's spillway (start times vary depending on the onset of darkness). It traces the heritage of the Columbia, the story of the dam's construction and the benefits of the project in an easy-to-digest format. In between historical segments, whimsical images and keyboard-driven music remind viewers that this was cutting-edge technology when the show debuted in 1989.

The highway ascends from Electric City away from Banks Lake up to the town of **GRAND COULEE** (pop. 1,050, el. 1,483 ft.). SR-155 glides past the **Gehrke Windmill Garden**, an eclectic blend of sight and sound delighting travelers since 1980. Over 120 windmills created from scrap metal, construction helmets and other discarded objects are on display at this admission-free site, part of the city's **North Dam Park**.

Passing through the junction with Highway 174, continue straight through the heart of town with its grocery stores and restaurants. The road bends to the left and descends into view of the dam itself – a large pullout on the right-hand side provides the closest photo op from the pavement.

Once past the visitor center, our tour reaches the town of **COULEE DAM** (pop. 1,095, el. 1,145 ft.) and its two distinct sections. This was the first of the towns to spring up during construction in 1933. The leafy lanes at the bottom of the hill formed Engineers Town and were built by the government, while the areas across the river were known originally as Mason City and housed the project's working classes. The two communities incorporated as a single municipality in 1959, forming the only city in Washington with territory in three separate counties (Douglas, Grant and Ohanogan).

The Grand Coulee Bridge opened in 1936 and is the last standing of the four bridges built here during dam construction. It connects to the portion of Coulee Dam found on the Colville Indian Reservation. A casino, entertainment center and motel all cater to visitors here, and an amphitheater provides seating for the dam's laser show during the summer months. **Colville Confederated Tribes Museum**, five blocks north of the bridge, tells the story of local Native Americans with historical photos, murals, dioramas and artifacts. The area's largest annual festival is held each Mother's Day Weekend - **Colorama** hosts a carnival, the town's grand parade and a rodeo.

3. Grand Coulee to Chelan (via Bridgeport & McNeil Canyon)

Retrace your route back to Grand Coulee and the junction for westbound SR-174. The highway clammers further upslope for three miles west of town before reaching **Crown Point Vista** (*Discover Pass required, see p. 3*), the best all-encompassing viewpoint of the dam. Visitors can enjoy the dam's laser show from a distance while listening to the broadcast of the musical and interpretative portion on 90.1 FM.

The road eschews the crenellated canyon landscape of the Columbia and darts westward for a 40-mile stretch across rolling open range. After twenty of those miles, SR-174 yields to Highway 17 on its northbound return to the Columbia. Grand Coulee's little brother, **CHIEF JOSEPH DAM**, stands 1½ miles upstream from the town of Bridgeport. The dam bears the name of the famed Nez Perce leader who was exiled to the Colville Reservation after helping his Wallowa band escape the U.S. Army for several months in 1880.

Chief Joseph Dam ranks second in the country in hydro power production and generates enough electricity to light up the entire Seattle metro area, but produces just 40 percent of Grand Coulee Dam's overwhelming capacity.



The town of **BRIDGEPORT** (pop. 2,455, el. 850 ft.), named for the city in Connecticut where its founders originally lived, hosts a number of recreational opportunities. Two miles past the dam's small interpretative complex is **Lake Woods Golf Club**, a 9-hole, public course located along the stretch of the Columbia behind the dam known as Rufus Woods Lake.

Adjacent to the golf course is **BRIDGEPORT STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required, see p. 3*), one of Washington's traditional hotspots for fishing. The park features tent and RV sites, a large swimming area, two boat launches and hiking trails. Be careful not to accidentally gulp some river water here – large areas of algae bloom in this slow-moving stretch of the Columbia.

Return to the bridge and cross back into Bridgeport, then follow signs for Brewster and State Route 173. This route eases through the center of town and bypasses a dozen beautiful tree carvings (*sample pictured at left*) along Foster Avenue. **Berryman Park**, four blocks southwest of the highway at 20th and Raymond, features a war memorial with a small fighter jet and an artillery gun.

From Bridgeport retrace the route south on SR-17. After 3 miles, turn right on the Bridgeport Hill Road. This unnumbered paved county road follows a draw for six miles up to the gently rolling upland of the Waterville Plateau. Settlement began on the plateau in the mid-1880s after the Moses-Columbia Indian Reservation was disbanded. Most homesteaders took up wheat farming and a grid of gravel and dirt county roads spread across the plateau. Wheat is still the major crop and many of the local roads remain unpaved.

After 4 miles turn left on SR-172, which in 3 miles reaches **MANSFIELD** (pop. 327, alt. 2,262 ft.), a trading center for surrounding farms. Its original site was 1½ miles southwest of the present town, but in 1909 residents relocated to be at the railhead of the new Great Northern branch, reasoning this would be a better place for business. The town's grid of streets was aligned with the railroad, intersecting the east-west highway at 45-degree angles. The line was abandoned in the 1980s and Mansfield has eased into its role as a quiet – but not forgotten – small town. The **Mansfield Museum** is a repository of local history and artifacts.

Continue west from Mansfield on SR-172. A little over 4 miles from town the highway jogs around the small rocky outcrop of **Lone Butte**. This is what geologists call an erratic, transported and deposited here by glaciers or Ice Age flooding. Similar features dot the plateau.

Just over 3½ miles west of Lone Butte, SR-172 makes a 90-degree left turn – bear right here on the unnumbered county road, following signs to Chelan. After a mile there will be another 90-degree turn – this time left – followed in a little over 2 miles by another 90-degree right. The paved road runs north for a mile then turns sharply left (west). Soon it begins a dramatic seven-mile descent from the rumpled edge of the Waterville Plateau down to the Columbia River through **McNeil Canyon**. The prevailing grade is 12 percent.

Rounding a bend, a magnificent view unfolds ahead of the east end of Lake Chelan in its mountain rimmed basin. At the lower end of the canyon the Columbia River comes into view. Nearing the river, the road turns south and soon intersects with US-97. Here you can turn left for Wenatchee or right to Chelan.

Side Trip – Chelan

Highway 150 clammers up a ridge via a sharp switchback and runs into Woodin Avenue on its way into the classic resort town of **CHELAN** (pop. 4,045, el. 1,129 ft.). The town's main street is named after founder L.H. Woodin, who set up a sawmill and land claim here in 1880. By 1890 Chelan had gained a foothold with tourists from all corners of the Northwest for its striking beauty and resort hotels. The oldest building in town is **St. Andrews Episcopal Church** located at Woodin and Columbia, erected in 1890 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, shops in the downtown area sell all manner of modern goods in a traditional Main Street setting, while a farmer's market showcases homegrown wares at Riverwalk Park on Thursdays in July, August and September.



Photo courtesy Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce

The town occupies the southern shore of spectacular **LAKE CHELAN**, a 55-mile-long jewel of the North Cascades whose bottom plunges as deep as 1,486 feet – only Crater Lake and Lake Tahoe delve deeper than that in the United States! The lake itself is classified by AAA as a **Great Experience for Members**. Its waters are frigid during the spring and early summer due to mountain snow melt but much more pleasant by late summer.

Generations of Washingtonians have camped, skied, boated and floated along the lake's southern half, which is lined with summer homes. Farther uplake, heartier souls brave its craggy, beachless northern reaches for unparalleled views and challenges.

Follow Woodin Avenue to the water and turn right, then turn left (in front of the Safeway) to reach Manson Highway (SR-150). A couple blocks ahead, **Don Morse City Park** appears on the left – it features a boat launch, tennis courts, a playground and a long grassy slope facing the lake for sunbathing. The park also houses the state's only grass-covered miniature golf course! For more grown-up activities, **Mill Bay Casino**, **Lake Chelan Golf Course** and **Lake Chelan Winery** are seven miles further uplake along Manson Highway.

Retrace your route, but follow West Woodin Avenue to explore the other half of Chelan's lakefront. The south shore has more hotels and resorts for out-of-towners. **Slidewaters**, a seasonal water park for all ages, is found on Webster Avenue. The **Lake Chelan Boat Co.** offers iconic tours year-round covering the lake's length – 2½ to 4 hours one-way – to reach the remote village of **STEHEKIN** (pop. 100, el. 1,230 ft.), accessible only by hiking, boating or via floatplane.

Once past the edge of town, travelers can continue exploring South Shore Road for another 25 miles. Two of Washington's most popular playgrounds are **LAKE CHELAN STATE PARK** and **TWENTY-FIVE MILE CREEK STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required for both, see p. 3*) – reserve campsites at either park months in advance for summer visits! Other top attractions are the wineries of the **Chelan American Viticultural Area** (AVA). Clustered around the east end of the lake and dominating the slopes, the AVA was established in 2009 and most of its wineries offer tours and tastings throughout the year.

Chelan's major events including a full weekend of fireworks celebrating the Fourth of July as well as September's **HydroFest** featuring two days of boat racing on the lake. The top event, **Fire and Ice WinterFest**, is held over Martin Luther King weekend in January – highlights include fireworks, ice sculptures, a Polar Bear Swim (brrrr!) and plenty of family activities.

Return to Highway 150 and the Beebe Bridge to continue the tour.

4. Chelan to Wenatchee (via US-97)

The last leg of our tour turns south to follow the eastern bank of the Columbia as it drifts back toward Wenatchee. For a tour covering the sights on the western shore, ask for the *North Cascades Loop Auto Tour* at your local AAA Washington office or visit www.aaawa.com and click the Maps & Directions tab at the top.

Basalt cliffs dominate the landscape through the canyon carved by the Columbia. As Highway 97 travels south, the sheared-rock scenery gives way to flatter features suitable for orchards bearing plums, pears, cherries, peaches and apples. From late spring through early autumn, fruit stands of all sizes showcase locally-grown produce beside this stretch of pavement. **DAROGA STATE PARK** (*Discover Pass required, see p. 3*) is situated 16 miles south of Beebe Bridge at a placid stretch of the river known as Lake Entiat and is another popular spot for enjoying personal watercraft. Camping, ball fields and a swimming area are key features of the park.

Six miles further south, US-97 merges with US-2 at the village of **ORONDO** (pop. 450, el. 757 ft.) and the two highways run together for the remaining run to Wenatchee.

Side Trip - Waterville

If your travel plans allow for a 45- to 60-minute detour, the climb up Pine Canyon is a fun and challenging driving diversion. Follow US-2 east from Orondo to begin the trek.

The ascent covers 2,029 vertical feet in just six miles of twisting, cliff-hugging travel – a six-percent grade that feels more like a diabolical workout of the gas and brake pedals than anything. Trees giving the canyon its name dot the hillsides. Halfway up the hill, keep an eye out for the spot where the local high school’s graduating classes have left their spray-painted marks on rocks.

Rewarding drivers at the top is a panorama of the Waterville Plateau. During spring and summer, a stunning landscape of waist-high wheat fields stretch east to the horizon. Two miles ahead is the entrance to the historic town of **WATERVILLE** (pop. 1,160, el. 2,625 ft.), the highest-elevation incorporated municipality in Washington state.

U.S. Highway 2 zig-zags through the center of town and its four-block historic district featuring attractive brick and stone buildings dating back to the town’s founding in 1886. Waterville is the seat of Douglas County and the town’s top sight is the **Douglas County Courthouse** (pictured at right), originally constructed in 1905 and refurbished in the mid-1990s. The biggest event each year is the *North Central Washington Fair* held during the last weekend of August.



Photo courtesy Google Earth

Return to Pine Canyon for the descent back to US-2/97 South – you’ll pass the turnoff for **Badger Mountain Ski Area** on your way back.

South of Orondo orchard country is in full bloom as the road passes **LINCOLN ROCK STATE PARK** (Discover Pass required, see p. 3), a boater’s playground on Lake Entiat adjacent to another AAA GEM attraction, **Rocky Reach Dam**. Note that the dam is only accessible from the other side of the river on US-97A.

Eight miles on, follow the highway back across the Columbia to complete our Auto Tour.

	<p>Be sure to pick up the latest edition of the AAA Washington TourBook at your local office!</p> <p>Redesigned for 2012, the <i>TourBook</i> contains updated information on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction Pricing & Hours of Operation • Exclusive Diamond Ratings for AAA-Approved Lodging & Restaurants <p>Best of all, <i>TourBooks</i> are FREE for members!</p> <p>Download AAA Apps for Android & iPhone Discounts, Roadside Assistance & TripTik Maps Available – Click www.aaawa.com to Download</p>	
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