



# AUTO TOUR

AAA Washington Travel Services

## *Yakima Valley*

---

Yakima Valley, breadbasket of the Pacific Northwest, arcs across the south-central reaches of the Evergreen State. Rising on the high eastern flanks of the Cascade Range and flowing 215 miles to the Columbia, the Yakima River waters a series of two east-west trending basins collectively known as the Yakima Valley. The lofty Cascades shelter the region from moist Pacific winds, creating a desert climate with less than ten inches of rain per year. The soils are naturally fertile and irrigation works in the early twentieth century brought an agricultural boom to the Yakima Valley. A network of over 2,000 miles of canals water fields of row crops, orchards, vineyards and pasturelands.

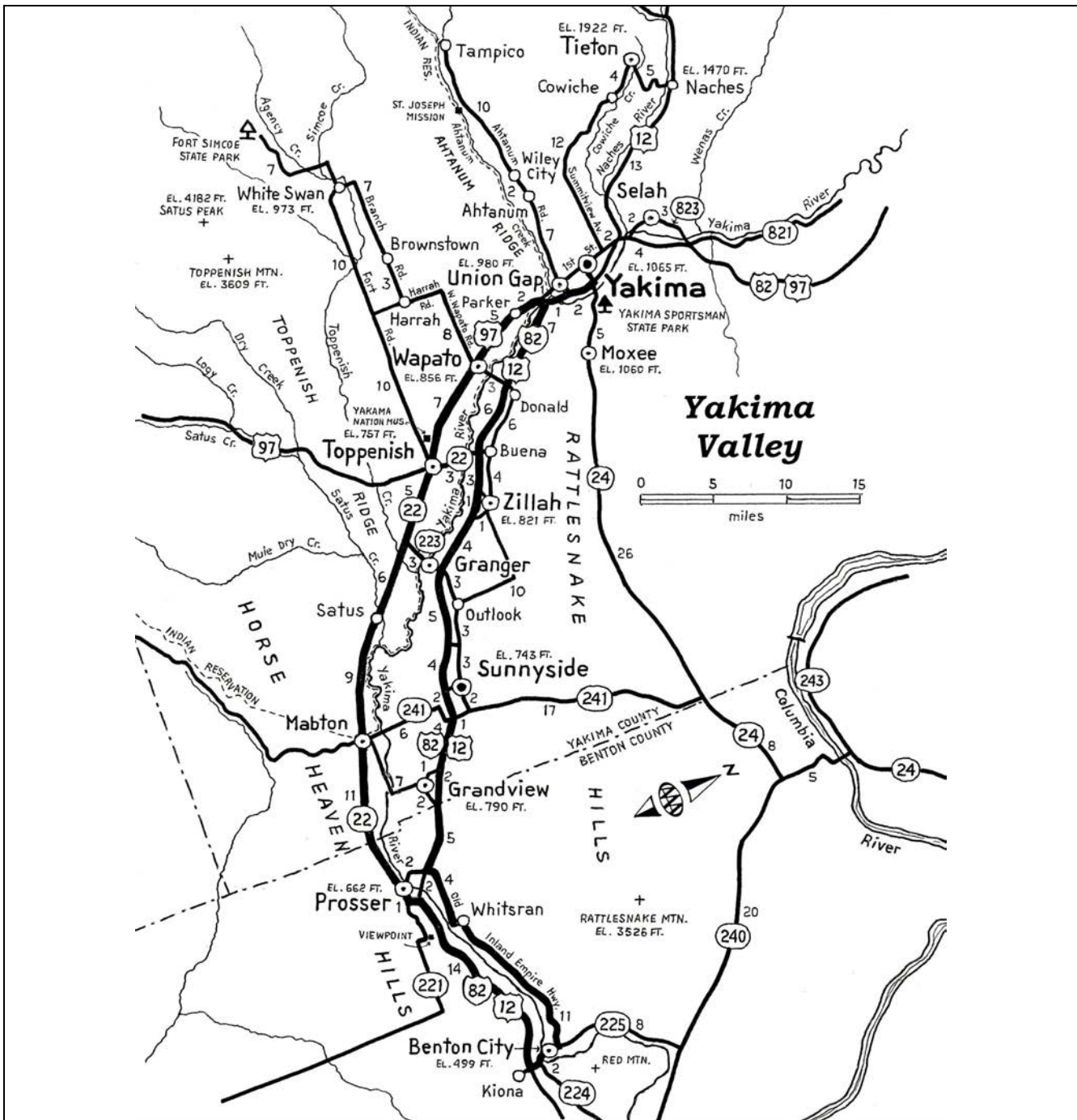


*Typical Yakima Valley landscape: vineyards as Chandler Reach east of Prosser.*

Our Auto Tour starts in the city of Yakima, then traces a counter-clockwise loop through the Lower Yakima Valley. We'll traverse a patchwork of farm and ranchland, touching historic sites and busy agricultural towns with a lively Hispanic flavor. Surfing the radio dial, you'll hear many stations broadcasting in Spanish as Hispanics form more than a third of the region's population.

During spring the valley is a crazy quilt of pastels as ranks of fruit trees blossom. The harvest season extends from summer into early fall and roadside stands proffer the valley's bounty. Wine touring is increasingly popular and contributes toward revitalization in many of the valley towns.

All portions of the Yakima Valley Auto Tour are driveable year round. The months of May through October offer the best weather with generally sunny, warm days and refreshing nights. In fact, the valley sports an average 300 days of sunshine annually. Average maximum temperatures in July and August are in the mid to upper 80's F, with morning minimums in the lower 50s.



The eastern part of the Lower Valley is noticeably warmer, averaging near 90°F, with lows near 60°F. Temperatures occasionally reach into the low 100s, but humidity is low.

Rainfall averages from 7 to 10 inches, with October through March bringing two to four inches per month. June through September are the driest months – each averaging less than half an inch. Ice may present a hazard on clear winter mornings. Snowfall occurs in winter. Yakima averages two feet of snow per year, the lower valley a bit more than half a foot. Fog and high winds producing blowing dust are other weather hazards.

You'll note two spellings: Yakima and Yakama. The latter refers to the Yakama Nation and its possessions.

Ask for the *Washington Wine Touring Auto Tour* from your local AAA Washington office. This publication provides more details on wineries and wine touring in the Yakima Valley and the entire state.

# 1. Yakima and the Upper Valley

**YAKIMA** (pop. 91,630, alt. 1,065 ft.) is the metropolis and primary trading center of the central part of the state. The city is located in the Upper Yakima Valley, on the right bank of its namesake river, set amid an oasis of irrigated orchards and farmland. Stark, barren hills flank the site. To the west these rise to wooded heights, the foothills of the Cascades. The Yakima River flows between high hills at opposite ends of the valley, forming Selah Gap to the north and Union Gap to the south. Both gaps are natural transportation corridors. First established in 1869 at Union Gap, four miles south of the present business district, the town moved to its present location in 1885 with the coming of the railroad (buildings were slid on rollers). As irrigation works encouraged farming, Yakima became the central processing and warehousing place for the district's agricultural products. Agribusiness is still significant to the city's economy as witnessed by **Produce Row**, blocks of warehouses and food processing plants lining First Avenue west of the railroad tracks.

Yakima's dry, sunny climate and central location have made the city a popular convention venue. A sign beside busy Interstate 82 bids travelers *Welcome to Yakima – the Palm Springs of Washington.*



[Photo courtesy HistoryLink.org]

**Downtown Yakima**, a mile west of the freeway, is undergoing revitalization. New hotels, retail establishments and restaurants are opening. The district suffered in recent years as retail establishments, including The Bon Marche (now Macy's) and Nordstrom fled to the suburban mall. A community effort known as the Downtown Futures Initiative strives to make the central business district a more pleasant destination. The program has funded street and storefront remodeling projects along Yakima Avenue and other streets in the downtown core. Pedestrian-friendly lighting, water fountains, planters, banner poles, new trees and hanging baskets complement paver-inlaid sidewalks.

Downtown is not without its attractions, mostly architectural. The 13-story **A.E. Larson Building** (pictured at left), built in 1931 at Yakima and Second, was the first skyscraper in town. Its elegant façade features dramatic Art Deco motifs and brick in thirteen different shades. The 1912 **William O. Douglas Federal Building** (S. Third St. and E. Chestnut Ave.) is significant as the city's finest example of Second Renaissance Revival/Beaux Arts architecture. Its name honors William O. Douglas, a Yakima native who served in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and was a Supreme Court justice for 36 years.

Take a peek at the old **Capitol Theatre** (19 S. Third St.), built in 1920 as a vaudeville venue, now carefully restored and hosting a series of stage productions and the Yakima Symphony. Over the years, Isadora Duncan, Anna Pavlova, Nelson Eddy and Bob Hope have performed on its stage. Tours are available by advance arrangement weekdays between 9am and 4pm.

**St. Michael's Church** (Episcopal), at Yakima Avenue and Naches Street, was the first stone building in town, erected in 1888 of locally quarried basalt. A statue in the landscaped median of Naches Street in front of the church is a **World War I memorial**.

To see the city's older architectural heritage visit the **North Front Street Historical District**, stretching several blocks along its namesake street north of W. Yakima Avenue. Here you'll find an interesting collection of brick and stone buildings from the turn of the 20th century. Take a look at the historic **Northern Pacific Depot**. West of the railroad tracks are some **shopping venues**: Track 29, with shops located in old railway cars, and Yesterday's Village offering antiques.

While the great majority of wineries are located in the Lower Valley, several have **tasting rooms in downtown Yakima**: **Gilbert Cellars** (5 N. Front, at Yakima Avenue) and **Kana Winery** (10 S. 2nd) are among them.

Yakima also boasts the sole remaining early 20th-century electric interurban railway line in the country. Weekends and holidays from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day you can peruse the artifacts and old rolling stock of the Yakima Valley Traction Company at the **Yakima Electric Railway Museum** (S Third and Pine St.). The interurban formerly operated a 44-mile network of tracks serving outlying communities and farms. **Yakima Valley Trolleys** still operates excursion runs summer weekends on its Pine Street line between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. The 5-mile Selah line is temporarily closed.



To learn about area history, visit the **Yakima Valley Museum**, adjacent to Franklin Park at 2105 Tieton Drive. Its exhibits chronicle the area from prehistoric times to American Indian and pioneer settlement periods to the growth of agriculture. The museum has a working 1930s soda fountain and a room dedicated to Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Other galleries feature changing exhibits. **Gilbert Homeplace**, across the park at 2109 W. Yakima Avenue, is an 1898 Victorian home with period furnishings. The museum is open daily Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, closed Mondays the rest of the year (admission) – phone (509) 248-0747.

**McAllister Museum of Aviation**, housed in a former flight school near the airport (2008 S. 16th Ave.), documents the history of aviation in the region. Displays include historic aircraft, avionics equipment and models. It's open Wednesdays through Saturday from May through Labor Day; Fridays through Saturdays the rest of the year (donations) – phone (509) 457-4933.

The **Yakima Greenway** is a paved recreation trail extending nine miles along the Yakima River from Selah Gap to Union Gap. A spur branches west along the Naches River to 40th Avenue. **Yakima Area Arboretum**, adjacent to the trail off I-82 Nob Hill Boulevard (exit 34), is a 46-acre tract with more than 2,000 species of indigenous and exotic plants. The arboretum is open daily; its **Jewett Interpretive Center** is open Tuesdays through Saturdays (free).

Baseball fans might enjoy a game at **Yakima County Stadium**, adjacent to the Central Washington Fairgrounds at 1220 Pacific Avenue. The Class-A Northwest League **Yakima Bears** play at the 3,000-seat stadium from mid-June to early September. **YAKIMA SPORTSMAN STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see below*), on the east bank of the river, off I-82 exit 34 (SR-24), offers campsites and a natural history trail. More than 140 species of birds frequent its woods and wetland habitats.

The **Yakima Valley Visitor Information Center**, built in the Tuscan style, has a wealth of information on the city and valley. The center is at 101 N. Fair Avenue, off I-82 southbound exit 33B, northbound exit 33 – phone (509) 573-3388 or (800) 221-0751.

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/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. Click [www.discoverpass.wa.gov](http://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.



## Yakima Vicinity



Colorful fruit box labels are collector's items. The best feature a play on words also captured by the artwork. [Image: Mighty Tieton]

Just beyond Selah Gap, where the Yakima River flows between high, grassy hills, is **SELAH** (pop. 7,205, alt. 1,118 ft.). The Northern Pacific Railway opened a station named Wenas here in 1885, but the settlement didn't become a town until Swedish immigrant and entrepreneur Gus Remington (born Nels Olson) promoted the location, even advertising in Swedish-language publications in the Midwest. Its name, meaning *smooth water*, comes from a calm stretch of the Yakima near the townsite. North of town, Wenas Valley extends northwestward. Orchards surround the town and fruit packing and processing remain Selah's economic mainstay. Selah is home of **Tree Top**, one of the country's largest apple grower-owned cooperatives. The co-op consists of more than 1,300 growers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

Tree Top's two processing plants here make apple juice, apple sauce and dried apples. The **Tree Top Visitor Center**, 204 E. Second Avenue, has apple industry displays and sells apple products. Another popular stop is the large **fruit stand** east of Selah, off I-82 exit 29.

**TIETON** (pop. 1,200, alt. 1,922 ft.) is a former fruit packing town, 16 miles northwest of Yakima. Built around a central square, Tieton incorporated in 1942. Apple and pear orchards still surround the settlement, but the local economy is changing. Hispanics now form more than 50 percent of the town's population. In recent decades, small-scale farms have consolidated, largely replacing family-run growers.

In 2005 a Seattle art book publisher started Mighty Tieton, an initiative to revitalize the community by encouraging artisan businesses like light manufacturing and hospitality enterprises. The group has purchased several buildings and properties close to town center and is attracting artists, designers, crafts people and retailers. The former church is now a community hall, an activities and events venue.

The city of **UNION GAP** (pop. 6,055, alt. 980 ft.) marks the original site of Yakima. Settled in 1861 as Yakima City, the Northern Pacific Railroad persuaded most of its businesses to relocate four miles north to Yakima's present site in 1885, where there was more room for a station and rail yards. The latter was known as North Yakima until 1918, when the State Legislature dropped 'North' and renamed the original Yakima 'Union Gap.' The town takes its name from the natural pass or "gap" which the river has carved through a barren ridgeline: Rattlesnake Hills to the east and Ahtanum Ridge to the west.

Union Gap's lower taxes have attracted most of Yakima area's big box retailers. **Valley Mall**, west of I-82 exit 36, is a shopping complex with 85 stores.

**Central Washington Agricultural Museum**, located in Fullbright Park (entrance off Main Street at south end of town), features an extensive open-air collection of farming equipment and a restored 1917 log cabin. Its Magness Hand Tool Collection contains more than 6,000 items. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays April through October; call for schedule rest of the year (donations) – phone (509) 457-8735.



*The timbered structures of St. Joseph Mission are on the National Registry of Historic Places  
[Photo: HistoryLink.org]*

Ahtanum Road runs seven miles due west from Union Gap to **AHTANUM** (pop. 500, alt. 1,246 ft.), an early pioneer community with a grange and Congregational church from the late 1800s. Its name means 'stream by long mountain,' descriptive of the creek which flows eastward near the base of Ahtanum Ridge.

Seven miles farther west, a small park south of the road contains **St. Joseph Mission**. French Oblate fathers established the mission in 1852 on a site requested by Yakama Chief Kamiakin. The mission burned in 1855 during a period of unrest known as the Yakima Indian War. It was re-established in 1867, but by 1871 was closed after the federal government arbitrarily placed Yakama Indian affairs under the Methodists. The mission was repaired and reactivated in the early 1900s and is still used for special occasions.

## 2. Down the Lower Valley's Right Bank Wapato, Toppenish and Prosser (66 miles)

When you're ready to leave Yakima, head south on I-82 and take exit 37 (signed US Highway 97). South of Union Gap the **Lower Yakima Valley** spreads west to the forested foothills of the Cascades and east to the sere hills of the Columbia Basin. Ahtanum Ridge and Rattlesnake Hills form its northern flank. To the south lie Toppenish Ridge and the Horse Heaven Hills. The blunt snowy dome of Mount Adams (elev. 12,276 ft.) commands the western horizon. Agriculture is king here and the winemaker is the new prince. The Yakima Valley was Washington's first American Viticulture Area (AVA), designated by the federal government in 1983. In the western part of the valley, the wineries lie north of the Yakima River – the land to the south constitutes the **Yakama Indian Reservation**.

US-97, a multi-lane divided highway, traverses the flat valley floor, a lush landscape of row and orchard crops made possible by a network of irrigation canals and ditches. The volcanic and alluvial soils are naturally fertile, nurturing all manner of temperate climate crops: apples, apricots, asparagus, cantaloupes, cherries, corn, cucumbers, grapes, hops, melons, mint, onions, peaches, pears, peppers, plums, potatoes, strawberries, tomatoes and zucchini. Roadside fruit stands abound.

The highway skirts the western edge of **WAPATO** (pop. 5,025, alt. 855 ft.). The town bears a Native American name for a starchy root and has come to mean 'potato.' Japanese contract laborers came to work the land in the 1910s when the reservation opened for non-Indian settlement. By 1915 Wapato sported a "Japanese Town," catering to the needs of the

expatriate community. They flourished despite occasional hostility from local white settlers, and by the early 1940s there were 1,200 Japanese Americans in the Lower Valley. This community came to an end in the aftermath of the December 7<sup>th</sup> attack on Pearl Harbor. By the late spring of 1942, all residents of Japanese ancestry in the western states were forced to relocate to internment camps. The government built a camp near Toppenish, but it was never used. The Yakima Valley Nisei were eventually sent to a camp at Hart Mountain, Wyoming. After the war ended in 1945, about 10 percent returned to the Valley, but given the almost universally hostile attitudes they encountered, few stayed.

Most travelers whip by Wapato on four-lane US-97, or completely bypass the place on I-82. Eyeing the success of down-valley towns like Granger and Toppenish, Wapatoans want more folks to turn off the highway and tarry awhile so they've come up with a plan to adopt a Southwest architectural theme for buildings in their central business district. Under the plan, storefronts along Wapato Avenue and W. First Street will eventually sport Southwest-adobe architectural motifs. Meanwhile, Wapato has joined marketing forces with nearby Zillah, Granger and Toppenish on a tourism promotional initiative, the **Rattlesnake Hills Trail**. A dozen new businesses have come to town and signs of life are appearing in the heretofore largely moribund downtown. Some of the valley's best fresh produce stands can be found around Wapato: Imperial's Garden (a Filipino family-owned farm on Lateral A west of town) and E.W. Brandt & Sons Fruit Stand (a half mile west of Lateral A on Ragan Road).

You can take an interesting side trip into the western part of the Lower Yakima Valley (*see below*), or proceed 7 miles south on US-97 to Toppenish.

---

### Side Trip – White Swan & Fort Simcoe

This 52-mile side trip explores the western end of the Lower Yakima Valley. Follow West Wapato Road, westward from its namesake town. Farm fields hug the edge of the highway. The dark green grass-like crop is mint, mowed in September for its oil. The land – north to and beyond Ahtanum Ridge, west to the crest to the Cascades, south to the top of Toppenish Ridge and east to the Yakima River – belongs to the Yakama Nation. Covering 1.2 million acres, this is the state's largest Native American reservation. Established by treaty in 1855, but not authorized by Congress until 1894, it represents a mere ten percent of the Yakama's ancestral homeland. Much of the most valuable land on the reservation is owned and farmed by non-Indians. Approximately 8,400 of the 34,000 people residing on the reservation are tribal members.

A little over five miles west of Wapato, turn left (south) on N. Harrah Road, which leads three miles to **HARRAH** (pop. 630, alt. 833 ft.), a typical small farming town. Established on a railroad branch line in 1913, it was first named Saluskin for a Yakama chieftain. Two years later it was renamed to honor J.T. Harrah in recognition of the economic importance of his ranch to the community. Until his death in 1917, Mr. Harrah humbly reproached the pressures that caused this change.

At Harrah turn west (right) on Branch Road. Three miles west, we pass **BROWNSTOWN** (pop. 50, alt. 853 ft.), first called **Bench**, for its location atop a patch of higher ground. Six miles beyond, turn left (south) on White Swan Road which leads to **WHITE SWAN** (pop. 675, alt. 968 ft.). The settlement was first called Stwireville, for Joe Stwire, a Yakama Indian who was also known as White Swan. A trading post opened in 1908 and a town developed. An Indian boarding school operated here from 1921 to 1962. The traditional council grounds southeast of town are the site of numerous celebrations, some attracting American Indians from throughout the West. Among the most colorful is *Treaty Day*, with a rodeo and powwow, held in early June. National Indian Days are in September.



Oaks offer shade at Fort Simcoe  
[Photo: WA State Parks]

A paved road leads 7 miles southwest to **FORT SIMCOE STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see page 4*), on the oak-dotted site of a traditional camping ground on the tribal trail to the fishing grounds along the Columbia River to the south. The fort dates back to 1856, when the Army established this outpost during the Yakima Indian War.

The historical centerpieces of the site are five original buildings: the commander's house, three officer's houses and a blockhouse. The houses are filled with period furnishings. Several other buildings representing the period have been replicated. The Interpretive Center and three buildings are open Wednesday through Sunday from April through September.

Return to White Swan and follow Fort Road east to US-97.



**TOPPENISH** (pop. 9,105, alt. 760 ft.) is a unique valley town known as *The City of Murals and Museums*. Its name comes from a Yakama Indian term meaning *sloping and spreading land*. The settlement formed in the late 1880s after the Northern Pacific established a section house at the halfway point on their line between Pasco and Yakima. The town quickly became a major cattle and horse shipping point. It was a ramshackle place as initially, non-Indian settlers could not buy land on this piece of the reservation. Development proceeded after 1905, when unrestricted land sales were permitted.

Large-scale commercial farming arrived with the completion of irrigation works in the early 1900s, and Toppenish became a processor for sugar beets. Today the district produces a wide range of vegetable and fruit crops.



Toppenish mural "When Hops Were Picked by Hand"  
[Photo: Toppenish Chamber of Commerce]

Not content to languish as a farm trading center, Toppenish has transformed itself into a tourist mecca via the medium of murals. More than 70 of these outsize, colorful works of art decorate building walls throughout the city. Narrated horse- and mule-drawn wagons haul visitors around town on mural tours from May through September.

The tourism initiative has sparked a general sprucing up of the historic architecture and a number of brick and stone buildings have been reborn as museums. The 1911 train station is the **Northern Pacific Railway Museum** and the former Carnegie Library is a local history museum (presently closed).

The **American Hop Museum**, 22 South B Street, claims to be the only museum of its kind in the U.S. Hops are a key ingredient in beer and you'll see hop yards throughout the valley – easy to spot with their 18-foot high trellises to mitigate the ravages of mold and rust. The Yakima Valley produces three-quarters of the nation's hops.

Toppenish is also the administrative center for the Yakama Nation. The **Yakama Nation Cultural Heritage Center**, off US-97 on the west side of town, displays Native American life and tells the impacts of the coming of the white man from the Indian perspective. The complex is open daily 8am-5pm (admission) and **Legends Casino** lies just south of the complex.

At the junction with US-97 and SR-22 at the south end of Toppenish, continue east on Highway 22. Irrigated fields run south to the base of the grassy Toppenish Ridge. Five miles down the road we cross Toppenish Creek. Beyond, the foothills of the ridge nose into the valley to the right of the highway. Continuing east, the valley widens again. Now the higher profile of the Horse Heaven Hills marks the southern horizon. The hamlet of **SATUS** (pop. 20, alt. 672 ft.) is now little more than a wide spot in the road. Its name derives from a Yakama term *Setaslema*, meaning 'people of the ryegrass prairie.'

**MABTON** (pop. 2,290, alt. 715 ft.) started in 1885 as a section house on the Northern Pacific line. The railroad named the place for Mabel Baker Anderson, daughter of a Walla Walla banker and railroad financier, using a contracted form of her first name. The town prospered in the early 1900s as irrigation canals laced the valley floor. The district was known for bumper crops of alfalfa. Nearly 90 percent of the population is Hispanic. East of Mabton the valley narrows again and the highway draws close to the base of the Horse Heaven Hills. The ridges' poetic name recalls the good grazing the cooler heights offered pioneer horsemen.

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area**, 2 miles north on SR-241, is a 2,800-acre wetland habitat along the Yakima River. This is one of the prime birding sites in the valley, especially in fall when you'll see eagles, hawks, falcons, swifts and hummingbirds, among many others.

**PROSSER** (pop. 5,780, alt. 666 ft.) sits on the south bank of the Yakima River with the tall, grassy Horse Heaven Hills forming a dramatic southern backdrop. Native Americans called the place *Tap-tap*, for the small waterfall on the Yakima River. The Northern Pacific Railroad established a construction camp here in 1884. In 1885 town namesake William Farrand Prosser homesteaded beside the stream on the site of today's **Farrand Park**, calling the area Yakima Falls. In 1887 a gristmill was built to take advantage of the waterpower and the settlement came to be called Prosser Falls. After the turn of the twentieth century, irrigation canals were watering a wide range of vegetable crops and Prosser became an important trading and shipping point served by two rail lines.

When Benton County was carved out of the eastern portions of Klickitat and Yakima counties in 1905, Prosser was designated county seat. The **Benton County Courthouse**, at 620 Market Street, is an imposing structure erected in 1926. Its interior features a central portico, oak banisters, terrazzo floors and other monumental touches reflective of the period's optimism.



*Desert Wind Winery, on the eastern edge of Prosser, sports a Southwest architectural theme.*

Prosser is capitalizing on its location amid one of Washington's premiere wine growing districts. Prosser's link to wine dates back to the 1930s, when Walter Clore began growing some of the state's first *vinifera* grapes at Washington State University's Prosser research facility. Dr. Clore discovered that Eastern Washington was well suited to viticulture, and growers slowly started experimenting with the crop.

**Hogue Cellars** opened Prosser's first winery in 1982, a time when Washington's viticulture was in its infancy. Hogue is now the fourth-largest winery in a statewide industry generating more than \$3 billion a year. Vineyards dot the valley and hills outside Prosser and city officials are confident they can promote this as the birthplace of Washington wine. There are **dozens of wineries** in the area and most have tasting rooms.

The city is in the early stages of an effort to boost its reputation, revamp its infrastructure and attract restaurants, hotels, and other tourist amenities. There are some interesting shops in downtown Prosser. Many of the buildings have been spruced up – check out the restored **Princess Theater**. The **Benton County Historical Museum**, in a park at Seventh and Patterson, has an extensive collection of 20,000 items including American Indian, pioneer and early twentieth-century artifacts. The museum is open daily except Monday.

The **Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center** is under development west of I-82 exit 82. The center will showcase Washington's wine industry and its links to cuisine. The Vineyard Pavilion, the center's event venue, opened in 2011.

For a panoramic view of the valley and distant Cascade volcanoes, head 2½ miles east on SR-221 to **Horse Heaven Vista**. Note: a left turn to the viewpoint from eastbound SR-221 is prohibited – you'll have to continue past the site until you can safely turn to backtrack to the vista.

Continue east from Prosser on I-82. The freeway traverses the foot of the Horse Heaven Hills. In spring, lush green grass cloaks their folds, but by June increasing heat and aridity turn the slopes golden. Fourteen miles east of Prosser we reach the eastern end of the Yakima Valley. Here the two ranges of hills on the valley's north and south flanks converge, forcing the river to turn north between Rattlesnake Hills and Red Mountain.

The high peak off to the north is **Rattlesnake Mountain** (elev. 3,526 ft.), the highest point in a 50-mile radius. American Indians consider the peak a sacred place. Local sources describe it as the world's tallest treeless mountain, but this is not authenticated. Its windswept slopes once hosted a Cold War missile base. An astronomical observatory occupies the summit, but is now closed. High on its slopes geologists have discovered glacial erratics, boulders embedded in ice blocks deposited in the area during cataclysmic Ice Age Floods 14,500-17,000 years ago. The mountain is part of Hanford Reach National Monument.

Two communities grew up in this vicinity. **KIONA** (pop. 230, alt. 518 ft.) lies south of I-82 exit 96. Largely residential now, it was established by the N.P. Railroad in 1885. North of the freeway is the much larger **BENTON CITY** (pop. 3,145, alt. 494 ft.) bordering the left bank of the sharp bend of the Yakima River. The town and county bear the name of Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benson (1782-1858), a staunch advocate of the country's westward expansion. The Union Pacific established a station here in 1909, which became the nucleus of the settlement. Like most valley towns, prosperity came with the advent of large-scale irrigation in the early 1900s. During World War II the population quadrupled with workers on the nearby Hanford atomic energy project.

The **Red Mountain** area, east of Benton City on SR-224, is a premium red wine producing region of international renown. It received federal designation as an AVA in 2001. Most of the wineries are on a network of country lanes branching off Sunset Road, which leads north along the broad, gradual slope. Roadside signs direct you to the wineries. The upland offers a panoramic view westward across the Lower Yakima Valley.



### 3. Wine Touring on the Valley's Left Bank

Grandview, Sunnyside, Granger and Zillah (65 miles)

The return leg of our Auto Tour traverses the northern part of the Lower Yakima Valley. Highway 225 zigzags north through Benton City; after 1½ miles turn left (west) on Hazel Avenue, also signed as O.I.E. Hwy. This stands for **Old Inland Empire Highway**, which was the first motor road through the eastern part of the valley. Leaving Benton City behind, the road continues along a bench above the Yakima River, here entrenched in a narrow basalt gorge. Our route follows the Union Pacific Railroad's Yakima Valley branch line, now abandoned. The Northern Pacific, now Burlington Northern Santa Fe, follows the river's opposite bank.

**WHITSRAN** (pop. 100, alt. 679 ft.), 11 miles west of Benton City, is a scattered village named by the railroad for a local landowner. The Old Inland Empire Highway zig-zags through the community, then strikes due west to the Prosser area. Follow signs to westbound I-82. There are a number of wineries in the North Prosser district, including a cluster on the appropriately named Merlot Drive, south of I-82 exit 80.



*This aerial view looks southeast over Grandview, processor and shipper of the agricultural bounty of its surroundings  
[Photo: City of Grandview]*

Interstate 82 leads seven miles west to **GRANDVIEW** (pop. 10,920, alt. 804 ft.), an attractive town set amid hop yards, vineyards, orchards, pastures and productive fields of vegetable crops. Although irrigation started in 1893, the town was not established until the Union Pacific opened its branch line in 1906. Its name comes from the grand perspective of hills to the north and south and snowcapped mounts Adams and Rainier on the distant western horizon.

Take exit 75 and follow Wine Country Highway through town. The downtown area and adjacent residential streets form a National Historic District, including well maintained architecture from the 1910s-1930s. The **Ray E. Powell Museum**, 311 Division Street, has local history displays, including a rare 1902 Kiblinger automobile. The museum is open Tuesday through Sunday afternoons.

The former **Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery**, at Avenue B and W. 5th Street, was the state's first post-Prohibition wine making facility. The winery utilized rare, European-style open-top fermenters to produce premium reds. Ste. Michelle relocated their production facilities to Woodinville in the late 1980s and has become Washington's largest wine maker.

Interstate 82 strikes northwest to **SUNNYSIDE** (pop. 16,010, alt. 745 ft.), the largest population center in the Lower Valley. Pioneer cattleman Ben Snipes built a cabin here in 1859. Work on irrigation canals started in 1885, after which farming prospered. The new community almost became a ghost town after the Panic of 1893, but got a new start with the establishment of the Christian Cooperative Colony in 1898. Early Sunnyside earned the nickname *Holy City* for its penchant for righteousness. The colony espoused the values of the Progressive Brethren, a German Baptist sect also known as Dunkards, which forbade vices such as gambling, drinking, dancing and horseracing. The Union Pacific Railroad arrived in 1906, bringing a spurt of growth.

Local farms and orchards produce more than 50 crops; asparagus is a specialty of the district. Sunnyside has become the Lower Valley's primary retail center. Its population is three-quarters Hispanic and special events reflect the ethnic heritage and agriculture-based economy. The community celebrates *Cinco de Mayo* with great gusto, while the *Lighted Farm Implement Parade* (early December) is one of the more unusual events.

At **Dairygold Dairy Fair**, south of I-82 exit 67 on Midvale Road, you can watch the cheese making process (open daily). To learn more about the area, visit **Sunnyside Historical Museum** at 704 S. Fourth Avenue. Its exhibits include American Indian artifacts, pioneer items and astronaut Bonnie Dunbar. Ben Snipes' 1859 cabin is across the street. The museum is open Thursday through Sunday afternoons from April to early December.

**OUTLOOK** (pop. 340, alt. 784 ft.), 4 miles west of Sunnyside, was founded in 1900. The name reflects the wide-ranging views.



A colorful dinosaur tops the sign over Main Street

Over the last dozen years the fruit-packing town of **GRANGER** (population 3,270, alt. 731 ft.) has quietly converted itself into the place *Where Dinosaurs Roam* (see picture at left). In 1958, Woolly Mammoth bones were discovered in the Granger Clay Products Company clay mine near town. Although a mammoth is not a dinosaur, it certainly is prehistoric, and that was good enough for the locals. In recent years, dozens of colorful dino-replicas have sprouted up around town.

According to the Granger Chamber of Commerce Web site, the first dinosaurs were built in 1994 under the guidance of the city's Public Works Department. The dinosaurs are made of steel frames, covered with wire mesh, then coated in concrete and varnished with automotive paint. The biggest cluster is in **Hisey Park**, also known as Dino Park, on the town's south side. From I-82 exit 58, head south on SR-223; a half-mile south, turn right on Main Street.

The park, with its collection of dinosaurs large and small, is on both sides of the highway. You'll also see a Brontosaurus and a Triceratops among many others. An amphibious dinosaur, known as a pterosaur, can be seen out in the artificial lake called Dinosaur Pond. Continuing along Main Street, look for a Tyrannosaurus Rex crashing through the side of a building. Other specimens can be seen scattered around town. Hisey Park is a pleasant spot for a picnic and the dinosaurs, many placed amid playground equipment, are endlessly fascinating for children, especially the younger kids. A path encircles the lake and on summer weekends you can rent paddleboats. Completing the prehistoric theme, the park's restrooms are shaped like a volcano and the snack bar is called the Dino-Store.

Just as Toppenish has its Mural-in-a-Day event, Granger has its own *Dino-in-a-Day* festivities held the first Saturday in June, celebrating the completion work on the town's newest dinosaur.

Like all Valley towns, Granger has a large Hispanic population (here roughly 82 percent). Granger has celebrated a *Cherry Festival* the first weekend in May since 1948 and in the 1990s a new event – *Cinco de Mayo* – was added to the weekend's festivities. If you're lucky enough to be in the area during this colorful event, be sure to check out this authentic manifestation of Mexican pride. Every summer weekend there's a traditional Mexican Fiesta in Hisey Park, featuring music, food, games and dancing.

Five miles northwest of Granger, **ZILLAH** (pop. 3,000, alt. 820 ft.) bears the name of Zillah Oakes, daughter of a Northern Pacific Railroad president. The town's founding dates to 1891, when the Sunnyside Canal project was completed. In the first decade of the twentieth century, cheap land and perpetual water rights attracted agricultural settlement. Many of the early homesteaders were of Dutch ancestry. Zillah incorporated in 1911.



A vineyard of Pinot noir grapes in the Rattlesnake Hills AVA, north of Zillah.

Two attractions are on the east side of town. **Teapot Dome Gas Station**, off I-82 exit 54, was built in 1922 to parody the like-named Wyoming oil lease scandal. Complete with a handle and spout, the squat, circular building resembling a teapot was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. It pumped gas until 2007. **El Ranchito**, on the eastern edge of town on Yakima Valley Highway, is an authentic Mexican restaurant, store and cultural center serving the area's sizeable Hispanic community. An unintended attraction is the **Church of God-Zillah**, established before the Japanese film monster gained worldwide popularity. Most parishioners have embraced the hip reference and they've even erected a wire-frame Godzilla model, armed with a cross and message board. When not in a parade, he's usually on display outside the Christian Worship Center (its official name) at 204 Cheyne Road on the west side of town.

Zillah is at the heart of the Lower Yakima Valley's wine growing area with dozens of wineries, most small, family-run affairs, scattered in the attractive countryside that slopes northward to the Rattlesnake Hills. **The Fruit Loop** is a self-guiding itinerary traversing this district. Brochures showing roads and locations are available at wineries, the local Chamber of Commerce and throughout the community.

In an effort to better tie into the region's tourism efforts, the Zillah City Council has approved an architectural theme recalling Italy's Tuscany wine region. It will feature tile roofs and stone and stucco siding to give the city a distinct identity.

Interstate 82 parallels the Yakima River for more than a dozen miles northwest to Union Gap. You can also take the pre-freeway route, signed as the Yakima Valley Highway. The low-lying floodplain along the river is known as Parker Bottom. Some of the farms here have been in the same family since homesteading started here at the turn of the twentieth century. En route we pass the small farming community of **BUENA** (pop. 590, alt. 820 ft.). The Northern Pacific bestowed the Spanish word for 'good' or 'pleasant' on the station established here in 1910. Once served by two railroads, both lines have closed.

Several miles south of **DONALD** (pop. 50, alt. 882 ft.) just off Yakima Valley Highway stands the weathered **Mattoon Cabin**, dating back to 1865. Surprisingly, this historic structure enjoys no formal protection other than its listing on the National Historic Registry. In Donald proper, the **Egbert French Trading Post** (built in 1867) is in private hands and is better preserved. Several miles beyond Donald the **Sunnyside Division Dam** impounds the Yakima River. This structure diverts water into Sunnyside Canal, which irrigates farms, orchards and vineyards along the river's left bank as far downstream as Benton City. Just upstream is **Ah-wah-tum**, a traditional American Indian fishing site. Tribal members still dip-net fish for steelhead in early spring and salmon in early summer and fall, both here and just below Sunnyside Dam.

Interstate 82 converges with US-97 at Union Gap. **Moxee Bog**, at the base of the gap's eastern rampart, is a unique, spring-fed wetland. Its sphagnum marsh, a relict of the last Ice Age, offers habitat for rare forms of wildlife, including an endangered species of Monarch butterfly.

Traversing the gap we return to the Yakima urban area, completing our Auto Tour.

### BLOSSOM CALENDAR

APPLES	early to mid-April
CEHRRIES	early April to early May
PEACHES	late April
PEARS	late April
APPLES	late April to early May



### HARVEST CALENDAR

APPLES	late August to early November
APRICOTS	July
ASPARAGUS	April-June
BEANS, GREEN	July
CANTALOUPE	July-September
CHERRIES	mid-June to mid-July
CORN, SWEET	July-September
CUCUMBERS	July-September
GRAPES, WINE	mid-September into October
MELONS	July-September
ONIONS	mid-September on
PEACHES	mid-July through late September
PEARS	early August into October
PEPPERS	August to frost
PLUMS	late August through September
POTATOES	July-November
STRAWBERRIES	June
TOMATOES	July-September
WATERMELON	mid-July through September
ZUCCHINI	June-July

#### KEEPING INFORMED ON THE ROAD

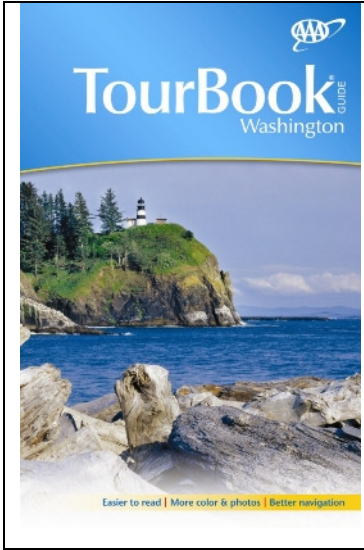
Here is a selected listing of Yakima Valley radio stations . . .

**GRANGER**  
KDNA – 91.9FM  
**SUNNYSIDE**  
KYXE – 1020AM  
KAYB – 88.1FM  
KZTB – 96.7FM  
**TOPPENISH**  
KYNR – 1490AM

**YAKIMA**  
KUSA – 980AM  
KIT – 1280AM  
KJOX – 1390AM  
KUTI – 1460AM  
KSOH – 89.5FM  
KNWY – 90.3FM (NPR)  
KDBL – 92.9FM

KATS – 94.5FM  
KQSN – 99.3FM  
KHHK – 99.7FM  
KARY – 100.9FM  
KXDD – 1-4.7FM  
KRSE – 105.7  
KFFM – 1007.1FM





Be sure to pick up the latest edition of the **AAA Washington TourBook** at your local office!

Redesigned for 2012, the *TourBook* contains updated information on

- Attraction Pricing & Hours of Operation
- Exclusive Diamond Ratings for AAA-Approved Lodging & Restaurants

Best of all, *TourBooks* are FREE for members!

**Download AAA Apps for Android & iPhone**  
Discounts, Roadside Assistance & TripTik Maps Available – Click [www.aaawa.com](http://www.aaawa.com) to Download



---

*Photos by John King unless otherwise indicated, Map drawn by John King*

*Updated 12/7/2011 tm*