

Passport to Pleasure: Feeling Good in Friday Harbor, San Juan Island

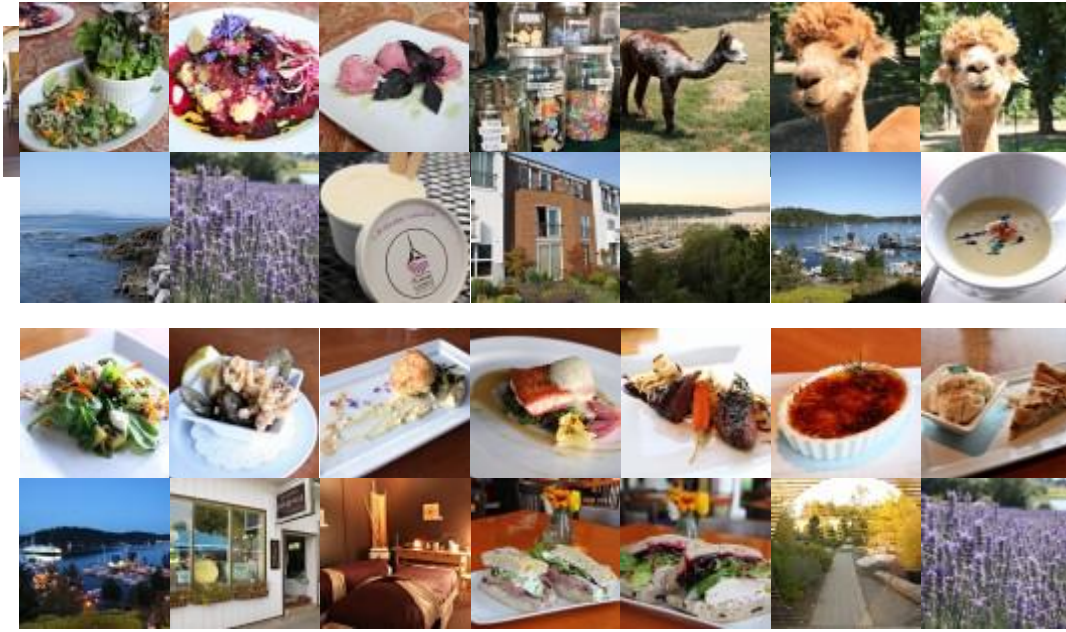
by Jay Friedman on October 30, 2012



A spot prawn cocktail is the perfect start to a meal at Swinomish Casino & Lodge's 13moons Restaurant

[Play](#)[Prev](#)|[Next](#)





Last year's trip to [Orcas Island](#) whetted my appetite to return to the San Juan Islands. And what better stop than the namesake of the island chain?



Less than ninety miles north of Seattle, you board a ferry in Anacortes, and in an hour's time you're on San Juan Island. Far from the urban scene, you'll quickly adapt to island time and island pace. Like Orcas, San Juan Island offers short hikes, beautiful views, and a relaxing, laid-back experience.

One might not ordinarily think of Friday Harbor for a culinary getaway, but it's on a small island (surrounded by other islands) full of farms and artists, which means local seafood, meat, fruits, vegetables, and more prepared with artisan care. Turns out the site of a Pig War is a perfectly good place to pig out.

I hereby offer you three perfectly pleasurable days on San Juan Island. Join me as we venture to Friday Harbor, where we stamp this installment of Passport to Pleasure—a hedonistic quest for great food and good times for two, from nibbles to naughtiness.

Prelude: A Friday Stay at Swinomish, pre-Friday Harbor

If you have a full work day and can't make it all the way to Friday Harbor to start your weekend getaway, make Anacortes your goal. This positions you just minutes from the ferry to catch the

earliest departure (avoiding the long lines that come with all the later sailings) the next morning. Lest you think Anacortes is full of dive hotels, look into the [Swinomish Casino & Lodge](#).

Now that you're not rushing and wondering if you'll catch your ferry, you're relaxing (isn't that the whole point of a vacation getaway?) in one of the comfortable rooms of this new property, where you can have a balcony that has water and mountain views, offering you promise of your island destination the next day. Even if you don't gamble, you can explore other entertainment at the resort, or simply settle in for a fine meal in the 13moons Restaurant, where you can enjoy the spot prawn cocktail in season. (More photos in the slideshow above.) Then call it an early night knowing you'll be catching the early ferry.

Day 1: Saturday Strolling and a Stay at Lakedale Resort

It's an early alarm, but an exciting one, as you can feel Friday Harbor in your reach. Still sleepy? No problem. You can park the car on the ferry and easily find seating where you can stretch out like the others and catch more zzz's, especially if there's typical early morning darkness and fog. Then, in one hour, you're docking at Friday Harbor while the little town is still waking up.

Grab coffee and pastry at the popular [Café Demeter](#) to get yourself going. You'll want an energy boost to make your way just south of the town along Cattle Point Road to the American Camp, where you go to the Visitor Center and ask one of the friendly guides to tell you the fascinating story of the Pig War that marks the history of San Juan Island. Then take a short stroll (watch for eagles!) to Grandma's Cove where you get an immediate taste of the beauty of the island: the water, the hilly terrain, the driftwood on the beach, the general tranquility. It might be the two of you alone at this hour, so stay and soak it all in. If time, you might venture just a little further south to the Cattle Point Interpretive Area and then a stop at South Beach to admire the amazing driftwood and views there.

But don't get too distracted, as you've come early on Saturday to see and taste the [San Juan Island Farmers Market](#) back in town. It may be modest in size, but it's a fun and friendly affair. You'll wish you had a kitchen where you can cook the locally fresh eggs, seafood, fruits and vegetables, and more, but the consolation prize is that [Bakery San Juan](#) is onsite with its pizza ovens to do the work for you—serving up some delicious slices.



better yet, rent a paddle boat or canoe and get *on* the lake.

After lunch, wander about town if you like, but knowing you'll return, you might want to enjoy some afternoon time at [Lakedale Resort at Three Lakes](#), where you'll stay the night. Here you'll find a variety of accommodations, including the intriguing canvas cabins for a "glamping" experience, and log cabins which would be ideal if you're doing the family or friends thing. More likely, you're in the lodge, where your room has a balcony overlooking Neva Lake. Enjoy the view from your balcony or the deck below;

For dinner, you're perfectly situated for a fine meal at [Duck Soup Inn](#), less than a mile up the road. You'll want to book a reservation well ahead, with the option of eating in the dining room or outside during warm weather, so ask about options. This is informal fine dining with friendly staff and fabulous food that's vibrant in color and flavor. Steak Diane is the signature dish and well-worth considering, but check out the rest of the regular menu for seasonal specials. Enjoy the evening before retiring back to your room at Lakedale, where you might want to take an evening stroll to see the stars.

Day 2: Touring the Island, Followed by Friday Harbor House

Morning means breakfast at Lakedale Resort, including the whimsy of the automatic pancake machine. As you sit on the deck you might contemplate a slow morning, but you have a fairly full day ahead as you will tour San Juan Island.

Start by heading north to Roche Harbor, built around the former Roche Harbor Lime & Cement Company and a Hudson's Bay trading post. Look for a couple of public bocce courts which provide playful entertainment—and a crowd if you're good. At the harbor are some restaurants, shops, and street artisans in season, including the Sweet Shoppe at Roche Harbor where you can buy high quality licorice from all around the world.

Continuing your counter-clockwise tour of the island, a fun stop is [Krystal Acres Farm](#). You can get a close-up look at the adorable alpacas, and then visit the country store if, in essence, you want to *wear* one. The fiber is spun into yarn to make sweaters, slippers, and the like. Stronger and warmer than wool, it feels good and will help you weather wintery days.

Next, take a stroll through English Camp, including a glance at the garden. If you're more interested in a hike up a hill, Mount Young awaits. But be sure to take time at Lime Kiln Point State Park, the place to enjoy the water views with hope of watching whales from just a few feet away.

A short drive from Lime Kiln Point is the [Pelindaba Lavender Farm](#). Wander through the colorful lavender fields, drawing inspiration to purchase products from the farm store. Some of those items are culinary, like teas and chutneys and herbs. For immediate satisfaction, you can try lavender ice cream.

Do your research and your tour can include a distillery, honey farm, ranches, fruit and vegetable farms, and the like, but at some point you'll come full circle back to Friday Harbor, which means it's time to check into [Friday Harbor House](#) for your overnight stay. Here you'll have fabulous views of the harbor, which you'll enjoy both day and night. Whether on your balcony or on the grounds in an Adirondack chair, you can sip a drink and relax while watching the ferries and seaplanes come and go.



At some point, smells from a kitchen will have you salivating, which means it's time to have dinner at The Bluff Restaurant at Friday Harbor House. Chef Kyle Nicholson deploys creative use of local ingredients, often in intriguing flavor combinations. The flash-fried kelp and

calamari, pictured here (more delicious dishes in the slideshow above) is a must if on the menu. Indulge in wine pairings with knowledge that your car is safely parked, and that you'll be safely parking yourself back in your room above the restaurant.

Note: Check the Friday Harbor House's "[Specials and Packages](#)" for some interesting deals, including this coming weekend's True Fall Harvest Cooking Class Getaway.

Day 3: A Relaxing Remainder and Goodbye to San Juan Island

Sleep in at Friday Harbor House, but be sure not to miss the excellent breakfast that's included with your stay. The coffee's local and the ingredients are again fresh and seasonal.

Next, you've booked a relaxing Touch for Two couple's massage at the [Lavendera Day Spa](#). Previously located at the lavender farm, the new location is just a stone's throw from the inn. There's something extremely satisfying about pampering yourselves with side-by-side treatments. You can choose the signature Earth Water Spirit Massage, combining reiki, hot stone, and Swedish massage, an experience which is simultaneously relaxing and energizing. At the spa shop, you can also pick up lavender products to take home, including massage oil so you can relive the experience.

Afterward is the time to stroll the village if you've yet to do it. You'll discover bookstores, vintage shops, gift shops, and galleries—including the [Sea Shepherd Gallery](#), as founder Paul Watson calls San Juan Island home.

When you're hungry for lunch, [Market Chef](#) awaits with spectacular sandwiches. Then the afternoon is yours to go to places you've yet to see, or to revisit favorite spots like Grandma's Cove. But check the ferry line. You may want to park your car in advance if there's a wait of more than one ferry, but you're free to leave your car walk where you'd like at that point. Eventually, you'll return to your car and board the ferry. As it pushes off the pier, you can look back to Friday Harbor and San Juan Island with a happy stomach and happy memories. *See more than 50 photos from a Friday Harbor getaway [in the slideshow above](#).*