

Lewis County Tourism Is a Money Maker

Mount Rainier Alone Attracts More Than 2M Tourists Each Year

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Millions of residents and visitors from other states enjoy Washington's fish, wildlife and major outdoors attractions, and Lewis County is a prime destination.

Mount Rainier, Mount St. Helens, White Pass Ski Resort, the Goat Rocks, Mayfield Lake, Mineral Lake, the Cowlitz River and agriculture destinations found in West Lewis County are just a few of the top destinations.

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County supports the website DiscoverLewisCounty.com which helps assist tourists as they consider coming to the county, and gives ideas for locals on "staycations."

Mount Rainier, for example, has so many visitors it is instituting a reservation system for people driving to Paradise. The picturesque mountain covering 2,800 square miles of ground hosts more than 2 million visitors each year, including 2,371,585 travelers in 2022.

Mount St. Helens is also a draw to the region, seeing about 750,000 visitors each year.

Lewis County's great outdoors, combined with quaint towns and bustling cities such as Chehalis and Centralia, makes tourism a top economic player in the region.

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County contracted with the consulting firm Arnett Muldrow for tourism statistics this past summer and released findings in the final quarter of 2023. The consulting firm used a 20-question survey this summer, garnering 376



Mount Rainier

Photos Provided



Cathedral Falls in the Goat Rocks

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2024 Will be Another Busy Year

From Clean Energy Hub Possibilities to a Hoped For Resurgent Economy, the Next 12 Months Should be an Exhilarating Time

RICHARD DEBOLT

Executive Director
Economic Alliance of Lewis County

There is much to look forward to as 2024 begins its march forward.

First off, the Economic Alliance of Lewis County Annual Banquet set for Friday, Feb. 2 at Jesters Auto Museum, is already sold out. For that I am grateful. I'm looking forward to Alliance Chair Luke Moerke's remarks, as well as seeing all our friends during the social hour which starts at 6 p.m. I do want to thank our banquet sponsors. A list of the sponsors is on page three of this Economic Report.



RICHARD DEBOLT
Director —
Economic Alliance
of Lewis County

A few days after the banquet, join us for The Economics of Clean Energy forum discussing how Lewis County benefits from the emerging clean energy economy on Monday, Feb. 5 at the Centralia College TransAlta Building, room 122.

This forum is sponsored by the Alliance and also Lewis County Transit. Doors open at 4 p.m. and the event is from 4:30 to 6 p.m. If you want to attend, please email Dolly@lewiscountyalliance or call 360-748-0114 to register as space is limited.

The panel of speakers should be fascinating as well as informative as Lewis County is poised to become a clean energy hub in the Pacific Northwest. Speakers included for this free discussion are Joe Clark with Lewis County Transit, Michelle Detwiler with the Renewable Hydrogen Alliance, Monica Brummer from the Center of Excellence for Clean Energy located on the Centralia College campus, Lewis County Commissioner Lindsey Pollock and Bob Russell representing the Pulp & Paper Renewable Task Force. We also have a few invited speakers who would make this a fruitful event, but they are still working on clearing out their calendars. We are all so busy these days.

Another event on the horizon that I am anticipating is the Thurston Economic Development Council's (home of Washington APEX Accelerator) Alliance Northwest, a forum that connects government contractors with businesses. This takes place March 14 at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center. You can find more information at www.alliancenorthwest.org. This is billed as the Northwest's largest conference of its kind and is in its 38th year.

Highlights include speeches from Department of Defense officials, a dozen breakout presentations, and a tradeshow of more than 100 agencies and prime

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Orcutt opposes effort to place capital gains tax on ballot



Photo Provided

Rep. Ed Orcutt, R-20th District

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Washington voters could weigh in on the state's new capital gains tax this November, after an effort to repeal it advanced Tuesday.

Conservative group Let's Go Washington has gathered enough signatures to bring the initiative to the Legislature, the Secretary of State's Office said Tuesday.

Let's Go Washington, founded and bankrolled by Redmond businessman Brian Heywood, is behind the attempt to give voters a direct say in whether the capital gains tax should continue — part of a larger effort to change or repeal Democratic policies pushed through in recent years.

The capital gains tax, passed in 2021, has brought almost \$900 million into state coffers since collections began last April. It represents state lawmakers' efforts to adjust Washington's tax code in a more progressive direction.

Rep. Ed Orcutt, R-20th District, the ranking Republican on the House Finance Committee, opposes the effort.

"House Republicans opposed the

SEE ORCUTT, PAGE A20

SPONSORED CONTENT

THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Labor and Management work together in the Forest

Washington's forest products industry is a cornerstone of the state's economy, providing crucial support to rural communities and offering over 102,000 family wage jobs across all counties. These jobs contribute significantly to local economies, with the forest industry injecting \$5.6 billion in wages and \$300 million in taxes annually. However, the sustainability of these jobs is at risk due to recent developments that threaten working forests and the environment.

Managed forests play a crucial role in mitigating environmental challenges. Currently, more than 12 million acres (53%) of Washington's forests are unmanaged, limiting their potential to grow faster, store more carbon, and support jobs. Private forests, in particular, sequester 120% more carbon per acre per year than state DNR forests and 175% more than federal forests. Therefore, supporting policies that encourage the expansion of productive working forests is essential for both economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Washington has a shortage of 270,000 homes to meet demand and make homes more affordable, policies that remove working forests without consideration for the workers,



take timber supply out of production, reducing the local wood supply which costs jobs, and damages the infrastructure of mills, trucking and local economies. Washington already has some of the most restrictive environmental regulations in the country, making it imperative to find a balanced approach that protects both the environment and the workforce.

The forest products sector supports family wage jobs across the entire supply chain, and there is potential to expand working forests to further support jobs and the local wood supply for homes. To achieve this, it is crucial to support policies that incentivize the growth of healthy, working forests within the state. Encouraging the use of wood sourced

locally rather than from out of state will not only bolster the workforce but also maintain the environmental standards Washington is known for.

Supporting policies that will maximize carbon in our forests by growing more trees and using more wood — will not only sequester and store more carbon, but also support local communities.

Managed forests lose about 14% of their annual growth to tree mortality from disease and fire each year; unmanaged federal forests lose 71% of their annual growth due to tree mortality from insects, disease, and fire. It is important we actively manage our working forests.

We should support policies that increase the use of wood in construction and incentivize growing more forests and timber supply which supports jobs.

In conclusion, it is imperative to advocate for policies that promote the expansion of working forests, restore forest health, and safeguard the interests of both the environment and the workforce. Asking for balanced policies that consider people, families and conservation is vital for achieving a balanced and sustainable approach to forestry in Washington.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



They create their wines on site at their winery near Toledo.



Bateaux Cellars tasting building

Photos Provided

Bateaux Cellars Worth the Drive to Toledo

From Delicious Reds to Welcoming Environment, Winery Is a Jewel of Lewis County

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Bateaux Cellars, a boutique winery located near the Cowlitz River in Toledo, is one of the newest members of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

The name Bateaux honors the early explorers who traveled these Northwest waters by bateaux — hand powered boats of commerce and exploration. Their mission is to make exceptional Washington wines approachable, affordable and fun. They hit their mission and then some.

“We just joined the Economic Alliance and are looking forward to connecting with other local businesses and entrepreneurs as well as helping promote and grow a strong and prosperous economy here in Lewis County,” said Lauren Padula, one of the owners of Bateaux Cellars.

The winery is known for its fine wine, with its reds and a rose standing out year after year.

“I’ve sipped their red wine in their tasting room and it was silky-tasty, a real treat,” said Michael Wagar, Communications Strategist for the Alliance.

“The drive out there is gorgeous and the payoff is a fine bottle or two of wine. If you like dogs, you can hang out with Arlo and Alice.”

The winery is part of the Southwest Washington Winery Association and participates in many events throughout the year, including Cheese Days in Toledo, the Savor Wine Tasting event in Battle Ground, the Ridgefield Main Street wine walk, the Craft Beer and Wine Festival in Vancouver and many more.

They offer live music twice a month, yoga at the winery, and an annual Red Wine and Chocolate Pairing event (stay up to date by following them on Facebook or Instagram; sign up for their email list on their website).

Bateaux Cellars was founded in 2009 on 40 acres near the historic river town of Cowlitz Landing, long since washed away by the meandering Cowlitz River. Starting in a modest outbuilding and doing many festivals and events to get their brand noticed, their consistently high quality wines and welcoming environment have allowed Bateaux Cellars to grow steadily.

They offer a variety of wines for tasting, glass purchase and bottle purchase. They also carry beer from their partners at Brothers Cascadia Brewing and ciders from OutWest Ciders.

They have a woodfired pizza oven and charcuterie boxes available for snacking purposes while enjoying their wine.

Steve and Cheryl Padula, ardent

wine explorers of the Pacific Northwest and the world, are co-owners of Bateaux Cellars.

“Cheryl will most often meet you in our beautiful tasting room,” as stated on their website. “Steve continues to hone his winemaking skills under the tutelage of Marcus Miller, winemaker for Airfield Estates and will happily give you a tour of the production area and may treat you to some barrel tasting.”

They purchase their wine grapes from varietals grown in the Yakima Valley. Presently they source their fruit from Airfield Farms, 1,000-acre vineyard located near Sunnyside and Grandview in Eastern Washington. They believe this area consistently provides them with remarkable grapes on which to base their French-style blends and single varietal wines.

Lauren Padula, their daughter, and Angelo Neroni, their son-in-law, round out the human team filling the roles of co-owners, distributors, event managers, social media and marketing wizards, and wine servers as well.

The important roles of Winery Dogs go to Arlo and Alice, whose love and affection can be bought with pizza crust and goldfish crackers while sipping a glass.

The winery started in a small outbuilding and is now housed in a stunning building containing production space, barrel and tank room, tasting room and event space. Their outdoor space is a gorgeous patio with shade

sails, welcoming picnic tables and Adirondack chairs, a fire pit, and bocce, horseshoes and cornhole games.

“We’ve been focused on growing our local community and have not entered wines in any competitions for quite a few years but our red wines continue to be showstoppers, as those are Steve’s pride to make,” said Lauren. “Our rose is also unbeatable during the warm months and in high demand — we sell out annually.”

Their biggest project to date is building six cabins on their property.

“We’ve been in the planning and permitting phase for almost two years and are optimistic about breaking ground in the spring,” Lauren said. “We’re looking forward to welcoming visitors and locals alike to our beautiful property for a fun, relaxing getaway.”

If You Want to Go:

Their tasting room hours are 2 to 6 p.m. Fridays, noon to 6 p.m. Saturdays, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays.

Directions: Take I-5 to Jackson Highway and take exit 57. Turn east at top of off-ramp for 0.1 mile to the T-intersection. Turn left (north) onto Jackson Highway and go for approximately one mile to Smokey Valley Road. Turn right (east) onto Smokey Valley Road. Travel approximately one mile to 288 Smokey Valley Road.

For more information: 360-836-4253, www.bateauxcellars.com

Discover Romance in Lewis County

Where Love Blossoms Amidst Nature and Entertainment

BY LENE LANGDON

Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Lewis County isn’t just known for its stunning natural beauty — it’s also a place where romance thrives.

Whether you’re planning a romantic getaway or looking to spice up date night, Lewis County offers a range of experiences to make your heart flutter. From outdoor adventures to captivating entertainment, love is in the air in this charming corner of the Pacific Northwest.

Outdoor Adventures for Lovebirds

Lewis County is blessed with an abundance of outdoor wonders, providing the perfect backdrop for romantic escapades. Imagine hand-in-hand walks through enchanting forests, breathtaking vistas and the gentle sounds of nature serenading you.

Lewis County Hiking Trails: Embark on a romantic hike along Lewis County’s picturesque trails. Consider the Skate Creek Trail in Packwood, where you can stroll through old-growth forest and enjoy the serene beauty of the surroundings. It’s an ideal spot for a secluded picnic and quiet moments with your loved one.

Gifford Pinchot National Forest: Explore the pristine beauty of Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The forest’s trails offer opportunities for peaceful walks amidst towering trees and the chance to spot local wildlife.

Captivating Entertainment for Lovebirds

After a day of outdoor adventures, Lewis County has delightful entertainment options for couples looking to unwind and enjoy each other’s company.

Comedy Night at McFilers: If you and your partner prefer laughter, join the fun at McFilers Friday, Feb. 2 for a night of comedy with Adam Ray. Prepare for an evening of hilarity as you support WACA programs. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., and the show starts at 8 p.m. on Eventbrite.

I-5 Valentine’s Wine Mixer: Wine enthusiasts will delight in the Annual I-5 Valentine’s Wine Mixer on Wednesday, Feb. 7. Savor tasty refreshments, mingle with great company, and witness the unveiling of the 2024 raffle vehicle. This event not only offers a chance to enjoy fine wines but also supports local schools and organizations through raffle ticket sales.

Mardi Gras Bash at Longmire Springs: Get ready to celebrate Mardi Gras in style on Saturday, Feb. 10 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Longmire Springs. Enjoy live Zydeco music, craft beers and Cajun delights with your sweetheart. Dress in your most festive Mardi Gras attire for a chance to win prizes.

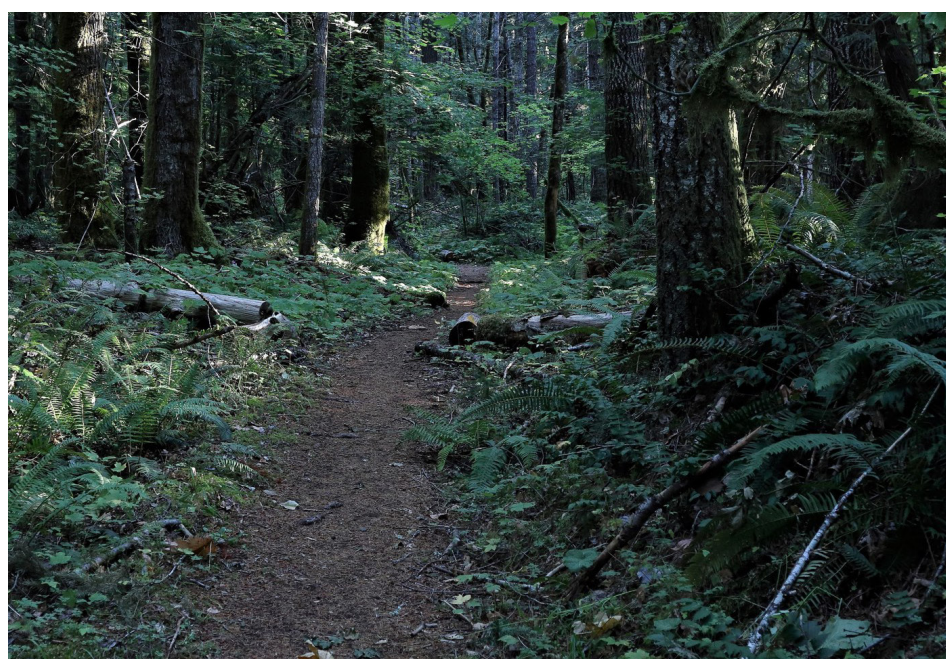
Lewis County’s romantic allure lies in its harmonious blend of natural beauty and captivating entertainment. Whether you’re strolling hand-in-hand through pristine forests or sharing laughter at a comedy show, love is sure to bloom in this enchanting corner of Washington. Discover romance in Lewis County, where unforgettable moments await around every corner.

To discover more intimate and invigorating places throughout Lewis County, go to Discoverlewiscounty.com.



I-5 Valentine’s Wine Mixer

Photos Provided



Skate Creek Trail in Packwood

DIRECTOR:

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contractors. Sign up and take advantage of one-on-one meetings with contracting agencies and small business owners.

Research and development engineering firms involved in the development of emerging technologies interests me.

With upcoming events profiled, I

would like to talk about recent news involving our economy.

These have been hard years for businesses. We survived the pandemic, with its masking and vaccinations and social distancing and fear. Supply chain disruptions hurt. Interest rates cut the legs out from under the real estate industry.

We survived a massive economic turnaround and predictions of a looming

recession. So far, the recession has not hit us, and some signs indicate the economy is on the upswing. The stock market is rolling, and signs are that the Fed is going to start lowering rates, perhaps as soon as next month.

We always need to hold on to the old sage that what goes up always comes down, and the flip that what goes down eventually stops its tumble.

Finally, as we unfurl 2024, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the staff and the board at the Economic Alliance. I lean on them for creative, intelligent and insightful advice and support. They do not fail.

We are poised to do great things in Lewis County this year. Join with me as we grow the businesses and economy of this great county.

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT • 2001 RUSH ROAD • CHEHALIS • 36 ACRES

UTILITIES:

Electricity: Lewis County PUD

Water: City of Chehalis

Sewer: City of Chehalis

Natural Gas: Puget Sound Energy



ERIC SONNENBERG
Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager

For information on industrial/commercial properties available throughout Lewis County (or to list your industrial/commercial property for sale), contact Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg at eric@lewiscountyalliance.org or 208-206-5407.



ORCUTT:

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capital gains income tax in 2021 arguing that it was unstable, unpopular, and unnecessary. We know this tax is volatile, that Washingtonians do not like state income taxes, and our state already has enough revenue to pay for its priorities without this tax on income,” Orcutt said. “By repealing this controversial tax, which many see as a step toward a state income tax, we will help our economy grow and create more jobs in the future. The Legislature should repeal this tax this legislative session.”

Next, the petition goes to state legislators, who are in the midst of a 60-day short session. Legislators could pass the repeal, pass an alternative to appear alongside the repeal on the ballot or do nothing.

They’re most likely to do nothing, in which case the repeal would appear on ballots in November.

The news of the repeal’s advancement comes a week after a years-long lawsuit against the tax hit a dead end on Jan. 16 when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to take it up.

According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Washington has the second-most regressive tax

structure in the country, meaning that low- and moderate-income Washingtonians pay a higher share of their income toward taxes than wealthy Washingtonians do.

The capital gains tax — and the funding of a state tax credit for low- and moderate-income families — moved Washington from its former spot as the most regressive tax system in the nation to No. 2. (Florida is first).

Opponents of the tax have decried it as an income tax in disguise. The tax is 7% on the profits of a sale or exchange of assets like stocks and bonds above \$250,000. There are exemptions, including for real estate transactions.

“Not only does the income tax on capital gains not have support of the law or voters, but in their own words, it’s a foot in the door for a statewide income tax,” Heywood said in a statement. “They’re already planning to expand the tax and target more small business owners, family farms, entrepreneurs and restaurant owners. It’s time to shut the door on this for good.”

Supporters of the tax say it forces wealthy Washingtonians to pay their “fair share” to support essential services. The first \$500 million in revenue collected by the tax goes toward education, and revenues above that go toward building schools.

Heywood is the main funder of six initiatives aimed at the 2024 ballot.

“I’m quite confident the Legislature will not take any action to repeal it, and I’m very hopeful that the voters will not do so either,” Gov. Jay Inslee said last week. “And I think there is reason to believe that they continue to want more education funding, and this bill provides over \$200 million to build more schools.”

Senate Majority Leader Andy Billig, D-Spokane, said he had “great trust in the voters to really look into the issue” and maintain the tax. He said revenues from the tax go to “vital” services including early learning education and child care, and that relatively few Washingtonians pay the tax on “very significant” profits from the sale of assets like stocks.

About 3,700 taxpayers paid the tax in 2023, the first year of collections, according to the state Department of Revenue.

Sen. Lynda Wilson, budget lead for the Senate Republicans, said in a statement that the tax “doesn’t pay for anything that can’t be funded with other revenue.”

“Government can get along just fine without it, and let the people keep more of their own money,” Wilson said.

Republicans in the Legislature have

pushed to hold hearings on the three other initiatives that have been certified, and a spokesperson for House Republican Leader Drew Stokesbary, R-Auburn, confirmed they would file a similar motion for the capital gains tax initiative.

House Democrats have defeated Republican motions to instruct committees to hold hearings on each of the three other initiatives that have been certified by the secretary of state, Stokesbary said on Tuesday morning, before the initiative to repeal the capital gains tax was certified.

The other certified initiatives would lift restrictions on when police can chase suspects, call for a repeal of the state’s carbon market and outline what information parents and guardians of public school students are entitled to.

Stokesbary pointed to the state constitution, which says initiatives “shall take precedence over all other measures in the legislature,” with an exception for appropriations bills.

“I think that is contrary to our obligation to attempt good faith compliance with the state constitution, and I have yet to hear a good reason why we shouldn’t do it,” Stokesbary said.

The Seattle Times contributed to this report

TOURISM:

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responses. About two-thirds of respondents were residents of the county.

One of the results of the survey was that tourists coming to Lewis County are wealthy, and that visitors had a household income of more than \$75,000.

According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, such recreational activity supports a robust recreation economy, generating revenue for

businesses. WDFW conducted a survey in 2022 detailing the benefits to the state. It’s not just about out of country and out of state tourists.

The findings include:

- In 2022, 4.4 million Washington residents aged 16 years or older participated in at least one wildlife-related recreation activity in 2022 — 72% of the state’s population — and 2.5 million took trips away from their homes to do so.

• Between residents and non-residents, the survey found that 1.2 million people fished, 292,000 people hunted and 6.2 million people watched wildlife, including 4 million who took trips farther than a mile from their homes to do so.

• These anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers spent over \$9 billion on equipment and trip-related expenses, spending associated with an estimated \$630 million in taxes contributing to the state general fund.

• Expenditures associated with wildlife-related recreation exceeded consumer expenditures by Washington residents on other major product categories

in 2022, including telecommunication services, new motor vehicles and accommodations such as hotels.

The Washingtonians who participated in wildlife-related recreation were as diverse as the population of the state overall. Many participants took part in more than one activity; fishers and hunters were far more likely to participate in wildlife watching than those who do not participate in these activities, according to the survey.

Participation rates exceeded national averages in all activities apart from hunting, though the hunting participation rate among women was double the national rate.

As stated on the website DiscoverLewisCounty.com, “Vibrant festivals and parades showcase the county’s rich culture and community spirit. Outdoor enthusiasts can immerse themselves in the county’s breathtaking landscapes, participating in outdoor events around biking, fishing, and lavender fields. History buffs can attend historical sites offering special programs about our area’s history. Additionally, visitors can experience the county’s agricultural heritage by visiting local farms and farmers’ markets, indulging in fresh produce and artisanal goods.”

Lewis County is one of the great tourist destinations in the state, and offers exciting experiences for both locals and visitors, which is a boon to the local economy



Mayfield Lake

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Economic Alliance 2024 Annual Banquet Sponsors We appreciate your support!

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