



Sunset, San Juan Islands, Washington State.

## WASHINGTON: Disappear In The San Juans

Scattered off of Washington's upper coast like a second-home realtor's dream, the San Juan Islands are the Pacific Northwest's answer to the Hamptons and the Florida Keys—but far more alluring. Part of the San Juan Archipelago, which comprises more than 170 named isles (and hundreds more at low tide), several of the San Juan Islands are accessible by the Washington State Ferry system and hampered only by crazy long car lines on summer weekends. Go when it's less busy, and you're in for a Northwest paradise.



Kayaking in the San Juans.

**STEP ONE:** San Juan Island is the hub of this chain, ground zero for inn-lazing, gift-shop browsing, boarding a whale watching boat, making that mandatory visit to **The Whale Museum**, and, above all, experiencing your first friendly close encounter with a six-foot-high killer whale dorsal fin while seated in a kayak. Wiggle into a one- or two-seater with local outfitter **San Juan Safaris** and glide straight into the sheltered saltwater wilderness of the Salish Sea—home to seals, otters, great blue herons, bald eagles, and about 85 orcas at last count. Best killer whale viewing is during summer salmon run, when the company claims to have a 20 to 30 percent success rate of meeting one of these giants up close.

**STEP TWO:** Orcas Island, the “Gem of the San Juans,” will make you want to raid the 40IKs to buy a piece of property. But if you can't live here, you can at least drive here, aimlessly cruising around this hilly horseshoe-shaped outer sanctum with no map and the windows down. Past anonymous pottery shacks, along sun-dappled back roads with names like Enchanted Forest and Dolphin Bay. Across quiet green valleys that dead-end at some tiny harbor where an old man on a bicycle is walking his seven dogs in the middle of the road. Up into **Moran State Park** and to the top of 2,409-foot Mount Constitution for views of Mount Rainier, British Columbia, and everything in between on a clear day. Then back down again, past rusty sculpture gardens, quiet harbor-side cul-de-sacs, and eventually to Main Street, Eastsound, where a premium sake list and cheese fondue