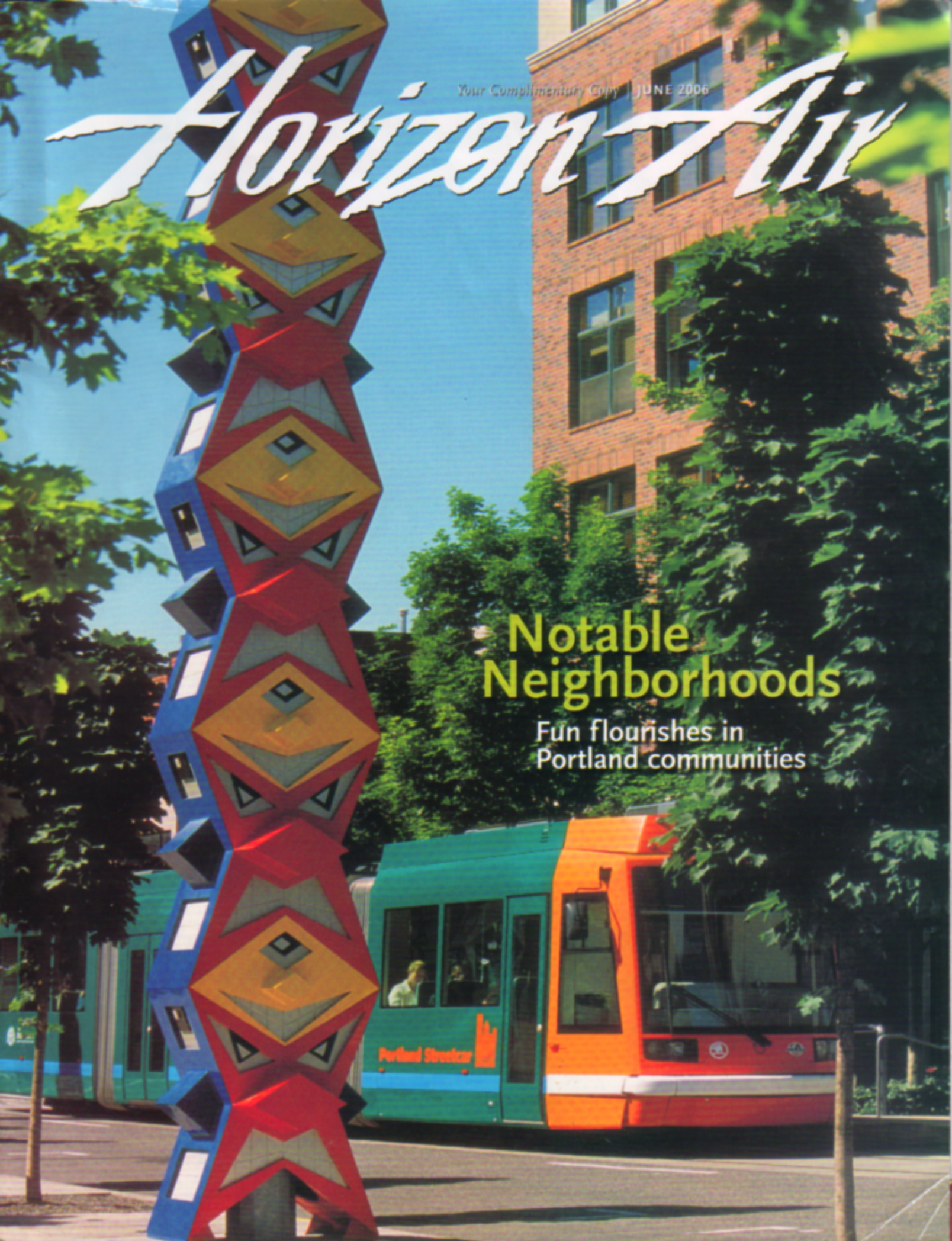


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Horizon Fly

Notable Neighborhoods

Fun flourishes in
Portland communities



I wake up on a Saturday morning in an unfamiliar bed in Idaho, and what was the strange sound that I heard? Or, rather, what were the sounds that I wasn't hearing? There was no television playing, no music blaring, no sounds of cars, or people running lawn mowers. I heard a gentle breeze rustling through trees and the fretful squawks of nearby chickens. ✿ I called for my wife, 15-year-old niece and 5-year-old son, and they were also missing. Even my faithful dog, Lucy, was gone. I found them all 10 minutes later at the barn, petting baby goats, fending off playful kittens, barking at sheep (in Lucy's case), and admiring two horses and a llama.

Our farm stay, was, in short, off to a rousing success.

We were at Cedar Mountain Farm in the northwestern Idaho town of Athol, and we were taking part in a movement—agritourism—that is now becoming popular in the Northwest. In its broadest sense, agritourism encompasses everything from visiting a farmers market to wandering a corn maze, from watching a sheepherder spin wool at a county fair to touring the famous Ukrainian sausage plant in Mundare, Alberta. But a growing component of agritourism in the Northwest is “on-the-land” experiences, frequently with the opportunity for overnight stays.

Long popular in Europe, this type of agritourism is being discovered and embraced by U.S. food producers and purveyors as a way to share their unique lifestyle with visitors, and to generate income that, in many cases, keeps family operations afloat.

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture notes, agritourism often comprises innovative on-farm or on-ranch endeavors in which people use the natural resources on their land—soil, water, air, plants, wildlife and scenery—to keep their family on the farm and the farm in their family. What's more, these endeavors require sound land care, the USDA points out. Because the land's resources generate income, conserving them makes good business sense.

In addition to expanding to overnight stays, agritourism is expanding in type of experience. These days, it includes not only hay baling and sheep shearing, but also horseback rides through vineyards; culinary retreats with cooking classes that feature local produce; fruit harvesting stays

in Northwest orchards; and week-long seminars on organic food production and gardening.

In some places, producers are even banding together to create major agritourism opportunities. In the Eastern Washington wine-producing region of the Tri-Cities, for instance, local vintners, viticul-



COURTESY: CEDAR MOUNTAIN FARM

Clockwise from upper left: At Fairburn Farm on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, a renowned chef leads culinary retreats that feature area produce such as the asparagus used in the dishes above. The farm is owned by a family that raises one of only three water buffalo herds in North America. At Cedar Mountain Farm in northern Idaho, guests enjoy petting baby goats. Willamette Valley wine country is the star at Wine Country Farm in Oregon, where guests can take a horseback ride through the vineyards.



ANDREI FEDOROV PHOTOGRAPHY

tourists and community leaders are planning a 4,000-acre Viticultural Park with wineries, shops, artist studios, specialty foods, a bike/walk path and B&Bs. They hope to have the first phase open by 2010.

“Farmers initially used tourism as an alternative to bringing consumers to their products,” noted James A. Maetzold, a retired USDA executive who consults on agritourism from his Virginia home. “A number of farms have now turned it into being the major enterprise on the farm or ranch. Once they've moved into it, they've generally found it wasn't as difficult as they thought.”

Perhaps that's because their efforts have taken place in concert with increasing consumer interest in knowing where our food comes from and how it's produced, in getting back in touch with agrarian roots, and appreciating the dedication and lifestyle of the growers who provide North America's culinary abundance.

While good U.S. agritourism statistics are not yet available—it will take about five years for studies and official tracking to catch up to the fast-growing movement, Maetzold said—it's clear that government

officials are taking notice of the existing and potential business and tourism revenue related to agritourism. The USDA's Natural Resources and Conservation Service has representatives in every state working to foster agritourism.

In the Northwest, Washington and Idaho are both exploring agritourism programs. Oregon started an Agri-Tourism Alliance in 1994 that provides resources for businesses and tourists. Montana hosted a series of "Farm and Ranch Recreation Business" workshops between 1996 and 2001 that were attended by more than 1,400 farm and ranch representatives and that culminated in a training video on how to start an agritourism business.

Since the late 1990s, Alberta's Agri-Tourism Initiative and British Columbia's AgriTourism Initiative—both benefiting from the support of their provincial governments—have been resources for agritourism ventures and visitors in Western Canada. Supporters of the B.C. Agri-Tourism Initiative note that during the past two years, at least a third of travelers to Canada participated in an agritourism activity.

To get a feel for how different Northwest agricultural entrepreneurs have incorporated tourism, I set off last summer and fall with my family and faithful dog to visit three agritourism sites. Each offered a new experience, delightful in its own way.

Cedar Mountain Farm, Athol, Idaho

"You know, I don't really know what agritourism is," said Daryl Kyle, our hostess at Cedar Mountain Farm, which is located between Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint, Idaho. What she does know is that running a bed-and-breakfast lets her and her husband, Al, hang on to, and share with guests, the farm where she grew up. The farmstead features, among other things, two handsome log cabins that Al built himself; horses, chickens and goats, including three kids that were babies last summer when we visited and didn't at all mind being picked up; a wary llama; a kitten named "Angry" that lived up to its name on a daily basis; three friendly dogs; and a herd of miniature cattle.

Not 10 minutes after we arrived, Daryl had 5-year-old Joe feeding chickens; my

wife, Kris, and teenage niece, Amy, hunting for eggs; Lucy happily racing around and making friends with the Kyles' dogs; and me rocking in a chair on the porch of our cabin and enjoying the fresh air of an Idaho summer day.

The farm has been in Daryl's family since 1950. Returning to the property in 1975 after Al's stint in the military, the Kyles grew vegetables and raised livestock, and Al has carefully logged adjacent Cedar Mountain for 30 years, sometimes working with horses or mules to remove trees without harming the environment. "We never clear-cut," he said thoughtfully. "We just removed the worst trees."

After the last of the six children whom they adopted grew up and moved away, the Kyles offered the property as a retreat for women in crisis for a year. In 2001, they decided to open the farm, which is also home to Daryl's elderly mother, to visitors as a B&B. With their welcoming manners and easy familiarity, Daryl and Al reminded me that there are some people who are just plain naturals at offering hospitality. They had the knack for knowing how long

Northwest Agritourism Opportunities

Here are just a few examples of agritourism in our region:

Andrus Ranch, a family-owned working ranch next to the Caribou National Forest and near the Lava Hot Springs and the town of the same name in southeastern Idaho. Activities include riding horses, going on roundups, tending livestock, branding calves, mending fences, sheering and herding sheep, and bottle-feeding newborn lambs and calves. 208-776-5113; www.andrusranch.com.

Bar H Bar Ranch, also a family cattle ranch, and one of the first ranches in southern Idaho, about 10 miles from Soda Springs. Ride horses; move and doctor cattle; and participate in other daily activities. Vegetarian cuisine available. 208-547-3082; www.barhbar.com.

Cedar Mountain Farm, a family farm with overnight stays, cordial hosts, friendly animals, fresh eggs and scenic views of a farm-owned forest. 866-683-0572; www.cedarmountainfarm.com.

Country Soul Stroll, Edmonton area, Alberta. A two-day festival in which farms across Sturgeon County, about 20 minutes north of Edmonton, open to visitors, who consult a map to create their own driving tours. Taste local foods, pet farm animals, visit orchards, watch artisans at work. July 22 and 23, 2006. 877-888-1757; www.countrysoulstroll.ca.

Fairburn Farm, in Duncan on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Enjoy a culinary retreat for overnight or day guests, with chef-led tours of the local farmers market followed by a cooking class and gourmet meal using market and farm produce. Also see one of the few water buffalo herds in North America and sample farm-made water buffalo carpaccio and cheese. 250-746-4637; www.fairburnfarm.bc.ca.

La Toscana Winery/Bed & Breakfast, Cashmere, Washington, east of Leavenworth. In spring, guests who stay in this boutique winery's single guestroom can help bottle La Toscana's red and white wines. Day visitors are also welcome by appointment. 509-

548-5448; www.latoscanawinery.com. La Toscana is part of central Washington's renowned fruit-producing area. The Cascade Foothills Farmland Association has a free driving map listing fruit stands, wineries, tourist attractions, lodging and dining. 509-548-6784; www.visitwashingtonfarms.com.

MaryJanesFarm, Moscow, Idaho. Known for its expertise in organic farming, the farm offers stays in wall tents (no electricity or phones) with outdoor kitchens, and also a weeklong Pay Dirt Farm School with classes such as organic farming, gardening and cooking; food preservation; composting; sustainable gardening; biofuels; and animal husbandry. 888-750-6004; www.maryjanesfarm.org.

Montana Bunkhouses/Montana Working Ranch Vacations, Big Timber, in southcentral Montana between Bozeman and Billings. Members of this consortium of 10 fourth- and fifth-generation Montana ranch families—whose slogan is "This ain't no dude ranch!"—offer working-cattle-ranch experiences, from branding, riding herd and roundups to calving and lambing. 406-222-6101; www.montanaworkingranches.com.

Sakura Ridge Farm and Lodge, Hood River, Oregon. Participate in harvesting asparagus or spreading organic fertilizer in the spring; picking and packing organic sweet cherries in the summer; and harvesting pears, heirloom tomatoes, squash and pumpkins in the fall. B&B stays with great views of Mount Hood. 877-4-SAKURA; www.SakuraRidge.com.

Wine Country Farm, Dayton, Oregon, south of Portland in Willamette Valley wine country. At this bed-and-breakfast, wander through the vineyards, observe sugar tests, help pick and load grapes onto horse-drawn wagons, and take a guided horseback ride amid the grapevines, with stops at local wineries for tastings. 800-261-3446; www.winecountryfarm.com. —JG