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A PURRFECT GETAWAY



LYNN JACOBSON / THE SEATTLE TIMES

At Hood Canal's 100-year-old Alderbrook Resort, go outdoors-crazy or just be lazy



LINDSEY WASSON / THE SEATTLE TIMES

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A rural retreat

Two resident cats live at the Alderbrook Resort & Spa on Washington's Hood Canal. Their names are Alder and Brook, and boy, do they know how to relax.

You can't miss them, curled up on a cushy chair in the lofty lobby or sprawled on a luggage cart near the door. Take a moment to scratch them behind the ears and they can barely muster the energy to lift their heads, looking at you through half-lidded eyes.

You may feel the same way after a day or two at this Northwest craftsman-style lodge, tucked into the crook of the fishhook that is Hood Canal. The area may not boast the grandeur of the Cascades or the drama of the Pacific Coast, but it offers plenty of opportunities for communing with the outdoors or simply catnapping in the shadow of the snow-capped Olympics. Alderbrook Resort — now entering its second century — puts the area's charms at your doorstep.

Alderbrook's site — 88 acres near Union, Mason County, about 90 minutes west of Seattle — has housed a retreat of one sort or another since 1913.

Originally, it was a tent camp, reached only by boat. After World War II, the property was more fully developed, and for a time, it served as a Christian conference center. In 2001, it was purchased by North Forty Lodging, which rebuilt the lodge and adjacent cabins, and rerouted the road to afford more privacy.

Today, it has the big-beamed look of other Northwest resorts — such as Skamania Lodge and Sun Mountain Lodge — and the feel, inside, of a nicely appointed hotel.

The property has two distinct halves: the lodge and surrounding outbuildings to the east, and a grouping of cottages to the west. The lodge side, with a pool, outdoor bar areas and patios, feels country-clubby and lively; the cottage side, facing a grassy barbe-

cue area and towering trees, is quieter and a little more rustic.

Most of the 77 rooms and 16 cottages have at least a partial view of Hood Canal. And when you glance out your window you may witness a wedding or some other gathering. Because of its proximity to the city and many amenities, Alderbrook is a popular spot for corporate retreats and family events. In the summer, the resort typically hosts a wedding every weekend day.

On site are a pool and hot tub; lawn games; a restaurant and bar; a full-service spa; communal, outdoor fireplaces and many artfully placed Adirondack chairs and chaises for reading and lounging. Nearby is an 18-hole golf course, Alderbrook Golf Club (with two tennis courts). A dock stretching out into the canal provides a launching point for rental boats of all sorts. Guest moorage is available for a fee (\$1.25 per foot after Labor Day; \$1.50 per foot in the high season).

All this talk about rentals and fees may tip

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Guests mingle in the lobby (above) of Alderbrook Resort & Spa on Hood Canal.

At top, Alder, one of two resident cats at the resort, curls up by the lobby's fireplace.



A couple strolls on the 500 foot-long boardwalk that connects to Alderbrook's dock.

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ON THE WEB

More photos of Alderbrook Resort:

See the link from this story at seattletimes.com/travel

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you off to the fact that a weekend stay at Alderbrook can be costly. The resort practices demand pricing, like airlines. On one Saturday night in August, a two-bedroom cottage rented for \$600-plus. The same cottage was priced under \$400 on the following night.

If you're looking to keep costs down, fall is a good time to visit. The days may be shorter, but there's still plenty to do, whether you want to explore the outdoors or make like the cats and relax. Based on a recent summer-turning-to-fall overnight stay, here are two daylong Alderbrook itineraries — one restful, one zesty.

Be lazy

A do-nothing day at Alderbrook begins at the spa. The menu of services includes everything from standard massages, facials and manicures/pedicures to exotic treatments with names like Hood Canal Starry Night. (That's a \$170 splurge described as "a sojourn in our herbal infused steam room," with a "wrap of Marine Algae, Sea Brine, and Aloe," topped by a "delightful hot oil scalp massage.")



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IF YOU GO

Alderbrook info, events

Contact the resort at 360-898-2200 or alderbrookresort.com Rates for an October weekend stay begin around \$175. There sometimes are last-minute specials on the website.

Beer and pumpkin seeds reception

6-7 p.m. every Friday in October; free for overnight guests.

Beer maker's dinner with Sound Brewery

An Oktoberfest celebration with Sound Brewery owner Mark Hood and food and beer pairings, starting at 6:30 p.m., Oct. 12; \$99.

Tree-lighting ceremony

A visit from Santa, hot cocoa and miles of strings of lights, Nov. 29; free.

Once you're thoroughly pampered and perfumed, find a cozy corner and open a book. Most lodge rooms have window seats, plus decks or patios; the cottages all have front porches. Fireplaces — indoors and outdoors, both gas and wood — abound. An entire afternoon might be spent next to one, sipping a glass of wine and staring out toward the calm waters of the canal.

By dinnertime, presumably, you'll feel rested enough to pussyfoot over to the resort's restaurant for dinner, where you may find yourself pleasantly surprised.

Resort restaurants often cater to captive audiences, with high prices, big portions and, at best, middling preparations of steak and seafood. Alderbrook has the big helpings and high prices (entrees range from \$23 to \$54), but the dishes concocted by chef



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At night the resort has a cozy glow.

Lucas Sautter are far from mediocre. A Southwestern Hanger Steak is served with smoky risotto, garlicky broccoli and a piquant chimichurri sauce (\$38); perfectly cooked Alaskan halibut comes with a snap-crackle-pop medley of vegetables (\$39). Local oysters on the half shell, at \$2 a piece, are so delectable you might have to order a half dozen.

Diners looking to economize might survey the happy-hour menu, which includes fish tacos, prime rib Philly cheesesteak sliders, a blackened chicken sandwich and other items ranging from \$5-\$9.

But you won't want to economize on desserts: Let a slice of peanut butter chocolate cake (\$8), or lemon chevre mascarpone cheese

cake (\$9) or a vanilla bean crème brûlée (\$7) put a sweet ending on a lazy day.

Go crazy

A do-everything day at Alderbrook starts on the dock, where you can rent kayaks, rowboats, motorboats, sailboats and a few things you may never have heard of before, such as hydrobikes — a kind of per-

sonal catamaran powered by a bicycle. For an hourly fee (starting at \$25), you can tool around the canal and look for seals and jumping fish. Early in the day is usually the best time for spotting wildlife.

Back on land, pass through the lobby (pausing to pet Alder and Brook on the way) and head across State Route 106 to find the resort's wooded walking trails. They're not extensive enough to satisfy a serious hiker, but they do offer a pleasant, leafy amble up to a viewpoint above the lodge.

Beyond the trails lies Alderbrook Golf Club, a scenic par-72 course with reasonable rates (\$20-\$40 in the fall). The club house was built in 2009 and features a restaurant and bar — a possible lunch stop.

After lunch, trade in your golf clubs for a racket. Two tennis courts are located next to the greens, or you can head back across the road and circle around to the road lawn on the cottage side of the resort. There you'll find the space and equipment you need to set up in impromptu game of badminton, volleyball or cro-



Source: ESRI
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quet.

Consider an outing for the afternoon (see related story), but leave time for a swim before dinner. Alderbrook's heated pool and hot tub are housed in an attractive glass building overlooking the canal. They're open till midnight nightly; after 9 p.m., the pool area is adults-only.

After dinner, your active day comes to a close with a sharp stick, marshmallows and one of the many outdoor fire pits dotting the beachfront. A few toasted marshmallows later, you'll be ready to lick your sticky paws and settle down for the night.

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