

A visit to the world of Twin Peaks is still majestically creepy

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Seattle was the capital of the 1990s. A relatively small, out-of-the-way city, it managed to provide some of the most powerful cultural images of the decade: the Starbucks sophistication of Frasier Crane, the heartbreak houseboat of *Sleepless in Seattle* and – most unforgettable for people my age – the dirty, long hair, flannel and thrift-store sweaters of grunge.

Today, as the children of the 1990s grow into the yuppies of the 2010s, Seattle is fast becoming the first city of nineties nostalgia. With some travel cash and vacation days to spare, thirtysomethings such as myself can't resist the Pacific

Northwest's promise of recapturing a slice of our youth. The era of Kurt Cobain cruises and Pearl Jam pilgrimages is upon us.

Most such trips, alas, are doomed to end in disappointment. The combined force of the twin tech booms of Microsoft and Amazon have turned greater Seattle into one of the fastest-growing regions in the United States. Rapid sprawl and lightning-fast gentrification have mostly wiped 1990s Seattle off the map. Yesterday's ragged rock club has become today's Whole Foods.

But if you're willing to venture beyond Seattle's city limits, one nostalgia trip remains gloriously attainable. David Lynch's cult TV series *Twin Peaks* is currently riding high on the mighty wave of 1990s revival, its popularity spurred by its rerelease on Netflix and the imminent 2017 arrival of a rebooted series. *Twin Peaks* offered something different from the mainstream vision of urban Seattle, presenting a foreboding and off-kilter look at small-town life through the lens of Douglas firs and cherry pie, jukeboxes and the supernatural. Set and filmed in the outskirts of greater Seattle, the world of *Twin Peaks* remains largely intact, surprisingly accessible and still majestically creepy.



A visitor lies next to the log at Kiana Lodge where the body of high school homecoming queen Laura Palmer is discovered in Twin Peaks.

Marta Balcewicz

My first target was the Kiana Lodge – a short drive from the postcard-perfect fishing village of Poulsbo on the western shores of Puget Sound. Now a venue for weddings and corporate events, the lodge provided the iconic interiors for *Twin Peaks*' Great Northern Hotel. While its pine-heavy interior with aboriginal formline art is beautifully preserved, the real attraction is out back: the massive tethered log by which Laura Palmer's body is discovered. Lying on a quiet, rocky beach, with Bainbridge Island in the distance, the log (taller than a person) is an unmissable, unforgettable sight. From the instant I set eyes on it, the spell was cast. I knew I'd entered Lynch Country.

The *Twin Peaks* location scouts were adventurous folks, venturing far and

wide in search of the perfectly eerie setting. My next destination, Laura Palmer's house, was a ferry ride and an hour's drive away. My GPS guided me to a series of increasingly narrow highways, through misty valleys and foggy forests lit up silver by the occasional flash of sunlight. Eventually, I arrived in the small town of Monroe, an innocent, quiet place sequestered from all evidence of the past two decades, with not a big box store or a commuter's Porsche in sight.

On the isolated edge of this already lonely place was the Palmer residence, the scene of untold horrors, a noble and slightly dilapidated white house with a twisted apple tree out front. A chill passed through me as I took it in from the roadside – then a light turned on inside, a reminder that someone calls this melancholy place home.



This house in Monroe, Wash., was the Palmer home in the show.

Marta Balcewicz

A half-hour's rainy drive south of Monroe is Fall City, home of the Roadhouse, site of smoky bar fights and secret rendezvous, now repainted an unfamiliar green but with its rough charm intact. A little farther south is the most spectacular sight of the tour. The *Twin Peaks* title sequence features a scene so unlikely that it seems to have emerged from a dream: a sprawling hotel complex perched precariously at the edge of a sheer cliff face, barely visible behind the spray thrown up by a 100-metre waterfall. Yet there it was, at a roadside pullout on Highway 202. I stood transfixed by this living diorama, the tag-team manmade/natural marvel of the Salish Lodge & Spa and the mighty Snoqualmie Falls beneath it.

Inside, the real-life model for the Great Northern is a reassuringly normal place: The rooms are spacious and rustically luxurious; the food and drinks in the Attic restaurant (I had the Dale Cooper cocktail) are delicious and affordable; the clientele are prosperous folk from the Seattle suburbs, with not a log lady, an eye-patched obsessive or a supernatural demon in sight. Only the inescapable white noise of the falls reminds you that you're deep in the land of Lynch.



A Dale Cooper cocktail at Salish Lodge & Spa.

Kip Beelman/Salish Lodge & Spa

After a night at the Salish Lodge, I set out to explore the town of Snoqualmie, the epicentre of *Twin Peaks* locations. I snapped some photos at the site of the “Welcome to Twin Peaks” sign and the nearby railway bridge that Ronette Pulaski crosses in a daze in the series’ first episode.

I experienced some of the region’s famous small-town friendliness at the DirtFish Rally School – a rally car training ground that occupies the former grounds of the of the now-defunct Packard mill and the Twin Peaks Sheriff’s station – where the phenomenally kind secretary at DirtFish instantly offered to vacate her seat so that I could have the honour of sitting in Lucy Moran’s post. (“I figured you weren’t here for the cars,” she said.)



Snoqualmie Falls is seen in the show's opening credits.

istockphoto

The Lynchian spell began to fade in nearby North Bend, home to Twede's Café. Known in the show as the Double R Diner, this is where the residents of Twin Peaks spent their free time drinking coffee, gushing about the cherry pie and chatting with Norma Jennings, the warmhearted proprietress. Recently refurbished for filming of the new series, the diner looked the part. But the coffee was meh, the cherry pie terrible and the service several notches below Norma's standard. And while the other sites I visited were empty and solemn, Twede's was crawling with *Twin Peaks* obsessives snapping up souvenir mugs for \$20 a pop.

On my way out of town, I stopped by Snoqualmie Point Park, the vantage point where James Hurley tapes his immortal video of Laura Palmer and Donna Hayward dancing arm in arm. In the background of the movie is an

endless expanse of green – miles of unchopped firs on fog-topped mountains. Standing where he stood, I saw the encroaching footprint of Amazon and Microsoft: strip malls and subdivisions. The 2010s were slowly lumbering toward Twin Peaks.

The dream of the 1990s is still alive in the woods of Washington – but reality is rapidly advancing. Go dream it while you can.



The Snoqualmie bridge that Ronette Pulaski crosses in a daze.

Marta Balcewicz

If you go

What to do

Though *Twin Peaks* aired long before the Internet went mainstream, the show's rabid fan base has since developed websites to satisfy every curiosity. The best place to look for filming locations is In Twin Peaks (intwinpeaks.com), a site so obsessive that it identifies the exact tree branch where the bird sits in the title sequence's opening shot. The only caveat is that some information is out of date now that filming of the rebooted series has begun (for instance, Twede's Café is no longer littered with stuffed Tweety Birds). Out of respect for current residents, In Twin Peaks doesn't provide addresses for locations such as the Palmer residence; for those, try the Internet Movie Database (imdb.com).

What to eat

Just like Dale Cooper, driving from site to site and inhaling all that fresh Douglas-fir-scented air is bound to make you hungry. Located a few minutes' drive from Laura's log in Poulsbo's quaint downtown, Sluys Bakery is an ideal spot to grab a handmade doughnut and a coffee to drink on a bench in the scenic harbour. When crossing from Kingston to Edmonds on the Washington State Ferry, treat yourself to the innocent, nostalgic pleasure of a soft pretzel, hot chocolate, and homemade granola bar. The cherry pie at the Salish Lodge's Attic restaurant may not be diner-authentic, but it sure beats what's on offer at Twede's Café. If you decide to make a meal of it, the Attic's roasted butternut squash sandwich and fruity Waterfall cocktail are a perfect complement to the spectacular view of Snoqualmie Falls.