



Gone Glamping

Exploring Under Canvas, Washington's newest luxury outdoor resort.



BY RACHEL GALLAHER SEPTEMBER 29, 2025



Aerial view of Under Canvas at Columbia River
PHOTO BY BAILEY MADE

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I am what could be considered an “indoor cat.”

Aside from [skiing](#)—and the occasional summer hike—much of my favored activity happens inside. But, as luck would have it, a few years ago, one of my friend groups started camping regularly. Maybe it was COVID-related boredom, or an abundance of free time, but there we were, pitching tents and building fires in campgrounds around the state. Each of my friends has a different level of dedication to and intensity for camping: one couple backpacks into the wilderness several times a year; the majority of us are car campers who will sleep in a tent but pack oysters and sparkling wine to pair with our hot dogs. I fall squarely in the latter category.

We didn’t camp much when I was a kid, and the second time I slept in a tent as an adult, I had no idea I was supposed to bring a sleeping pad. (The next day, in sheer desperation, I purchased an inflatable pool raft at a hardware store on a grocery run. Frankly, it wasn’t much better than the ground.)

It’s not that I don’t like the outdoors. I love nature and feel very lucky to live in the Pacific Northwest with its mercurial, seasonal beauty. I just don’t love camping. I’ll go if everyone else does, mostly because I don’t like to miss out and I enjoy late-night hangs by the fire. But sleeping in a tent, not taking showers, and having no access to electricity is just not how I like to experience nature. (Yes, I know how awful that sounds.) So, when someone told me about the first [Northwest location](#) of Under Canvas—the upscale outdoor hospitality brand known for offering “glamping” in breathtaking locations across the country—I was instantly intrigued. I had never “glamped,” but the mention of in-tent showers, bathrooms, and beds with actual mattresses sounded just about my speed.

Tucked in a valley just 16 miles (about a 25-minute drive) from White Salmon, a small town on the border between Washington and Oregon, Under Canvas Columbia River Gorge captures the wild beauty of our state's south-central region—and a striking snapshot view of Oregon's Mount Hood in the distance.

"All 12 of our camps are intentionally located in close proximity to the country's most iconic national parks, monuments, and outdoor destinations," says Under Canvas CEO Matt Gaghen. "The Columbia River Gorge was a natural progression for the expansion of the brand. The region is a coveted outdoor recreation playground, offering an incredible array of outdoor adventures as well as more relaxing lifestyle experiences with a rich food and wine culture that sets it apart from our other camps."

I had been to the area before. Two of my good friends grew up in White Salmon, and between wine weekends and bachelorettes, the Gorge bewitched me with its natural wildness and laid-back, small-town charm.

A day or two before I set off, I received a pre-arrival email with helpful information, from a reminder that the camp is "off-grid" without Wi-Fi access ("To encourage immersion in nature and connection with each other and ourselves," Gaghen explains), to specific instructions for accessing the site. (Pay attention to the provided driving directions, as two roads lead to Under Canvas. One is much longer and completely gravel. Ask me how I know.)

My four-hour drive from Seattle was fairly uneventful, with the standard congested traffic around Portland, but once I turned east, it was a smooth shot to Hood River, then over the bridge, through White Salmon, and on to Under Canvas. The arrival experience winds you down into the White Salmon River Valley, where 50 safari-style tents sit on 120 acres. "We design every camp to minimize disruption to the landscape—preserving open space, working with the land's natural topography, and using sustainable systems throughout," says Gaghen. These systems include low-flow toilets, pull-chain showers, energy-efficient lighting (as the operators of the world's first DarkSky-certified resorts, Under Canvas takes steps to minimize light pollution), and battery-powered charging stations.

Check-in was simple, with a quick demonstration of how to operate the sinks, showers, and gas fireplace in my tent, although the latter felt unnecessary as the temperature hovered around 90 degrees. After the usual registration procedures, an Under Canvas staffer whisked me to my car in a golf cart (the parking lot sits slightly north of the campsite), loaded my luggage, and ferried me to my accommodations: one of the resort's Stargazer tents, which features a skyward viewing window above the king-size bed.

The raised, safari-style tent is made of heavy canvas that turned out to make a lot of noise when the wind blew (I was used to it by the second night, but woke up abruptly several times the night before when particularly strong gusts whipped the lodging, causing the wood beams to creak). It's a hazard of the area; the Columbia Gorge is known for its gusty conditions. The first thing I noticed was the smell: in the warm afternoon, the cedar floor and wall planks delineating the ensuite shower and toilet made the whole tent smell pleasantly like a sauna. Outfitted with West Elm furniture, the space included the bed with two nightstands, a seating area (two leather sling-style chairs and a rattan pouf), a wood bench, and a cowhide rug underfoot. A small, covered porch had two chairs—I spent a couple of hours reading there before dinner.

"[Under Canvas] provides the comforts of a boutique hotel in the middle of some of the country's most breathtaking landscapes," Gaghen says, noting that in addition to the Stargazer and pint sized tents for kids, they offer "unique options like our Mount Hood Suite at Columbia River Gorge, which includes two tents connected by a private deck, allow[ing] guests to customize their experience, whether traveling solo, as a couple, or with family or friends."

For obvious reasons—to avoid attracting local wildlife, including black bears—food is not allowed in the tents. Grab-and-go snacks (energy bars, juices, sandwiches, meat-and-cheese packs) can be purchased and eaten in the lobby tent, dining room, and outdoor communal area, which features two firepits and a series of picnic tables. Breakfast and dinner are available for purchase in a café-style setting offering a menu focused on locally sourced food and drinks. During my stay, the resort did not yet have its permit to serve alcohol, but it did allow adult beverages on the property, which proved a benefit after visiting a few wineries the next day. (Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and water are always free). The food—everything from shrimp tacos, burgers, and salads to wild king salmon and cioppino—was fine; better fare than I'd had on many camping trips, but, at the time of my visit, nothing to write home about.



In-tents experience. The safari-style tents at Under Canvas Columbia River Gorge include beds, gas fireplaces, and West Elm furniture

PHOTO BY BAILEY MADE

After dinner, complimentary s'mores are a must: packets of chocolate, marshmallows, and graham crackers, plus roasting sticks, are available every evening in the lobby. Other amenities include acoustic guitars, yoga mats, board games and books, and live music. For those looking to venture beyond the tents, Under Canvas offers an adventure concierge who can help arrange or advise on excursions such as white-water rafting, hiking, mountain biking, wine or beer tasting, fishing, and stand-up paddleboarding. On-site activities range from morning journaling and yoga to scavenger hunts and crafts for all ages, like bracelet and bookmark making.

Although the resort doesn't have WiFi, my phone did have service (thanks, T-Mobile), so I can't say I fully unplugged during my stay. But there was something about the experience that encouraged a slower pace. I spent a lot of time reading (in bed, on my porch, by the communal fire pit) and trying to escape the heat. While glamping proved a major step up from a tent in the woods, there were several things I didn't anticipate, like the shower only staying on for around 30 seconds with each yank of the chain, how dark it got at night (battery-powered lanterns are the light source), and even though I was solo for the trip, the fact that there wasn't an actual door on the bathroom (an L shaped wood screen created a nook in one corner). It got cold at night.



The lobby tent is a camp hub, where guests can hang out, meet fellow glampers, and plan excursions with on-site adventure coordinators.

PHOTO BY BAILEY MADE

These unexpected moments imbued the experience with a rustic sensibility, creating a unique bridge between past camping trips and traditional hospitality hot spots. Under Canvas was a great “home base” between exploring the independent boutiques and cafes in White Salmon and sipping flights of wine at nearby tasting rooms. And if your trip leans more on the adventurous side, the tent-filled resort is surely a welcome end-of-day retreat. After all, who doesn’t want a soft bed after a long day of rafting or a multi-mile hike?

“At Under Canvas, we welcome anyone who is up for an adventure,” says Gaghen “Travelers who want to really connect—with nature, with each other, and with something bigger than their everyday routine. Whether it’s couples, families, or friends looking to explore the outdoors and still enjoy a comfortable bed at night, our guests come for the adventure and stay for the small moments.”

Under Canvas Columbia River Gorge is open for booking through Oct. 26.