

next stop

DESTINATION:

Bellingham

The arts flourish
in the shadow of
Mount Baker

BY ALLEN COX



Whatcom Museum's elegant Lightcatcher exhibit space.

When you need a break from winter thrills on the slopes of Mount Baker, you can head down the hill and in from the chill in Bellingham's cultural arts district.

Welcome to the city's "living room"—beginning at the corner of West Holly and Bay streets—where the arts, science and history come together. This downtown district's centerpiece? Whatcom Museum's Lightcatcher, a 42,000-square-foot exhibit space defined by a 37-by-180-foot translucent curved wall. Having opened its doors in November 2009, this fine art and history museum is one of the Northwest's newest, with exhibits ranging from regional history to American fine art, plus a "Family Interactive Gallery" that kids love.

At nearby Mindport Exhibits, you'll wonder whether you're in a science or art museum, and that question flatters its creators. Here, hands-on exhibits are all about creativity and exploration. Around the corner, geek is chic at the American Museum of Radio and Electricity, where an electrifying collection of world-class exhibits spans 400 years of discovery.

Local artists have works on display at the Allied Arts gallery. "We feature a new exhibit every month," says Kelly Hart, Allied Arts executive director. "But one of our most popular events is the annual Holiday Festival of the Arts." Now in its 31st year, this juried arts and crafts show runs from Nov. 19 to Dec. 24. **■**



THE BASICS

Visitor Information Center
(800) 487-2032; I-5 Exit 253;
www.bellingham.org

Whatcom Museum
(360) 778-8930; 250 Flora St.;
www.whatcommuseum.org

Mindport Exhibits
(360) 647-5614;
210 W. Holly St.;
www.mindport.org

**American Museum of Radio
and Electricity**
(360) 738-3886;
1312 Bay St.;
www.amre.us

Allied Arts
(360) 676-8548;
1418 Cornwall Ave.;
www.alliedarts.org

EAT

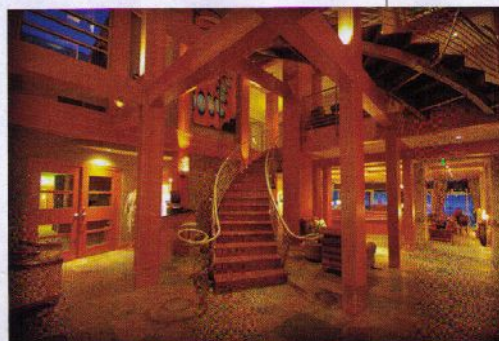
Old Town Cafe: Scrumptious breakfasts and lunches. (360) 671-4431; 316 W. Holly St.; www.theoldtowncafe.com

Flats Tapas Bar: Delectable small plates. (360) 738-6001; 1307 11th St.; www.flatstapas.com

Nimbus: Locally sourced fine cuisine. (360) 676-1307; 119 N. Commercial St., 14th floor; www.nimbusrestaurant.com

ZZZZZs

The Chrysalis Inn and Spa
(Pictured below) Relax and unwind at this elegant respite right on the Bellingham waterfront. 804 10th St.
Hotel Bellwether
This exceptional hotel, also on the waterfront, is pet friendly. 1 Bellwether Way.



PETER JAMES