



A PLACE
WONDERFUL



BOTH

AND

STRANGE

WASHINGTON
STATE'S SNOQUALMIE
VALLEY ISN'T QUITE
AS WEIRD AS THE
CULT SENSATION
TWIN PEAKS MADE
IT OUT TO BE—BUT
IT'S DARN CLOSE.
NOW, AHEAD OF THE
SERIES' REVIVAL,
THE REGION FLIRTS
WITH BECOMING
TWIN PEAKS AGAIN

Words **DERRIK J. LANG**
Photography **BROOKE FITTS**

IF

you squint your eyes while standing on the stretch of Reinig Road facing Mount Si, on the side of the street that borders the adjacent river, you can almost see the hand-painted sign welcoming visitors to the town of Twin Peaks (population: 51,201). It's not actually there, of course, but as with everything auteur David Lynch creates, it has the eerie power to linger in your mind—somewhere between dream and reality.

For those who were enamored with Lynch's soapy supernatural drama when it originally aired in the 1990s, or later binged on it when it became available online, the Snoqualmie Valley provides about a dozen such touchstones, whether it's hypnotically gazing at the falls cascading underneath the Great Northern Hotel or having an out-of-body experience eating a slice of cherry pie at the Double R Diner.

The 900-square-mile area was cast as the town of Twin Peaks by Lynch, the far-out filmmaker behind *Dune* and *Blue Velvet*, and his collaborator Mark Frost after a recommendation from a friend. During a scouting trip to the small neighboring towns of North Bend, Snoqualmie and Fall City, the pair found everything they'd imaginarily mapped for their series about a twisted Pacific Northwest enclave: a diner alongside railroad tracks, a sawmill at the center of town, a rough-and-tumble roadhouse and a grand hotel seemingly overlooking it all—just to name a few.

The pilot episode was shot entirely on location across the Snoqualmie Valley, while later episodes filmed in Southern California featured scenes with duplicated interiors and other locales. After a few hours in this precipitation-heavy area 30 miles east of Seattle, it's easy to understand why Lynch and Frost were drawn here. It could simply be the stuck-in-time nature of the region (or that guy having an intense conversation with a water pipe behind the library), but a noticeable peculiarity hangs



in the atmosphere. It's just as present as the mist that drifts across the landscape.

You don't have to be a *Twin Peaks* aficionado to appreciate the majesty of the area. Before the region became an iconic fictional town or even a real-world logging hub, the Snoqualmie tribe hunted deer and elk, fished for salmon and gathered berries and wild plants across the valley's foggy and fertile landscape. (You can learn all about it at the Snoqualmie Valley Historical Museum.) Today, most visitors venture here for the gorgeous hiking, kayaking and biking, or to gawk at the thundering Snoqualmie Falls.



But there are still those die-hard fans who make the pilgrimage to see how much of *Twin Peaks* is really real.

Twin Peaks wasn't just must-see TV. It was a cultural phenomenon, paving the way for cinematic storytelling on TV. At the dawn of the Internet Age, the serialized show gained another life online, where far-flung fans were able to virtually fixate over every Lynchian detail. (What is the Black Lodge? Why does everyone there sound kooky when they speak? Did Audrey Horne survive the bomb at the bank? What do the owls mean? Who is Bob?!) The digital congregation also allowed

obsessives to catalog the filming locations on sites such as intwinpeaks.com.

An estimated 35 million viewers tuned in for the debut to see homecoming queen Laura Palmer's body wash up on the riverbanks of *Twin Peaks* on April 8, 1990. Unfortunately, the mystery and fandom wavered. After ratings took a dive in the second season, ABC axed *Twin Peaks* in 1991, ending it after 30 episodes. When the Lynch-crafted movie prequel *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me* failed to satisfy fans or generate box office heat in 1992, it seemed as if *Twin Peaks* was destined for the cult archives—until 2014, when Lynch >



announced that a limited series would continue the creepy town's story.

After 25 years, Lynch and company returned to the Snoqualmie Valley for about six weeks last year to film a third season—Lynch refers to it as an 18-part movie—that will air on Showtime beginning May 21. “He didn’t have to bring the actors here and shoot here,” says North Bend city administrator Londi Lindell. “With the green screens and everything they can do now, there’s no reason to come here—or they could have just spent a day or two here. He didn’t have to spend weeks here, but he really believes in having [the actors] feel the place.”

Lynch got lucky. The most remarkable thing about the Snoqualmie Valley is how much this area hasn’t changed in the decades since ABC cancelled the show. That’s intentional, according to North Bend’s mayor, Ken Hearing, who was born and raised in the Snoqualmie Valley. The city’s own mission statement pledges to protect the “rural character of the community,” in spite of the booming development that’s occurred in other bedroom communities outside Seattle alongside Interstate 90.

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Snoqualmie
Falls and
the Salish
Lodge. Right:
Reinig Bridge

only three or four percent of the population commuted to work,” says Hearing, who owns a local burger stand and doesn’t go anywhere in town without his dog, Butch. “Everyone worked in the warehousing or timber industries, or they were supporting it. Today, 85 percent of our population commutes to work.”

The old sawmill, which appeared throughout the show, closed for good in 2003. The site is now home to the DirtFish Rally School, a performance driving school. On-screen, the mill’s office served as the *Twin Peaks* Sheriff’s Department, where law enforcement attempted to solve the town’s many mysteries.



Krissy Shelton, who works at the front desk, says she still sees fans coming by to gawk at the building from her perch.

“It’s rare we don’t have people stop by on the weekends,” says Shelton, who allows polite fans who’ve travelled from far away to sit behind her desk and pose for photos in the same spot where Kimmy Robertson’s nasally receptionist Lucy Moran answered the phone.

While the mill is long gone, just about every other location featured in *Twin Peaks* is still present, looking strikingly the same as it did on-screen in the 1990s. In fact, all of North Bend seems as if it’s been frozen in time. The town’s most popular landmark is Twede’s Cafe, which doubled as the Double R Diner, the friendly eatery where Kyle MacLachlan’s quirky FBI Agent Dale Cooper consumed countless cups of coffee, slices of pie and stacks of doughnuts.

Kyle Twede, the cafe’s owner since 1997, capitalizes on the *Twin Peaks* link by selling souvenirs, such as coffee cups and T-shirts, as well as serving his own version of cherry pie and “damn fine” coffee. “It’s pretty much a loss leader for me,” acknowledges Twede, a giant but gentle proprietor who struggles with simultaneously satisfying the local townsfolk with hearty breakfasts, while also appeasing visiting *Twin Peaks* fans. “If you put sugar and cream in that coffee, I haven’t made a cent.”

Still, he can’t escape the *Twin Peaks* connection—even though he once tried. After an arson fire in 2000, Twede’s remodel of the diner left it looking more modern and less like the wood-paneled original. For the Showtime revival, he allowed the show’s crew to restore the cafe to its Double R Diner glory. “I said, ‘Do whatever you want. It’s your dollar. >

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Whatever you do, I’ll keep it that way. If it’s just going to be a museum to *Twin Peaks*, whatever you do, make it permanent.” (Twede’s waitresses don’t sport the same throwback teal uniforms donned by characters on the show. They wear T-shirts.)

Other than confirming that MacLachlan is reprising his role as Agent Cooper and releasing a list of the 217 actors who will appear in the new installment, Lynch has remained tight-lipped about the plot of the new season. The locals have been sworn to secrecy, although they do drop hints here and there about where Lynch and company popped up while in the valley.

When Lynch returned to North Bend, the town’s mayor not-so-jokingly petitioned the filmmaker to feature his burger stand, Scott’s Dairy Freeze, as a new locale in the series, or to cast him as the mayor of Twin Peaks. Lynch declined, although he was a loyal patron of Hearing’s business, which—in addition to flavorful burgers and crispy waffle fries—serves fried pickles and 20 different flavors of milkshakes.

While there’s not actually an eye-patched woman obsessed with window treatments, a possessed serial killer or a lady cradling a log roaming the streets of North Bend, the town does boast its own off-kilter population, such as the aforementioned dude conversing with a water pipe or an oddball donning a vintage mining helmet while biking around town. “We’re not going to name names,” jokes city administrator Lindell. “We have different types of local characters—whether they hold a log or something else.” The biggest character in the Snoqualmie Valley is the oddly ominous 4,167-foot-tall Mount Si—and its shorter 1,576-foot-tall brother, Little Si—looming in the town’s background. The adjoining mountains’ toothy crags and dark forests are both beautiful and foreboding.



Above: The cherry pie at Twede’s Cafe.
Here: North Bend Mayor Ken Hearing

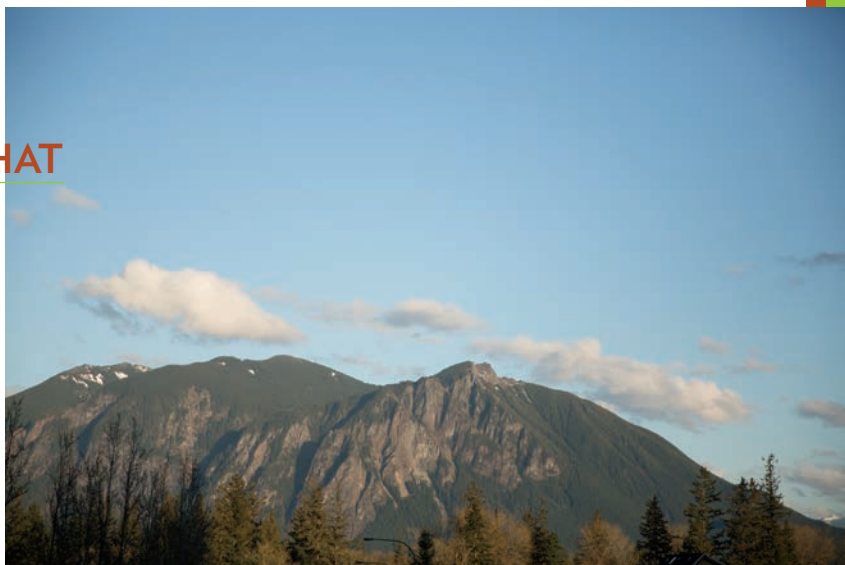
For outsiders who haven’t watched a second of *Twin Peaks*, they’d never know the area’s place in TV history strolling through the quiet downtown corridors of Fall City, Snoqualmie and North Bend, where the old-school neon signs from businesses such as Scott’s Dairy Freeze cast an unsettling glow on empty streets after the sun sets. Other than a mural of the Twin Peaks welcome sign painted on the back of Twede’s Cafe, few places outwardly recognize the association. The exception is Selah Gifts, an unconventional North Bend gift shop a block away from Twede’s Cafe. The owner, Shelly Woodward, sells *Twin Peaks* fan art and other memorabilia alongside incense and children’s toys.

“I grew up here and never fit in,” says Woodward, a self-proclaimed eccentric who >

“THIS TIME AROUND, IT’S DIFFERENT. WE KNOW WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT NOW.”

has paranormal theories about why the area attracts such quirkiness. “I still don’t—and I like that. This is a weird area. It’s very unique. There’s all this history about the mountain. We do weird well.”

The idiosyncrasies continue over at the Salish Lodge & Spa, aka the Great Northern Hotel, which served as Agent Cooper’s home away from home in *Twin Peaks*. The hotel is surreally perched on the side of Snoqualmie Falls with a feeling that it could slip into the booming river below at any moment. Inside, it’s a different story. A rustic luxuriousness accents the 84 rooms and fireplace-fueled lobby. (The inside of the lodge never looked as it did on the show. The Great Northern’s interiors were actually filmed at an entirely different spot about 90 miles away before they were



WELCOME TO TWIN PEAKS A visit to the show’s most iconic landmarks

Double R Diner

Besides pie and coffee
“black as midnight
on a moonless night,”

Twede’s Cafe
specializes in grub
like the *Twin Peaks*
burger—two beef
patties topped
with cheddar, Swiss,
ham and bacon.
twedescafe.com

The Great Northern Hotel

Along with the view,
the **Salish Lodge & Spa** sports restaurants
serving a cocktail
named after Dale
Cooper. It’s a medley
of gin and clove-
infused honey from
the hotel’s apiary.
salishlodge.com

Giant Log

The mammoth Douglas
fir log from the
opening credits now
sits under the
Snoqualmie Centennial
Log Pavilion outside
the **Northwest Railway
Museum**, which has
a vast collection
of historic train cars.
trainmuseum.org

reproduced on a soundstage.) There’s a special section in the quaint gift shop dedicated to *Twin Peaks* novelties, such as log-shaped pillows and owl pins engraved with the infamous line: “The owls are not what they seem.”

The operators of the Salish Lodge, a popular destination for romance-seeking couples, have embraced their *Twin Peaks* infamy by offering a special room package that includes a self-guided tour map and a slice of cherry pie. In July, the staff will welcome hundreds of passionate *Twin Peaks* fans, many of whom have been converging on the area since 1992, for the annual *Twin Peaks* Festival. This year’s event will run from July 28 to 30 and feature a karaoke night, bus tour and appearances by *Twin Peaks* stars.

“It has quite the cult following,” says Beth Neleson, who has lived in the Snoqualmie Valley for over 20 years and works at Birches Habitat, a home décor and clothing store. “I have a daughter at the University of Washington, and she’s starting to watch the old episodes in preparation for the new ones.”

The area’s always had a love-hate relationship with *Twin Peaks*. While many citizens appreciated the opportunities—and revenue—that a big-time Hollywood production brought to the otherwise sleepy town, others haven’t been so fond of the kooky reputation or looky-loos that Lynch’s surreal masterwork draws. After more than 25 years—as the revival draws near—that’s finally changing.

“This time around, it’s different,” says Twede, who’s already noticed an uptick in visitors to his diner in recent months. “We know what it’s all about now. The city is really excited about it. We can’t wait to see the first episode, but there’s that little voice in the back of your mind not knowing what the hell he’s going to do.” **AW**



Above: Mount Si
Here: Selah
Gifts owner Shelly
Woodward