

Sleeping Lady

Lose yourself in the trees, Leavenworth, WA

By Crai S. Bower

Outside my window, snow settles among the Ponderosa pines. I am curled in an alcove, nestled beneath a thick duvet, reading a long-awaited book. The only challenge in my day is staying awake. I'll admit, it is a nice challenge to have.

Just a few hours east of Seattle, located near Leavenworth is the Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat. Opened in 1995, Sleeping Lady serves as a destination for many conferences, but also for couples and families (especially during the winter).

Today, snowfall turns to rain and provides a sweet patter on the Center's tin gable roofs. Sleeping Lady's simple bungalows of exposed knotty pine beams and rustic appointments settle into clusters that suggest a druidic village. The cabins face inward toward the wooded courtyards; as a guest, one can't help but follow their lead. Stress slips off like snow from a windshield the instant you wander onto the path away from the distant parking lot.

In my own bungalow, I peek out of the window while reading the new Gay Talese memoir—the one I've requested and returned to the library three times. This setting cajoles me to turn off and tune out, write in my journal and keep the laptop stowed in my satchel next to the Sunday Times. Eventually, I switch off my iPod as well, closing the portable speakers for the remainder of the trip. The current of Icicle Creek, which flows past the southern border of the property, replaces the familiar sounds of home.



Photo by Matt Burke

Sleeping Lady Mountain Retreat

7375 Icicle Rd
Leavenworth, WA

1.800.574.2123

www.sleepinglady.com

Winter Rates:

Sun-Thurs: \$196.20

Weekend: \$262.20

Holidays: \$275

New Years Eve: \$571.92

New Years with Gala: \$669.12

Upcoming Events:

1/31 New Years Eve Party
with Junior Cadillac

2/9-11 Winter Mystery Film
Weekend VIII – "Film Noir:
Murder and Mayhem at Midnight"

More Events:

The quiet determination of surrounding mountains, including the peak for which the Center is named, adds to the peaceful feeling.

But Sleeping Lady is more than just a Rip van Winkle hideaway. Owner, Harriet Bullitt, created the retreat as an arts center for individuals to delve into a cultural cross-pollination.

Sleeping Lady's Icicle Creek Chamber Music Festival was the first of more than 1,000 events and meetings in its ten-year history. The Center recently held the Simplicity Forum, one of many publicly attended events designed to enlighten visitors to a more holistic lifestyle. The discussion of conservation, Ms. Bullitt's passion, is never far as each March the Center hosts the Hazel Wolf Environmental Film Festival, among numerous other environmental seminars.

Ms. Bullitt believes only art can magnify the environment's glory, and the majority of the 100-piece collection reflects the natural world. Right outside my bungalow, Gerard Tsutakawa's Fountain of Dreams is quiet in the winter but the bronze statue still mirrors the property's majestic conifers. Cast salmon, otters and, most recently, Tony Angell's magnificent Ravens grace the grounds. Dale Chilhuly's *Icicle Creek Chandelier*, the artist's first permanent outdoor sculpture, spreads resplendently atop an equally impressive boulder.

Art and ambiance

And then there is the Grotto Bar—an innovative supplement to the holistic Center in which a combination of fireplace and full bar warms visitors. I ease into a glass of Icicle Creek Merlot, nibble on some cheese, and reopen my book. A second fireplace awaits in O’Grady’s Pantry, a friendly bakery also located on the grounds.

Sleeping Lady plans to hire a new executive chef who will use organic produce grown by small local farms to reflect its overall holistic mission. As of this fall, an organic farmer tends to Sleeping Lady’s gardens. The buffet-style dinner reminds the diner that this is also a conference center, though there is plenty of intimate seating near the fireplace .

Outside, a well-lit path leads the way to the Arts Center, a sanctuary-styled structure populated with local artwork, which also houses a small performance space. Nearby, the library is furnished with dark wicker furniture and a complete early edition of Peter Pan author J.M Barrie works. A lone computer resides there, sitting awkwardly in the library’s arboreal environs.

Somehow, checking e-mail just doesn’t quite compete with the 24-hour Rock Pool, a spacious 3’6” spa complete with rocky outcroppings. There is also a sauna, plunge pool and massage service (reservations a must.) Tonight, I soak under a dark wintry sky, where clouds sprint across the valley and an occasional gust upsets the still snow.

The time is barely 8:30 as I return to my room. Thoughts of the early hour disappear when, contrary to my post-midnight bedtime in Seattle, I plunge into sleep just twenty-five minutes after reopening my memoir; thoughts of city and work long since forgotten. Van Winkle dances among these trees after all.

Crai S. Bower came up with his "Escape the Pace" column while in Stehekin, Washington, where there was literally nothing to do but hike, read and kayak. He lives and writes in Seattle.