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## Away for a Day: Shhhh . . . Don't Tell Anyone About Cama Beach State Park



Several years ago, I discovered a tiny slice of family vacation heaven, also known as Cama Beach State Park. To celebrate our tenth wedding anniversary this month, I booked seven cabins eighteen months in advance — a necessity to secure a summer reservation. But don't tell anyone, I don't want to spoil the secret. Honestly, the secret of the magic of Cama Beach is out, at least among families in Seattle, and soon hoards of Portlanders will also discover the joys of glamping (glamour + camping) along the banks of Puget Sound.

Cama Beach is a new state park but a long-time vacation spot. Since the 1930s the property on Camano Island has been home to fishing camps. The newly built Cama Center boasts a restaurant and a rental ballroom, and is dotted with historic photos of the site. The photos tell

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the story of the Risk family and their 1930s-era fishing resort — a destination that has been left largely unchanged since it was built. Through a combination of a family gift and sale, the State of Washington has turned the site into a state park, with the understanding that it would be run as it was in the 1930s. Forty small cottages line the rocky Puget Sound beach, close enough to skip rocks along the water from the porch. The rustic cabins hold two full beds, a refrigerator, a heater, a sink and a microwave. Most cooking is done on barbecues scattered throughout the grounds.

Cars are forbidden on the site. A park-run shuttle service carts guests and their belongings to the cabins. The absence of cars is what makes it a kid paradise. On a recent visit, I watched grade-schoolers zipping around on their bikes, darting in and out of secret hideaways and forts designed into the surrounding forest.

Troops of child bandits are free to roam the park at will with a sense of freedom not often found in our modern era. In the rare case of a meltdown, parents are easy to find — sipping wine, chatting uninterrupted with other adults and watching the sun set over the sound. During our visit, each of the forty cabins contained at least one person under the age of 15 enjoying the natural trifecta of water, mountains and sky. Our Washington friends laughed at me as I was dazzled by each sunset the sound offered up, old hat for those who live surrounded by water. There are ample opportunities for kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, rock skipping and pristine relaxation.

But: if you're smart, you'll keep this destination under wraps. We don't want too many finding out about the idyllic family vacation spot just 90 minutes north of Seattle. This summer, we just might see you there.

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Ariel Frager is a school counselor and has a private therapy practice that specializes in treating children, adolescents and



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