

in Living COLOR

Top things to
see and do on
your visit to the
**SKAGIT
VALLEY TULIP
FESTIVAL**



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The Skagit Valley Tulip Festival is one of Western Washington's most anticipated spring rites. It fills the entire month of April with events and activities to entertain visitors excited to see fields filled with cheerful blooms. Although the tulip fields are the main attraction, a big part of the fun lies in exploring the region's charming towns, fun eateries and spectacular natural settings. Don't miss the top things to see and do on your visit to *this year's* festival.

SPRING INTO THE TULIP FESTIVAL

Turn your visit to the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival into a fun day of exploration. Read our tips and recommendations to make the most out of your trip, enjoy excellent family-friendly activities, and explore restaurants, nearby towns, trails and more.

The scenic **KUKUTALI PRESERVE**, on two connected islands, is an extraordinary setting with two miles of trails through Douglas fir and madrone forest, driftwood-strewn beaches and gorgeous water views—including a view of the Deception Pass Bridge. Because it is owned jointly by Washington State Parks and Swinomish tribe, it is considered sacred ground and increased respect is expected. No pets or alcohol are allowed, and you need a Discover Pass to park.

SAFETY FIRST

In the interest of safety and as a courtesy to fellow festivalgoers, do not pull over or park in unauthorized areas—and because these are working farms, do not walk into the fields.

TIP #1

Try to hit the festival on a weekday, when there are fewer crowds. Don't forget your boots. April is often rainy, which means muddy fields.

TULIP TOWN

A building brimming with colorful souvenirs is along the path to the tulip fields, where you will find blooms planted in narrow bands of brilliant colors. A viewing platform offers a good vantage point for photography.

ROOZENGAARDE

North America's largest bulb grower is home to a beautifully composed 5-acre display garden featuring extravagant displays of fancy blooms and an authentic Dutch windmill. Beyond, you'll find 25 acres of color-saturated tulip fields that stretch into the distance, with the dusky Cascades as a backdrop.

TIP #3

In addition to displays at Roozengaarde and Tulip Town, there are several fields of "free range" tulips. Their location varies year to year based on crop rotations. Look for highway signs pointing to the "Tulip Route."

TIP #2

Because the main Mount Vernon exit (Exit 226) often backs up in April, consider using Highway 20 at Exit 230 instead.

Out-of-this-world morning treats at the **C-SQUARE MARKET** include caramelized Bee Sting—a croissant baked in a muffin tin with honey and almonds. With award-winning, house-made charcuterie as well as international and local cheeses, this is also a great place to pick up picnic fare. A bonus: They make delicious organic ice cream.

The annual **KIWANIS SALMON BBQ**, featuring an alder-grilled salmon feast at Hillcrest Park, is a perennial favorite, and proceeds benefit local causes. It is typically held in April.

TIP #5

Local organizations host everything from wine tastings to chainsaw carving in Mount Vernon, Burlington, La Conner, Conway, Anacortes, Sedro-Woolley and other surrounding communities. Find the event schedule at tulipfestival.org. The Mount Vernon Street Fair, the festival's largest celebration, takes place April 19–21 in downtown Mount Vernon.

TIP #4

Although the festival officially takes place during the entire month of April, nature calls the shots in terms of peak bloom time, so check the official bloom status at tulipfestival.org/bloom to keep up with conditions.

The Skagit Valley Tulip Festival coincides with another remarkable display of nature: Around 35,000 snow geese overwinter in the area, typically through mid-April or early May. The best place to see these elegant beauties is in the **SKAGIT WILDLIFE AREA'S FIR ISLAND FARMS RESERVE UNIT** (wdfw.wa.gov), off Fir Island Road.

LA CONNER >

With historic buildings filled with local shops and cafés along the Swinomish Channel, La Conner is one of the Northwest's most appealing small towns.

The pub menu at **LA CONNER BREWING CO.** includes grass-fed beef burgers, enchiladas, pizzas and more, plus housemade beer.

Sustainable seafood shines at **THE OYSTER & THISTLE**, whose French-inspired dishes are served with great attention to detail, in a quaint hillside building.



SEEDS BISTRO AND BAR features local foods, with creative salads and hearty sandwiches at lunchtime, in the historic Tillinghast Seed Company building.

The free **MUSEUM OF NORTHWEST ART** regularly carries exhibits of remarkably high-quality contemporary art that reflects the cultural diversity across the Northwest, including British Columbia and Alaska.

Set in the historic Gaches Mansion, the **PACIFIC NORTHWEST QUILT AND FIBER ARTS MUSEUM** showcases textile art from throughout the Pacific Rim and beyond. Exhibitions include traditional works, as well as those with contemporary flair.

Maintained by the Civic Garden Club, **THE BUTTERFLY GARDENS** is a tranquil spot and you can enjoy the view of town and part of the channel. You may not be able to enter, however, if it is rented for an event.

