



Back to the Beach

Rediscover Alki for the quintessential Seattle summer experience

Clockwise from top: The view from Alki Beach is one of the city's most spectacular; every day is casual Friday at Coastal Surf Boutique; Alki Bakery's scrumptious cinnamon rolls; Spud's famous fish 'n' chips; cooling off on the Alki boardwalk; upscale dining at Phoenicia at Alki; The Celtic Swell's inviting exterior; Seattle's favorite beach

BY PAT TANUMIHARDJA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY AARON GUSTAFSON

ON NOVEMBER 13, 1851, Arthur A. Denny and his party rowed ashore at Alki Point and established Seattle's first white settlement. But after fewer than six (probably miserably wet) months, the party relocated to a more protected area across the bay—what is now Pioneer Square. Fortunately, Alki didn't remain abandoned; residents started settling in the neighborhood at the beginning of the 20th century, and today the neighborhood is one of Seattle's most sought-after communities. In place of the weather-beaten beachside bungalows of years past, trendy condominiums now flank Alki Avenue SW, offering residents stunning views of Elliott Bay, Bainbridge Island and the Olympics.

The growing cluster of cafés, restaurants and bars between 55th Avenue SW and 63rd Avenue SW ensures that locals and visitors are well nourished. Alki's attractiveness comes as no surprise—sandy Alki Beach is Seattle's closest approximation to the California coast. In the heat of summer, everyone's an Alki fan. Tanned taut bodies lie on the sandy beach while muscled volleyball players show off their prowess. Joggers, cyclists and skaters throng the concrete paths that ribbon the water's edge, and fast cars and fleeting visitors swarm the narrow streets and cozy cafés. Who knows what Seattle's fate might have been if the Denny Party had arrived in June?



●●● EAT

Come summertime, families with toddlers, sun-kissed surfer types and lounging locals can be spotted sipping iced mochas or sampling the luscious cinnamon rolls at the **Alki Bakery** (2738 Alki Ave. SW; 206.935.1352), a neighborhood anchor since 1985. When **Spud Fish & Chips** (2666 Alki Ave. SW; 206.938.0606) opened in 1935, two pieces of breaded lingcod and fries cost a dime. Though the same meal today will set you back \$8.41, grabbing a bite at Spud is still an Alki must-do. At **The Celtic Swell** (2722 Alki Ave. SW; 206.932.7935; celticswell.com), one of several late-night hangouts to emerge on the block, families dig into traditional shepherd's pie while Gen Xers gather late to share stories and chug pints of Smithwick's. Pizza lovers can sink their teeth into **Pegasus Pizza's** (2758 Alki Ave. SW; 206.932.4849) thick-crust pies loaded with toppings from the ordinary (pepperoni) to the extraordinary (sunflower seeds). At **Phoenicia at Alki** (2716 Alki Ave. SW; 206.935.6550), savor Middle Eastern specialties ranging from fragrant and spicy curry seafood pasta to succulent lamb skewers.

●●● SHOP

If you left your swimsuit at home, **Coastal Surf Boutique** (2532 Alki Ave. SW; 206.933.5605; coastalseattle.com) comes to the rescue with a rainbow selection of bikinis, board shorts, flip-flops and more from brands such as Billabong, Element and Roxy. Hop onto one of Coastal's beach cruiser bikes for rent (\$7 per hour) and hit the waterfront bike trail. Two blocks south of the beach, the Alki Community Center hosts the **Alki Beach Art Fair** (July 29–30; 5817 SW Stevens St.; 206.684.7430; cityofseattle.net), where you can purchase jewelry, pottery and metalwork produced by local artists.

●●● EXPERIENCE

The **Alki Bathhouse** (2701 Alki Ave. SW; 206.684.7430; cityofseattle.net) offers pottery and painting classes for kids and adults in a historic location. The building is all that remains of the "Pavilion," which provided bathers with dressing rooms, a gym and a café and stood on this site since 1911. For a quintessential Alki experience, bring your own net and set up a volleyball court on the beach—then, when the sun dips behind the horizon, light a fire in one of the designated **fire pits on the beach**, available on a first-come, first-serve basis (206.684.4075; cityofseattle.net). ●

