

GETAWAYS

DAY TRIPS

PORT LUDLOW

Steer toward the calm and beauty of this port

BY KRISTIN DIZON
P-I reporter

PORT LUDLOW — This town often seems overlooked among the cities that begin with "Port" on the Olympic and Kitsap peninsulas.

People bypass it for Port Townsend and Port Angeles. It's not as much of a gathering spot as Port Orchard. Nor does it have a highway cutting through it, as Port Gamble does, or, for that matter, the charming, historic buildings of that tiny town.

However, Port Ludlow is worth a detour off state Route 104 to explore its lovely setting around the shores of scenic Ludlow Bay. Tucked just off the north end of Hood Canal, it's a half-hour ferry ride and about 28 road miles away from Seattle.

Most people probably come for an overnight trip, staying at The Inn at Ludlow Bay, which offers 37 well-appointed rooms with fireplaces and jetted tubs. Primarily a residential community — a master-planned one at that — Port Ludlow is filled with spacious, new homes in developments.

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For a town of about 2,500, there is a multitude of "For Sale" signs and at least three real estate offices, but no full-fledged grocery store or clothing shop. Where tall-masted schooners once moored, there are now yachts and sailboats in a 300-slip marina.

A schooner is the town's symbol and marks just about everything — signs, trail markers, even the sand imprint in the ashtray at the Harbormaster Restaurant & Lounge.

An unusually high number of Cadillacs and Lincoln Town Cars are one clue that Port Ludlow is a retiree haven,

but locals say that's changing. More young workers and families are moving in, attracted by the natural beauty, slower pace and friendly folks.

"We've begun to see a change in the demographics," said Miriam Villiard, marketing director for Port Ludlow Associates, which owns most of Port Ludlow's assets as well as the resort. "In the past, we'd see people moving here who were retiring and entering that next phase of their life. Now, we're seeing younger people coming in, buying their second home."

Port Ludlow's commercial center, Village Creek, is fairly tiny, with a general purpose store and gas station, post office, Cucina Pizza and a coffee and gift shop called Once Upon a Time. Just across the way, the Port Ludlow Artists League has a gallery, but it's closed on Wednesdays (when I visited) as well as weekends.

Golfers are familiar with the town, which began as many in the area did, milling the felled timber from the peninsula. Esquire magazine once called the Port Ludlow Golf Club, featuring 27 holes, one of the five most scenic places to hit the links. This is an ideal season to get a tee time and not feel crowded or rushed on the course. "We're fairly busy from 9 a.m. to noon," says director of golf Kevin Earl. "But after noon, it's easy to get a tee time."

Alas, I am not a golfer, so I checked out its stunning setting — with sloping greens nestled among trees, overlooking the water — then moved on.



From the third hole on Trail Nine, one of three nine-hole courses at Port Ludlow Golf Club, players get views of Mount Baker and the resort marina.

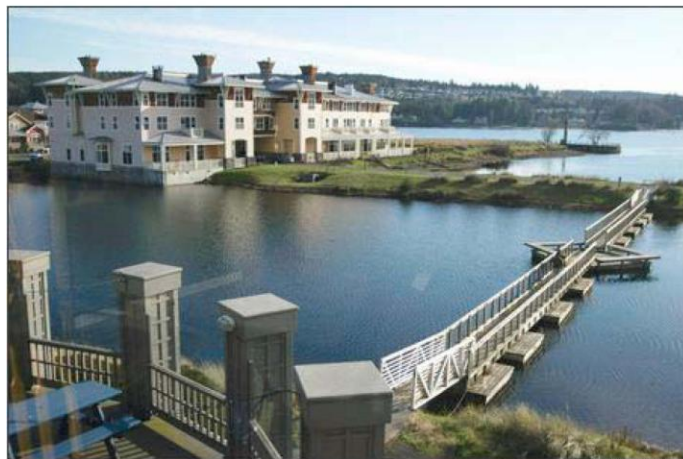
At the resort, I rented a kayak from the marina store and had the bay to myself on a sunny winter day that was almost warm. The bay is an ideal place for novice kayakers or young paddlers, because the water is calm and protected, with mild tides. (It can be windy, though.)

As I paddled around one of two little islands, called The Twins, movement in some evergreens drew my eye. Standing above me in several trees were seven blue herons, more than I'd ever seen in one spot. There are plenty of other birds to watch on the water, and locals say they

sometimes see otters or seals.

Back at the marina store, where they also rent bikes, I chatted with Wendy Lindsay, who was running the shop. A Port Ludlow resident for about 10 years, the Enumclaw native likes the town's idyllic setting. "It's just a gorgeous area. There's just so much water here," said Lindsay, who also takes pictures of local scenery and turns them into photo cards. I bought one showing Inlet, Whidbey Island and pink-frosted Cascades at sunset.

I stopped for lunch at the Harbormaster Restaurant & Lounge,



The Inn at Port Ludlow features 37 well-appointed rooms with fireplaces and jetted tubs. This view is from the resort's Harbormaster Restaurant & Lounge.

where most of the tables are next to floor-to-ceiling windows, so you can soak up the sun like a cat while you dine and gaze across the bay at crescent-shaped sand beaches. The menu offers sandwiches, burgers, fish and chips, but I went with the Northwest chicken and apple salad, with blue cheese, loads of bacon bits and candied pecans (\$12). Dressed with honey mustard, the salad was huge and came accompanied by two warm rolls.

I checked out the nearby inn, which has a restaurant that serves an elegant dinner (and breakfast for overnight guests). The front desk staff is friendly and will

shower you with brochures and trail maps of the area. Lining the hallways are black-and-white photos of Port Ludlow's beautiful Victorian hotels, churches and houses from its milling and shipbuilding days. It's a poignant sight, for none of those old buildings stand today.

From the inn's pretty bayside lawn, there's a serene view of the Olympics peering over the water, with two Adirondack chairs begging guests to enjoy the vista. Nearby, a wonderfully modern totem pole carved by David Boxley in 1995 features a lumberman holding an ax.

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Port Ludlow's boosters have put together several trail maps, but most of their "trails" are really a mix of paved paths next to the road, shoulders alongside the road, and dirt roads. But they're all popular with residents and their dogs.

A more natural route is the half-mile Ludlow Falls Interpretive Trail. Finding it is less than intuitive, but once you're

If you go

► **Getting there** — Port Ludlow is just across the Hood Canal Bridge on the Olympic Peninsula. Coming from the east, the easiest way to get there is to cross the bridge and take the first right — it comes quickly — onto Paradise Bay Road, then travel five miles.

► **Port Ludlow Golf Club** — 751 Highland Drive; 800-455-0272 or e-mail teelimes@ludlowbaygolf.com. Winter hours at the public course are 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. and 18 holes costs \$27 (rising in late spring, and again in early summer).

► **The Inn at Port Ludlow** — 1 Heron Road; 800-732-1239. The inn features 37 rooms, a sunroom, conference rooms and restaurant. Rooms are \$149-\$249, with seasonal specials.

► **Marina and store** — 1 Heron Bay; 800-308-7991. Kayaks are \$10 an hour for a single, \$15 double. Bikes are \$5 per hour, \$3 for children. The marina has 300 boat slips and the store sells boating supplies and some groceries.

► **Village Center** — At the junction of Paradise Bay and Oak Bay roads. Features Cucina Pizza by the slice, the Village Store and Gas, Once Upon a Time coffee shop and Dana Pointe Interiors. Just across Oak Bay Road, the center continues, with the Port Ludlow Cafe and Port Ludlow Artists League gallery.

► **Ludlow Falls Interpretive Trail** — Park just past the Village Center, in a lot next to large blue recycling bins. Cross the road and follow the signs to the Port Ludlow RV Park. Look for the navy blue trail tiles and swing left after signs for the dump. The trail is a simple half-mile loop that has a paved section and stairs in one area.

► **Timberton Loop Trail** — Just south of town, turn onto Timberton Drive and go for about a quarter mile until you see a parking lot on the left with trailhead markings.

there, it's a pleasant enough little waterfall whose water courses brown after traveling through cedar swamps and peat bogs.

Another option is the five-mile Timberton Loop Trail, which uses logging and access roads, and travels partially next to the golf course.

Whether you wander through for a day, or overnight, or just a few hours on



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your way elsewhere, Port Ludlow is a small oasis of calm.

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David Boxley's totem pole stands on Burner Point behind The Inn At Port Ludlow.



Ludlow Creek and Falls can be accessed from behind the Port Ludlow RV Park. There's a half-mile trail to enjoy.



Doug and Nancy Manheimer of Bremerton play the ninth hole on the Tide Nine, one of the three nine-hole courses at Port Ludlow Golf Club, which is open to the public. Esquire magazine once called the course of the five most scenic places to hit the links.



The Port Ludlow Marina, part of the Resort At Port Ludlow, rents kayaks and bikes. For \$10 an hour, you can rent a kayak and paddle around the bay. It's an ideal place for novice kayakers or young paddlers.

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P-I PHOTOS BY MERYL SCHENKER

The calm and beauty of Port Ludlow

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