



Washington's Tri-Cities Enjoy an *Exceptional* Growing Climate

by Connie Naylor

Washington's Tri-Cities area affirms the theory that good things come in threes. Three distinct communities—Pasco, Richland and Kennewick—benefit from a pleasant high desert setting near the confluence of the Columbia, Yakima and Snake Rivers. Each community affords unique advantages. Together they create an environment *Business Week* recently recognized as one of the top three American places to “make a fresh start.”

Kennewick, the most populated, boasts a strong manufacturing sector and a huge fun factor. Making the most of its location on the banks of the mighty Columbia River, it's home to Columbia Park—a recreational mecca featuring the Family Fishing Pond, playground, splash park and public golf course. Kennewick's entertainment options also include annual hydroplane races, the local fair and a long roster of entertainment options at the Toyota Center.

A lovely cable bridge crosses the Columbia to connect Kennewick with **Pasco**. That thriving community enjoys retail and housing booms, yet clings to its agricultural heritage. Each year throngs flock to the Pasco Farmer's Market—the region's largest showcase for local growers. Patrons enjoy fresh produce and the products it

inspires. Every September The Fiery Festival celebrates the local Hispanic community with a salute to all things spicy and flavorful.

Richland shed its farm-town attitude more than 60 years ago when it became the federal government's choice for the Hanford Site, home to the nation's first nuclear reactor. It remains a major global force in science and technology. Residents also benefit from proximity to the Hanford Reach National Monument—the last free-flowing stretch of the Columbia River.

In addition to ample recreational options and a bustling business environment, the cities share a sunny, four-season climate pleasing to man and especially well suited to Washington's flourishing wine industry. The area is home to the prestigious Red Mountain viticulture area, a region known for its full-bodied red varietals, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. Grapes grown in this unusual terroirs benefit from warm sunny days and the cooling effect of the Yakima River at night. They are sought after by some of the



VINEYARD: JOHN CLEMENT PHOTOGRAPHY



Cable Bridge



Dancer at The Fiery Festival

state's many exceptional wineries. Washington State is the nation's second largest producer of wine. Only California outpaces its yield. The Tri-Cities area serves as gateway to Eastern Washington's wine country. More than 200 wineries dot the countryside, and 50 are within a half-hour drive. Visitors will find little, if any, traffic as they travel from one winery to the next and more often than not will have the opportunity to meet the winemaker during a tasting.

Flying between the nation's top wine regions is easy thanks to SkyWest service to and from San Francisco twice each day. Deanna Smith, public affairs director for the Tri-City Development Council said that commercial air service also provides other advantages, "From an economic development standpoint, having convenient and affordable air service plays a significant role in sustaining economic prosperity for a region like ours. Having air service to San Francisco enables our leisure travelers better access to places like Hawaii, Europe and Asia. It also fosters more business and investment for our growing clean-tech economy with businesses and venture capitalists on the West Coast as well as connecting the nation's two wine tourism regions." ■

HANFORD AND DANCER IMAGES: GARY WHITE



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