

Spokane, Washington's famous falls

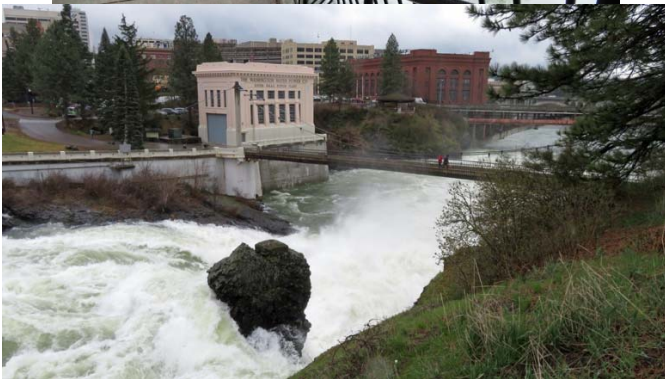
Spokane is Washington State's 2nd largest city. The name comes from the first humans to inhabit the area nearly 14,000 years ago. The name in Salishan means "children of the sun." With close proximity to Canada, trading posts were seen in the early 1800s. Lumbering, mining and agriculture have been part of its history. In 1974, a World's Fair took place in the city. The city's park next to the Spokane Falls still has some remnants of that event. Spokane's rolling hills to the south with its lush prairies called the Palouse make for beautiful scenery.

Spokane went through several economic ups and downs. The railroads' arrival in the late 1890s made Spokane an important center. Today the railroad is still an important junction. Some 85 trains pass through the city today and are not allowed to blow their whistles.

The city's impressive waterfall attracts many visitors next to the Riverfront Park. One can walk by two famous landmarks on the way to the falls, the Davenport Hotel and Bing Crosby's Theatre. Crosby was born in Tacoma, WA in 1903. In 1917, at 14 years of age, he was a property boy at Spokane's Auditorium. There he saw great acts which thrilled him. He graduated from Gonzaga High School, later attended Gonzaga University, but did not graduate. Later in life, he did receive an honorary doctoral degree from Gonzaga.

The Davenport Hotel, built in 1914, was spared from demolition in 2000 after it had been closed since 1987. Today, a four-star hotel and a historic restoration has made it a place to visit. An interesting story told was that during World War II, the skylights in the lobby were painted black to not attract enemy bombers. During the restoration, the uncovering of the skylights was found to be stained glass.

The Spokane Falls, the bridge to the Canada island celebrating history with totem poles, is an impressive site. The falls spill on average 2,250 gallons of water per second. The site has a small water powered generating house that can supply electricity to 360 homes. The Monroe Street Dam was built in 1889. The electricity generated there is about 10 percent of the electricity from all Spokane River dams. Restoration of the park and dams site is an on-going process.







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