

Spokane, Washington



The area where the Spokane River flows east from Lake Coeur d'Alene into the Columbia River in the west, is the ancestral and current home of the Spokane people, the Pend d'Oreille people, and the Ktunaxa people. Since the arrival of white people to this high-desert intermountain area (between the Cascades to the East and the Rocky Mountains to the west) in 1810, and since the completion of the Northern Pacific Railway in 1881, the local economy mainly consisted of mining, timber, and agriculture industries until the 1980s.

Currently, Spokane is the largest city latitudinally (217,000 in 2017) between Seattle and Minneapolis. It is the home of the Jesuits; Gonzaga University and a major locus of Northwest Jesuits since Pieree-Jean De Smet, SJ founded his nearby northern Idaho missions in 1843. JVs have served in a variety of roles in Spokane since 1970.

Despite the wealth of the South Hill neighborhood, Gonzaga, and other schools in Spokane, homelessness and poverty are key issues in Spokane. The federal poverty rate in Spokane County is approximately 15%, and Spokane has a large number of people who are struggling with low wages and an extremely tight housing market (rental vacancy rate is less than 1%). One in eight people and one out of five children in the Inland Northwest are at risk of hunger, according to Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap, an annual analysis of food insecurity trends nationwide.

Joys of being a JV in Spokane

Known as "The Lilac City", Spokane espouses a slogan of "Near Nature, Near Perfect." Outdoor recreation is abundant inside and outside city limits, and JVs enjoy a strong local support network. Spokane has at least a couple claims to fame, as it is home to the largest, timed, 12K road race in the world, known as Bloomsday, during which more than 40,000 people walk and run this 7.5 miles. Additionally, Hoopfest, the largest 3-on-3 street basketball tournament, happens each June. The Centennial Trail (which conveniently passes by the JV houses) provides a scenic path for biking, walking, and running. JVs often search the weekly Inlander Newspaper for free and affordable activities, festivals, speakers, shows, concerts, and events.

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