



Why did we move to Spokane? by CJ Cherryh

Why did we move to Spokane? A convention asked me.

We were house-hunting, wanting to move someplace with four distinct seasons and a chance to be outdoors in all of them---and, well, I had a short list, and Spokane had never figured on it.

But we came in as guests of the convention. All I knew about Spokane was that it was in Washington, and that it had hills.

The convention was 4th of July weekend. The hotel was the Doubletree, heart of downtown, overlooking Riverfront Park, which has a whitewater river, a waterfall, hiking trails that connect to city streets, and a great big lawn where the whole city gathers to watch fireworks, which go off on the island, and to eat from the food booths that blossom whenever there's a citywide event.

The fireworks went off right outside the Doubletree windows. It's a wonder the hotel didn't tilt; the whole convention packed the upstairs windows as the fireworks started going off. By then, as guests of the convention, we'd dug fossils up at Republic, toured hither and yon across the region---we'd seen eagles, we'd seen mountains, forests, columnar basalts, and waterfalls and rivers, and heard about the ice age floods that shaped the area---we heard about the mountain climbing, the skiing, the skating, the kayaking, the other things that people do here. You certainly do know you're in the Pacific Northwest. Outdoor stores do a brisk business, and cars with kayaks are a frequent sight.

What hadn't we seen? Oh, the whole rest of the year! We hadn't seen the flowers break out in spring in amazing variety, and the all-city Bloomsday Race, which has everything from Kenyan athletes to people pushing babies in prams; or Pig Out in the Park (remember those food carts?) or Ballet and Bubbly or the outdoor ice skating where the amusement rides are in summer...and we hadn't seen the season when skis replace kayaks on the car-tops.

We just knew we'd had a great time, and we weren't stressed out at all. It's a modest sized city that once hosted a world's fair and utterly transformed itself in the process. A walkable city...remember that park with the waterfall? All those paths? You don't need a taxi to get places; you just cross the park, go over one of the bridges in a tranquil green space, probably with a view of the falls, and you've gone from hotel to convention center to the arena to the downtown or a set of fine restaurants without breaking a sweat. It's the biggest 'little' city in the west.

So there we were were packing to leave, admiring the view from the windows, saying what a great time we'd had, and turned to each other with a simultaneous, "Y'know..."

"Here?" we said to each other.

Then: "Why not?" And a happy feeling that we'd just answered the Big Question right there.

By the next year, we were back to stay.