

Summer walks and berries, tent cabins and rolling hills: MaryJanesFarm is a respite from the daily grind.

Fun on the farm

For a dose of nature, a couple of ardent urbanites head for the golden hills of Idaho

BY JONATHAN KIEFER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROB BRODMAN

WE TAKE TURNS looking like idiots, wheeling our suitcase up the rutted pine tree-shrouded path. Graciously, MaryJane doesn't watch. "Mice are moving in this time of year," she says. "Rascals." Presumably she's referring to actual rodents, not this pair of stressed-out city dwellers who've joined her for some R&R and a weekend's worth of farm life in the hills outside Moscow, Idaho

The path isn't steep by the standards of

our San Francisco streets, yet our breath, like our dignity, somehow escapes us. Winded, we follow, past the tree-swing and the outhouse and through the thickening brush, up to the uppermost of MaryJane's five fanciful, shabby-chic "wall tents." I can already smell the lack of Wi-Fi in the air. And, oh yes, the freshness.

MaryJane is MaryJane Butters, and MaryJanesFarm is the base of operations from which she and husband Nick Ogle

cultivate organic produce and a lifestyle thereof. Not to mention build brand awareness—and with a magazine, online store, blogs, and books, they are indeed a brand—via short, back-to-nature stays for would-be (or even not-a-chance) farmhands. Words that have been used to describe this experience include "agritourism" and "glamping." For my girlfriend and me, it's more like "bluffing it."

Our tent contains suggestions of real

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Northwest Escape



Husking corn on the front porch at MaryJane's Farm, 1801 N. Downtown Moscow, ID.



rusticity, but also several doilies. Just outside, there's a cast-iron bathtub with two camp stoves underneath it. In August, Idaho evenings bring a mellow chill; if we light those stoves before dinner, the bath will be warm by nightfall.

A little bit country

"It's the concept of wilderness," MaryJane later explains over our fireside feast under a canopy of plum trees. "You just want to know it's there." She understands the occasional-glamper's motives.

This must partly explain why, not long after dropping off the darn suitcase and admiring the hills that seem to roll on forever, the only thing we know to do with ourselves is head into the redbrick comfort zone of Moscow's downtown. At Coeur d'Alene Brewing Company, we sample ales. The roundly satisfying Centennial Pale wins out over the popular but too-fruity Huckleberry; six come back with us to the tent, and the welcoming—and now warm—tub for two.

After waking the following morning to complete stillness, we're back for the lively farmers' market in Moscow's Friendship Square, where the Hog Heaven Big Band carries out a breezy set of standards. Hogs' Heaven, it's said, was the first suggested name for this town, from the era when settlers' pigs spent their days rooting rapturously among endless fields

of camass flower bulbs.

MaryJane has no hogs, but she has four milk cows, whose unblinking eyes I feel on me throughout our stay, and free-range chickens, whose freedom of range makes us nervous.

"They're my favorite farm animal," MaryJane says. "They're aloof, they don't need you emotionally, and I like that." She doesn't wash the eggs when harvesting, she explains, because the thin coat of mucus they come out with serves as a natural preservative. With that in mind, I stop at the six I've collected—and head for one of several well-situated hammocks. This farm life isn't so bad.

Later in the day, I meet Matthew, a young boy visiting with his mom from nearby Washington. He has spotted me doing spazzy dance moves on MaryJane's outdoor trampoline, and he wants in. My girlfriend joins us, and eventually we all get dizzy and breathless, then adjourn to the upper garden to throw strawberries at one another and eat them. Then Matthew's mom comes to collect him, we say our goodbyes, and they drive away.

With luck he won't grow up and go too many years without doing spazzy trampoline dance moves or contemplating chicken-womb mucus or taking baths under the blue sky or tossing farm-fresh berries at gradually relaxing strangers, city mice though they may be.



48 hours in Moscow, Idaho

GETTING THERE

From Spokane, drive south on U.S. 195 76 miles to Pullman, then 7 miles east on State 270 to the Idaho border, where the road becomes State 8, then 2 more miles into downtown Moscow (www.moscowchamber.com).

To get to MaryJanesFarm from Moscow, continue east on State 8 a mile past the cemetery, turn right on Lenville Rd., continue for 1½ miles, bear right on Blaine Rd., crest Paradise Ridge, and turn right again on Wild Iris Lane. From \$139, including breakfast; two-night minimum stay; reservations required; www.maryjanesfarm.org

FRIDAY After check-in, head into downtown Moscow for an urban fix: burgers and beers from the **Coeur d'Alene Brewing Company at the Alehouse** (6; 226 W. Sixth St.; 208/882-2739), and an arty movie at the **Kenworthy Performing Arts Centre** (6; 508 S. Main St.; kenworthy.org).

SATURDAY This is the day for the **Moscow Farmers Market** (8–noon May–Oct, live music 9:30–11:30; Friendship Square, Fourth and Main Streets). And this is the month for Moscow's vine-ripened tomatoes. (MaryJane should have you covered for berries and plums.) Peruse eco-friendly housewares at the **Natural Abode** (closed Sun; 517 S. Main; 800/863-1078). Maybe a suitcase-size solar oven (\$145) for roasting those tomatoes?

SUNDAY Browse for literary treasures among the **BookPeople of Moscow** (521 S. Main; 208/882-7957). Stock up on healthy car- and plane-ready snacks at the **Moscow Food Co-op** (121 E. Fifth St.; 208/882-8537).

Even if you leave without fish,
THE MEMORIES ARE KEEPERS.



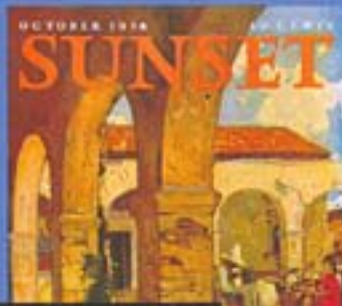
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