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via

The West's Best Waterfalls ²⁸

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Shoshone Falls in
Twin Falls, Idaho

The West's Best *Waterfalls*

The air is warming, the snow is melting, and cascades from Washington to Arizona are at their peak.

TRICKLES OR TORRENTS, sheer plunges or rocky chutes, mountain cataracts or desert gushers, waterfalls draw us into their multisensory spectacle. We delight in the sight and sound of their tumbling waters, inhale their freshness, even feel their tingling spray on our faces. They can soothe us and, some say, improve our mood by bathing us in negative ions. For naturalist John Muir, their song helped him “get as near the heart of the world” as he could.

What makes a waterfall noteworthy? Height, width, and volume all count, says expert Bryan Swan of the World Waterfall Database and Northwest Waterfall Survey. Based on his criteria and other factors—such as ease of visiting and the thoroughly unscientific observation that they’re darn pretty—here are six must-see falls in the West.

By Christopher Hall

▼ **Snoqualmie Falls** Snoqualmie, Washington

They say power seduces, and that is certainly the case with Snoqualmie Falls. Situated a short drive off I-90, about 25 miles east of Seattle, this stunner—one of North America's most powerful waterfalls by volume and height—squeezes the Snoqualmie River through an andesite chute and then dives 268 feet. Its might has drawn the attention of hydro engineers since at least 1899, when they first tapped it and reduced its flow. Managed by Puget Sound Energy, the waterfall is still impressive from both the upper and lower viewing platforms, especially when it swells with rain or snowmelt. "We're sitting on solid rock here," says Alan Stephens, general manager of the Salish Lodge & Spa, which overlooks the rim. "But on big flow days we can even feel the rumble indoors."

