Winthrop

Old railroad town turned into a classic Western village, a tourist attraction.
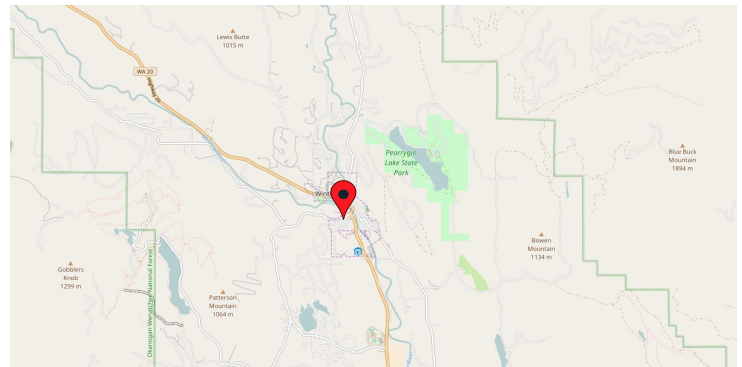

In 1883 the lure of gold brought the first white settlers, including Guy Waring, to Okagonan county, where they encountered the first people who were living there. Waring stopped in the area of Methow and became the acclaimed founding father, but the city, which was founded on March 12, 1924, was named after Yale graduate and gifted author, Theodore Winthrop.

Waring's original Duck Brand Saloon was built in 1891. Fortunately it survived the town fire of 1893 and later became Winthrop's town hall. Also, Winthrop is the home to the oldest legal saloon in Washington State, the "Three Fingered Jack's Saloon".

While spending his honeymoon in Winthrop, Waring's Harvard roommate Owen Wister wrote the first western novel: "The Virginian". The opening of highway 20 in 1972 forced the business people to plan for a lot of visitors passing through the town. It was decided that Winthrop should be western themed, due to inspiration from Leavenworth, WA.

Now it is not only a tourist attraction, but also a good place for the locals to go biking or hiking.

Category: tourist town
Location: 48.4779° N   120.1862° W
Elevation: 539m
Opening times: 24/7
Distance to Wenatchee: 118km

I went there on a chilly saturday with my host family. I expected it to be a wholly traditional western village, without cars and with buildings that look like the ones that can be seen in movies. When we drove into Winthrop, at first I was stunned. It was nothing like I expected it to be. As I looked around me I saw a regular village with many cars buzzing and street signs standing at the corners. A wave of disappointment flushed through me, as the only resemblance to "western" were some buildings, who were wooden and looked a bit like the things you would see in the "Westworld". One of the only houses I was content with was the town Hall/Information center. It looked really great with it's wooden structure and the figure in front of it. For example, there was a map of cross country skiing tracks for the winter and good biking routes for the summer. Those two activities are the most popular in Winthrop, as can be seen if one looks at the number of bike/ski stores there. After wandering a bit around town, I realized it was actually better than I thought it would be to explore Winthrop. My favourite building was the bookstore, because the atmosphere in there was beautiful. I would describe my experience as enjoyable, but not fasccinatingly amazing.

In short: During the 3 hours I spent there, it became clear, that one doesn't go to Winthrop to enjoy the "western way" , but to be in awe of it's surroundings and what could be done for fun there. I am not a particular fan of the town, but then again, other people have other tastes and interests. The two hour drive to Winthrop is, in my opinion, not worth it, but I recommend Methow and the North Cascades.

! My tipp:
I would definetly just wander around the town and pay attention to detail!
There are some pretty things that are hidden at the first glance.