

The Road Trip Report

Seattle, Washington

28 August 2026

*Lost
in art*



Seattle sea turtles

A visitor to Chihuly Garden and Glass studies a sculpture by local artist Dale Chihuly, who was inspired by life in Puget Sound.

Lost in art

MORE INFORMATION — Click on the underlined words.

The car break-in I wrote about in the previous newsletter took more from us than passports, prescriptions and spectacles. We lost two days of family time and missed a visit to Mount Rainier National Park getting things straightened out.

We resumed the fun part on a Friday afternoon when the passports were handed to us beneath the bulletproof glass. This newsletter is devoted to just one of our Seattle sights — Chihuly Garden and Glass — because the place deserves it.

Dale Chihuly is an 85-year-old Tacoma-born artist for whom the museum is named. His works of blown glass — and some of his drawings — fill both the building and its acre-and-a-half garden at the base of the landmark Space Needle built for the 1962 Seattle World's Fair.

He is the artistic powerhouse of the Pacific Northwest, described by former *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* art critic Regina Hackett as "the most inventive glass sculptor in the history of the medium." When you consider that's a history that includes Venetian glass blowers who created glass to help illuminate the bath houses of the Roman Empire, it's quite the statement. The Italian city of canals and gondoliers is still famous for glass blowing on the island of Murano.

But since Chihuly — who once studied at Murano and later created some of his works there — hit the art scene in the 1970s, the Seattle area has surpassed that island for the number of glass blowers who work there.

Speaking about what drew him to the medium of glass in the recorded narration on his Seattle museum's website about a collection of his Northwest-inspired pieces, he said it came down to the furnace and fire. "That was really the breakthrough series for me, to begin to form glass with fire, with gravity, with heat, with centrifugal force."

One of the most important lessons he learned in Venice was the team approach to blowing glass in which other glass blowers work under the direction of the lead artist to create and assemble huge pieces that dwarf the people who see them. His teams executed works he envisioned and directed for public displays in Venice and for major museums and landmarks around the world.

Without the team approach, glass would have ended his career in London in 1976. He was involved in a head-on traffic collision in which he went through the windshield, blinding his left eye. A bodysurfing accident three years later injured his shoulder, ending his own ability to blow glass.

Hackett wrote that he became "more choreographer than dancer, more supervisor than participant, more director than actor." When Chihuly was asked about the impact of the accidents, he said: "'Once I stepped back, I liked the view."



Sealife tower

All kinds of glass marine life from fish to mollusks swim in this column of glass water.

Glass “stone”

A glass rock in a natural garden reflects the Space Needle.





Mom's inspiration

Chihuly credits time in his mother's garden with inspiring many of his works.



Hey, little guy

A tiny octopus perches on coral, inspired
by Chihuly's living near Puget Sound.



Persian ceiling

Chihuly said he was trying to make something people had never seen before. "You walk under there and all of a sudden, you have to start wondering what you're looking at."



The looming tower
Seattle's symbol over its artist's garden.