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Seattle

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This article is about the city. For other uses, see Seattle (disambiguation).

Seattle (🔊[i]/siˈætl/) is a West Coast seaport city and the seat of King County. With an estimated 684,451 residents as of 2015,[2] Seattle is the largest city in both the state of Washington and the Pacific Northwest region of North America. In July 2013 it was the fastest-growing major city in the United States,[6] and remained in the top five in May 2015 with an annual growth rate of 2.1%.[7] The Seattle metropolitan area of around

Seattle, Washington		
City		

Downtown Seattle from Queen Anne Hill

Flag of Seattle, Washington	Official seal of Seattle, Washington
Flag	**Seal**

Etymology: Chief Si'ahl
Nickname(s): The Emerald City / The Jet City / Rain City
Motto: The City of Flowers / The City of Goodwill
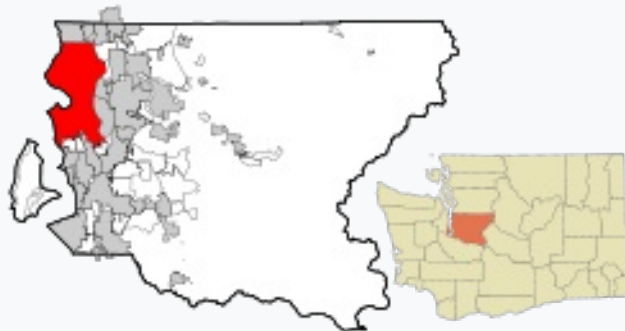
Location of Seattle in King County and Washington

3.7 million inhabitants is the [15th largest metropolitan area](#) in the United States.[8] The city is situated on an [isthmus](#) between [Puget Sound](#) (an inlet of the [Pacific Ocean](#)) and [Lake Washington](#), about 100 miles (160 km) south of the [Canada–United States border](#). A major gateway for trade with Asia, Seattle is the third largest port in North America in terms of container handling as of 2015.[9]

The Seattle area was previously inhabited by [Native Americans](#) for at least 4,000 years before the first permanent European settlers.[10] [Arthur A. Denny](#) and his group of travelers, subsequently known as the [Denny Party](#),

Location in the United States

Coordinates: [47°36 35 N 122°19 59 W](#)

Country	United States
State	[Washington](#)
County	[King](#)
Incorporated	December 2, 1869
Government	
• Type	[Mayor–Council](#)
• Body	[Seattle City Council](#)
• [Mayor](#)	[Ed Murray](#)
• [Deputy mayor](#)	Hyeok Kim and Kate Joncas
Area	
• [City](#)	[142.5 sq mi](#) (369.2 km^2)
• Land	83.87 sq mi (217.2 km^2)
• Water	58.67 sq mi (152.0 km^2)
• Metro	8,186 sq mi (21,202 km^2)
Highest elevation	520 ft (158 m)
Lowest elevation	0 ft (0 m)
Population ([2010](#))[1]	
• [City](#)	608,660
• **Estimate** (2015)[2]	684,451
• **Rank**	US: [18th](#)
• **Density**	7,969/sq mi (3,077/km^2)
• [Urban](#)	3,059,393 (US: [14th](#))
• [Metro](#)	3,733,580 (US: [15th](#))
• [CSA](#)	4,459,677 (US: [13th](#))
Demonym(s)	Seattleite
Time zone	[PST](#) (UTC-8)
• **Summer** ([DST](#))	[PDT](#) (UTC-7)
ZIP codes	**ZIP codes**[3][4] 98101–98119, 98121–98122, 98124–98127, 98129, 98131, 98133–98134, 98136, 98138–98139, 98141, 98144–98146, 98148, 98154–98155, 98158,

	98160–98161, 98164–98166, 98168, 98170, 98174–98175, 98177–98178, 98181, 98185, 98188, 98190–98191, 98194–98195, 98198–98199
Area codes	206
FIPS code	53-63000
GNIS feature ID	1512650[5]
Website	www.seattle.gov

arrived from Illinois via Portland, Oregon on the schooner *Exact* at Alki Point on November 13, 1851.[11] The settlement was moved to the eastern shore of Elliott Bay and named "Seattle" in 1852, after Chief Si'ahl of the local Duwamish and Suquamish tribes.

Logging was Seattle's first major industry, but by the late 19th century the city had become a commercial and shipbuilding center as a gateway to Alaska during the Klondike Gold Rush. By 1910, Seattle was one of the 25 largest cities in the country.[12] However, the Great Depression severely damaged the city's economy. Growth returned during and after World War II, due partially to the local Boeing company, which established Seattle as a center for aircraft manufacturing. The Seattle area developed as a technology center beginning in the 1980s, with companies like Microsoft becoming established in the region. In 1994, the Internet retail giant Amazon was founded in Seattle. The stream of new software, biotechnology, and Internet companies led to an economic revival, which increased the city's population by almost 50,000 between 1990 and 2000.

Seattle has a noteworthy musical history. From 1918 to 1951, nearly two dozen jazz nightclubs existed along Jackson Street, from the current Chinatown/International District, to the Central District. The jazz scene developed the early careers of Ray Charles, Quincy Jones, Ernestine Anderson and others. Seattle is also the birthplace of rock musician Jimi Hendrix and the alternative rock style grunge.[13]

Contents

History

Main articles: History of Seattle and Timeline of Seattle

Founding

Archaeological excavations suggest that Native Americans have inhabited the Seattle area for at least 4,000 years.[10] By the time the first European settlers arrived, the people (subsequently called the Duwamish tribe) occupied at least seventeen villages in the areas around Elliott Bay.[14][15][16]

The first European to visit the Seattle area was George Vancouver, in May 1792 during his 1791–95 expedition to chart the Pacific Northwest.[17]

The Battle of Seattle (1856)

In 1851, a large party led by Luther Collins made a location on land at the mouth of the Duwamish River; they formally claimed it on September 14, 1851.[18] Thirteen days later, members of the Collins Party on the way to their claim passed three scouts of the Denny Party.[19] Members of the Denny Party claimed land on Alki Point on September 28, 1851.[20] The rest of the Denny Party set sail from Portland, Oregon and landed on Alki point during a rainstorm on November 13, 1851.[20]

Duwamps 1852–1853

After a difficult winter, most of the Denny Party relocated across Elliott Bay and claimed land a second time at the site of present-day Pioneer Square,[20] naming this new settlement *Duwamps*. Charles Terry and John Low remained at the original landing location and reestablished their old land claim and called it "New York", but renamed "New York Alki" in April 1853, from a Chinook word meaning, roughly, "by and by" or "someday".[21] For the next few years, New York Alki and Duwamps competed for dominance, but in time Alki was abandoned and its residents moved across the bay to join the rest of the settlers.[22]

David Swinson "Doc" Maynard, one of the founders of Duwamps, was the primary advocate to name the settlement after Chief Sealth ("Seattle") of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes.[23][24][25]

Incorporations

The name "Seattle" appears on official Washington Territory papers dated May 23, 1853, when the first plats for the village were filed. In 1855, nominal land settlements were established. On January 14, 1865, the Legislature of Territorial Washington incorporated the Town of Seattle with a board of trustees managing the city. The town of Seattle was disincorporated January 18, 1867 and remained a mere precinct of King County until late 1869, when a new petition was filed and the city was re-incorporated December 2, 1869 with a Mayor-council government.[20][26] The corporate seal of the City of Seattle carries the date "1869" and a likeness of Chief Sealth in left profile.[27]

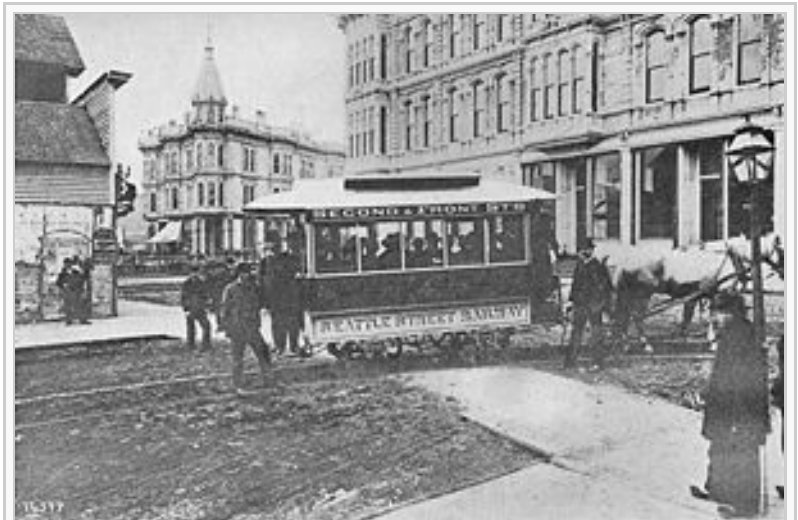## Timber town

Seattle's first streetcar, at the corner of Occidental and Yesler, 1884. All of the buildings visible in this picture were destroyed by fire five years later.

Seattle has a history of boom-and-bust cycles, like many other cities near areas of extensive natural and mineral resources. Seattle has risen several times economically, then gone into precipitous decline, but it has typically used those periods to rebuild solid infrastructure.[28]

The first such boom, covering the early years of the city, rode on the lumber industry. (During this period the road now known as Yesler Way won the nickname "Skid Road", supposedly after the timber skidding down the hill to Henry Yesler's sawmill. The later dereliction of the area may be a possible origin for the term which later entered the wider American lexicon as *Skid Row*.)[29] Like much of the American West, Seattle saw numerous conflicts between labor and management, as well as ethnic tensions that culminated in the anti-Chinese riots of 1885–1886.[30] This violence

originated with unemployed whites who were determined to drive the Chinese from Seattle (anti-Chinese riots also occurred in Tacoma). In 1900, Asians were 4.2% of the population.[31] Authorities declared martial law and federal troops arrived to put down the disorder.

Seattle achieved sufficient economic success that when the Great Seattle Fire of 1889 destroyed the central business district, a far grander city-center rapidly emerged in its place.[32] Finance company Washington Mutual, for example, was founded in the immediate wake of the fire.[33] However, the Panic of 1893 hit Seattle hard.[34]

Gold Rush, World War I, and the Great Depression

The second and most dramatic boom and bust resulted from the Klondike Gold Rush, which ended the depression that had begun with the Panic of 1893; in a short time,

The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition had just over 3.7 million visitors during its 138-day run[35]

Seattle became a major transportation center. On July 14, 1897, the *S.S. Portland* docked with its famed "ton of gold", and Seattle became the main transport and supply point for the miners in Alaska and the Yukon. Few of those working men found lasting wealth, however; it was Seattle's business of clothing the miners and feeding them salmon that panned out in the long run. Along with Seattle, other cities like Everett, Tacoma, Port Townsend, Bremerton, and Olympia, all in the Puget Sound region, became competitors for exchange, rather than mother lodes for extraction, of precious metals.[36] The boom lasted well into the early part of the 20th century and funded many new Seattle companies and

products. In 1907, 19-year-old James E. Casey borrowed $100 from a friend and founded the American Messenger Company (later UPS). Other Seattle companies founded during this period include Nordstrom and Eddie Bauer.[33] Seattle brought in the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm to design a system of parks and boulevards.[37]

Pioneer Square in 1917 featuring the Smith Tower, the Seattle Hotel and to the left the Pioneer Building

The Gold Rush era culminated in the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909, which is largely responsible for the layout of today's University of Washington campus.[38]

A shipbuilding boom in the early part of the 20th century became massive during World War I, making Seattle somewhat of a company town; the subsequent retrenchment led to the Seattle General Strike of 1919, the first general strike in the country.[39] A 1912 city development plan by Virgil Bogue went largely unused. Seattle was mildly prosperous in the 1920s but was particularly hard hit in the Great Depression, experiencing some of the country's harshest labor strife in that era. Violence during the Maritime Strike of 1934 cost Seattle much of its maritime traffic, which was rerouted to the Port of Los Angeles.[40]

Seattle was also the home base of impresario Alexander Pantages who, starting in 1902, opened a number of theaters in the city exhibiting vaudeville acts and silent movies. His activities soon expanded, and the thrifty Greek went on and became one of America's greatest theater and movie tycoons. Between Pantages and his rival John Considine, Seattle was for a while the western United States' vaudeville mecca. B. Marcus Priteca, the Scottish-born and Seattle-based architect, built several theaters for Pantages, including some in Seattle. The theaters he built for

Pantages in Seattle have been either demolished or converted to other uses, but many other theaters survive in other cities of the U.S., often retaining the *Pantages* name; Seattle's surviving Paramount Theatre, on which he collaborated, was not a Pantages theater.

Post-war years: aircraft and software

War work again brought local prosperity during World War II, this time centered on Boeing aircraft. The war dispersed the city's numerous Japanese-American businessmen due to the Japanese American internment. After the war, the local economy dipped. It rose again with Boeing's growing dominance in the commercial airliner market.[41] Seattle celebrated its restored

Building the Seattle Center Monorail, 1961. Looking north up Fifth Avenue from Virginia Street.

prosperity and made a bid for world recognition with the Century 21 Exposition, the 1962 World's Fair.[42] Another major local economic downturn was in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at a time when Boeing was heavily affected by the oil crises, loss of Government contracts, and costs and delays associated with the Boeing 747. Many people left the area to look for work elsewhere, and two local real estate agents put up a billboard reading "Will the last person leaving Seattle – Turn out the lights."[43]

Seattle remained the corporate headquarters of Boeing until 2001, when the company separated its headquarters from its major production facilities; the headquarters were moved to Chicago.[44] The Seattle area is still home to Boeing's Renton narrow-body plant (where the 707, 720, 727, and 757 were assembled, and the 737 is assembled today) and Everett wide-body plant (assembly plant for the 747, 767, 777, and 787). The company's credit union

for employees, BECU, remains based in the Seattle area, though it is now open to all residents of Washington.

As prosperity began to return in the 1980s, the city was stunned by the Wah Mee massacre in 1983, when 13 people were killed in an illegal gambling club in the International District, Seattle's Chinatown.[45] Beginning with Microsoft's 1979 move from Albuquerque, New Mexico to nearby Bellevue, Washington,[46] Seattle and its suburbs became home to a number of technology companies including Amazon.com, RealNetworks, Nintendo of America, McCaw Cellular (now part of AT&T Mobility), VoiceStream (now T-Mobile), and biomedical corporations such as HeartStream (later purchased by Philips), Heart Technologies (later purchased by Boston Scientific), Physio-Control (later purchased by Medtronic), ZymoGenetics, ICOS (later purchased by Eli Lilly and Company) and Immunex (later purchased by Amgen). This success brought an influx of new residents with a population increase within city limits of almost 50,000 between 1990 and 2000,[47] and saw Seattle's real estate become some of the most expensive in the country.[48] In 1993, the movie Sleepless in Seattle brought the city further national attention.[49] Many of the Seattle area's tech companies remained relatively strong, but the frenzied dot-com boom years ended in early 2001.[50][51]

Seattle in this period attracted widespread attention as home to these many companies, but also by hosting the 1990 Goodwill Games[52] and the APEC leaders conference in 1993, as well as through the worldwide popularity of grunge, a sound that had developed in Seattle's independent music scene.[53] Another bid for worldwide attention—hosting the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference of 1999—garnered visibility, but not in the way its sponsors desired, as related protest activity and police reactions to those protests overshadowed the conference itself.[54] The city was further shaken by the Mardi Gras Riots in 2001, and then literally shaken the following day by the Nisqually earthquake.[55]

Yet another boom began as the city emerged from the Great Recession. Amazon.com moved its headquarters from North Beacon Hill to South Lake Union and began a rapid expansion. For the five years beginning in 2010, Seattle gained an average of 14,511

residents per year, with the growth strongly skewed toward the center of the city,[56] as unemployment dropped from roughly 9 percent to 3.6 percent.[57] The city has found itself "bursting at the seams," with over 45,000 households spending more than half their income on housing and at least 2,800 people homeless, and with the country's sixth-worst rush hour traffic.[57]

Geography

With a land area of 83.9 square miles,[58] Seattle is the northernmost city with at least 500,000 people in the United States, farther north than Canadian cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, at about the same latitude as Salzburg, Austria.

The topography of Seattle is hilly. The city lies on several hills, including Capitol Hill, First Hill, West Seattle, Beacon Hill, Magnolia, Denny Hill, and Queen Anne. The Kitsap and the Olympic peninsulas along with the Olympic mountains lie to the west of Puget Sound, while the Cascade Range and Lake Sammamish lie to the east of Lake Washington. The city has over 5,540 acres (2,242 ha) of parkland.

Cityscape

Further information: List of tallest buildings in Seattle

Seattle Skyline view from Queen Anne Hill. The Space Needle is visible on the left, the mountain in the background is Mount Rainier, on the right is Elliott Bay and the Port of Seattle on Puget Sound.

Panorama of Seattle as seen from the Space Needle: a nearly 360-degree view that includes (from left) Puget Sound, Magnolia, Queen Anne Hill, Lake Union, Capitol Hill, downtown Seattle, Elliott Bay, and West Seattle.

Topography

See also: List of Seattle parks, Bodies of water of Seattle and Regrading in Seattle

Seattle is located between the saltwater Puget Sound (an arm of the Pacific Ocean) to the west and Lake Washington to the east. The city's chief harbor, Elliott Bay, is part of Puget Sound, which

Downtown Seattle is bounded by Elliott Bay (lower left), Broadway (from upper left to lower right), South Dearborn Street (lower right), and Denny Way (upper left, obscured by clouds).

makes the city an oceanic port. To the west, beyond Puget Sound, are the Kitsap Peninsula and Olympic Mountains on the Olympic Peninsula; to the east, beyond Lake Washington and the eastside suburbs, are Lake Sammamish and the Cascade Range. Lake Washington's waters flow to Puget Sound through the Lake

Washington Ship Canal (consisting of two man-made canals, Lake Union, and the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks at Salmon Bay, ending in Shilshole Bay on Puget Sound).

The sea, rivers, forests, lakes, and fields surrounding Seattle were once rich enough to support one of the world's few sedentary hunter-gatherer societies. The surrounding area lends itself well to sailing, skiing, bicycling, camping, and hiking year-round.[59][60]

The city itself is hilly, though not uniformly so.[61] Like Rome, the city is said to lie on seven hills;[62] the lists vary, but typically include Capitol Hill, First Hill, West Seattle, Beacon Hill, Queen Anne, Magnolia, and the former Denny Hill. The Wallingford, Mount Baker, and Crown Hill neighborhoods are technically located on hills as well. Many of the hilliest areas are near the city center, with Capitol Hill, First Hill, and Beacon Hill collectively constituting something of a ridge along an isthmus between Elliott Bay and Lake Washington.[63] The break in the ridge between First Hill and Beacon Hill is man-made, the result of two of the many regrading projects that reshaped the topography of the city center.[64] The topography of the city center was also changed by the construction of a seawall and the artificial Harbor Island (completed 1909) at the mouth of the city's industrial Duwamish Waterway, the terminus of the Green River. The highest point within city limits is at High Point in West Seattle, which is roughly located near 35th Ave SW and SW Myrtle St. Other notable hills include Crown Hill, View Ridge/Wedgwood/Bryant, Maple Leaf, Phinney Ridge, Mt. Baker Ridge and Highlands/Carkeek/Bitterlake.

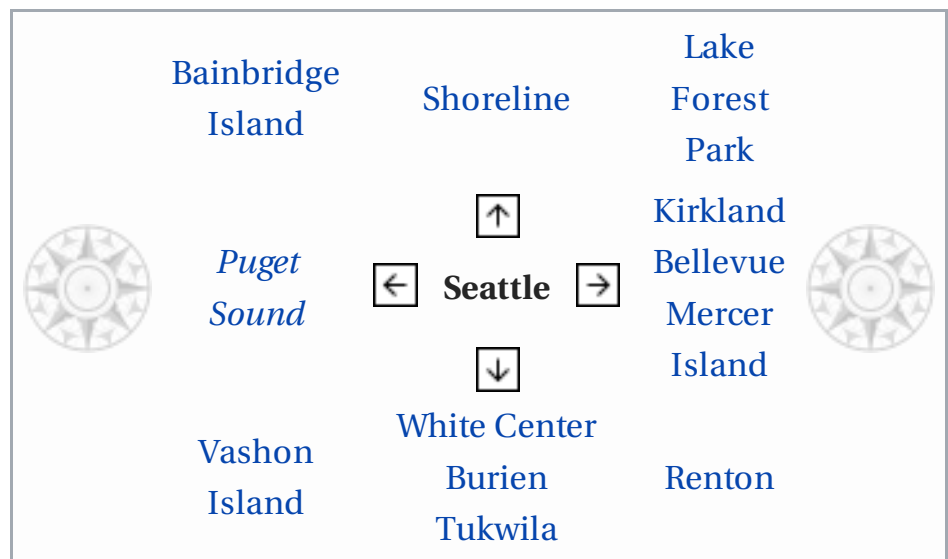Boats gather on Lake Union in preparation for the July 4 fireworks show.

North of the city center, Lake Washington Ship Canal connects Puget Sound to Lake Washington. It incorporates four natural

bodies of water: Lake Union, Salmon Bay, Portage Bay and Union Bay.

Due to its location in the Pacific Ring of Fire, Seattle is in a major earthquake zone. On February 28, 2001, the magnitude 6.8 Nisqually earthquake did significant architectural damage, especially in the Pioneer Square area (built on reclaimed land, as are the Industrial District and part of the city center), but caused only one fatality.[65] Other strong quakes occurred on January 26, 1700 (estimated at 9 magnitude), December 14, 1872 (7.3 or 7.4),[66] April 13, 1949 (7.1),[67] and April 29, 1965 (6.5).[68] The 1965 quake caused three deaths in Seattle directly, and one more by heart failure.[68] Although the Seattle Fault passes just south of the city center, neither it[69] nor the Cascadia subduction zone has caused an earthquake since the city's founding. The Cascadia subduction zone poses the threat of an earthquake of magnitude 9.0 or greater, capable of seriously damaging the city and collapsing many buildings, especially in zones built on fill.[70]

According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 142.5 square miles (369 km^2),[71] 83.9 square miles (217 km^2) of which is land and 58.7 square miles (152 km^2) water (41.16% of the total area).

Surrounding municipalities

	Bainbridge Island	Shoreline	Lake Forest Park
	Puget Sound	↑ Seattle →	Kirkland Bellevue Mercer Island
	←	↓	→
	Vashon Island	White Center Burien Tukwila	Renton

Climate

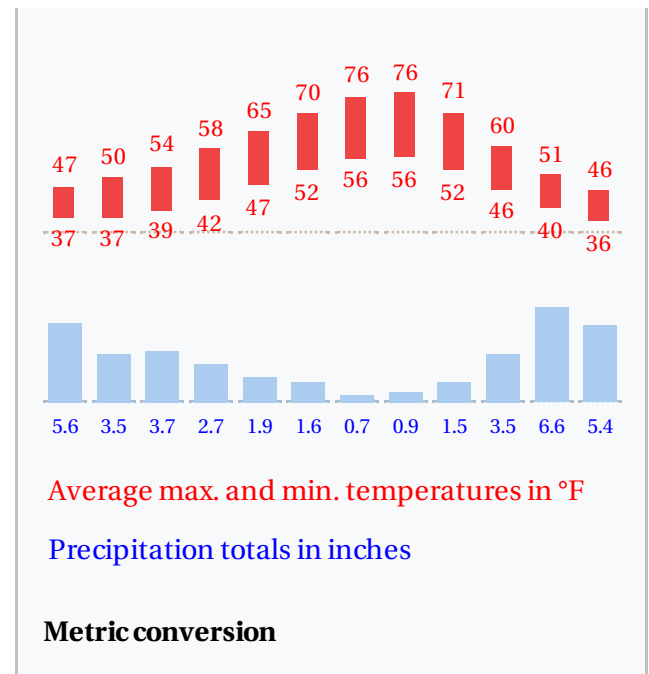Seattle's climate is classified as oceanic or temperate marine, with

Seattle

Climate chart (explanation)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

cool, wet winters and warm, relatively dry summers. Like much of the Pacific Northwest, according to the Köppen climate classification it has a warm-summer Mediterranean climate (*Csb*).[73] Other climate classification systems, such as Trewartha, place it in the Oceanic zone (*Do*), like much of Western Europe.[74] The city and environs are part of USDA hardiness zone 8b, with isolated coastal pockets falling under 9a.[75]

Downtown Seattle averages 71 completely sunny days a year, with most of those days occurring between May and September[72]

Hot temperature extremes are enhanced by dry, compressed wind from the west slopes of the Cascades,[76] while cold temperatures are generated mainly from the Fraser Valley in British Columbia.[77]

Temperature extremes are moderated by the adjacent Puget Sound, greater Pacific Ocean, and Lake Washington. The region is largely shielded from Pacific storms by the Olympic Mountains and from Arctic air by the Cascade Range. Despite being on the margin of the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, the city has a reputation for frequent rain.[78] This reputation stems from the frequency of light precipitation in the fall, winter, and spring. In an average year, at least 0.01 inches (0.25 mm) of precipitation falls on 150 days, more than nearly all U.S. cities east of the Rocky Mountains.[79] It is cloudy 201 days out of the year and partly cloudy 93 days.[72] Official weather and climatic data is collected at Seattle–Tacoma International Airport, located about 19 km (12 mi)

south of downtown in the city of SeaTac, which is at a higher elevation, and records more cloudy days and fewer partly cloudy days per year.[72]

From 1981 to 2010, the average annual precipitation measured at Seattle–Tacoma International Airport was 37.49 inches (952 mm). Annual precipitation has ranged from 23.78 in (604 mm) in 1952 to 55.14 in (1,401 mm) in 1950; for water year (October 1 – September 30) precipitation, the range is 23.16 in (588 mm) in 1976–77 to 51.82 in (1,316 mm) in 1996–97.[80] Due to local variations in microclimate, Seattle also receives significantly lower precipitation than some other locations west of the Cascades. Around 80 mi (129 km) to the west, the Hoh Rain Forest in Olympic National Park on the western flank of the Olympic Mountains receives an annual average precipitation of 142 in (3.61 m). Sixty miles to the south of Seattle, the state capital Olympia, which is out of the Olympic Mountains' rain shadow, receives an annual average precipitation of 50 in (1,270 mm).[80] The city of Bremerton, about 15 mi (24 km) west of downtown Seattle, receives 56.4 in (1,430 mm) of precipitation annually.[80]

In November, Seattle averages more rainfall than any other U.S. city of more than 250,000 people; it also ranks highly in winter precipitation. Conversely, the city receives some of the lowest precipitation amounts of any large city from June to September. Seattle is one of the five rainiest major U.S. cities as measured by the number of days with precipitation, and it receives some of the lowest amounts of annual sunshine among major cities in the lower 48 states, along with some cities in the Northeast, Ohio and Michigan. Thunderstorms are rare,[81] as the city reports thunder on just seven days per year.[82] By comparison, Fort Myers, Florida reports thunder on 93 days per year, Kansas City on 52, and New York City on 25.

Seattle experiences its heaviest rainfall during the months of November, December and January, receiving roughly half of its annual rainfall (by volume) during this period. In late fall and early winter, atmospheric rivers (also known as "Pineapple Express" systems), strong frontal systems, and Pacific low pressure systems are common. Light rain & drizzle are the predominant forms of precipitation during the remainder of the year; for instance, on

average, less than 1.6 in (41 mm) of rain falls in July and August combined when rain is rare. On occasion, Seattle experiences somewhat more significant weather events. One such event occurred on December 2–4, 2007, when sustained hurricane-force winds and widespread heavy rainfall associated with a strong Pineapple Express event occurred in the greater Puget Sound area and the western parts of Washington and Oregon. Precipitation totals exceeded 13.8 in (350 mm) in some areas with winds topping out at 209 km/h (130 mph) along coastal Oregon.[83] It became the second wettest event in Seattle history when a little over 130 mm (5.1 in) of rain fell on Seattle in a 24-hour period. Lack of adaptation to the heavy rain contributed to five deaths and widespread flooding and damage.[84]

Autumn, winter, and early spring are frequently characterized by rain. Winters are cool and wet with December, the coolest month, averaging 40.6 °F (4.8 °C), with 28 annual days with lows that reach the freezing mark, and 2.0 days where the temperature stays at or below freezing all day;[80] the temperature rarely lowers to 20 °F (−7 °C).[80] Summers are sunny, dry and warm, with August, the warmest month, averaging 66.1 °F (18.9 °C), and with temperatures reaching 90 °F (32 °C) on 3.1 days per year, although 2011 is the most recent year to not reach 90 °F.[80] The hottest officially recorded temperature was 103 °F (39 °C) on July 29, 2009;[85] the coldest recorded temperature was 0 °F (−18 °C) on January 31, 1950;[86] the record cold daily maximum is 16 °F (−9 °C) on January 14, 1950, while, conversely, the record warm daily minimum is 71 °F (22 °C) the day the official record high was set.[80] The average window for freezing temperatures is November 16 through March 10, allowing a growing season of 250 days.[80]

Seattle typically receives some snowfall on an annual basis but heavy snow is rare. Average annual snowfall, as measured at Sea-Tac Airport, is 6.8 inches (17.3 cm). Single calendar-day snowfall of six inches or greater has occurred on only 15 days since 1948, and only once since February 17, 1990, when 6.8 in (17.3 cm) of snow officially fell at Sea-Tac airport on January 18, 2012. This moderate snow event was officially the 12th snowiest calendar day at the airport since 1948 and snowiest since November 1985.[80] Much of the city of Seattle proper received somewhat lesser snowfall accumulations. Locations to the south of Seattle received more,

with Olympia and Chehalis receiving 14 to 18 in (36 to 46 cm).[87] Another moderate snow event occurred from December 12–25, 2008, when over one foot (30 cm) of snow fell and stuck on much of the roads over those two weeks, when temperatures remained below 32 °F (0 °C), causing widespread difficulties in a city not equipped for clearing snow. The largest documented snowstorm occurred from January 5–9, 1880, with snow drifting to 6 feet (1.8 m) in places at the end of the snow event. From January 31 to February 2, 1916, another heavy snow event occurred with 29 in (74 cm) of snow on the ground by the time the event was over.[88] With official records dating to 1948, the largest single-day snowfall is 20.0 in (51 cm) on January 13, 1950.[89] Seasonal snowfall has ranged from zero in 1991–92 to 67.5 in (171 cm) in 1968–69, with trace amounts having occurred as recently as 2009–10.[80] The month of January 1950 was particularly severe, bringing 57.2 in (145 cm) of snow, the most of any month along with the aforementioned record cold.[80]

The Puget Sound Convergence Zone is an important feature of Seattle's weather. In the convergence zone, air arriving from the north meets air flowing in from the south. Both streams of air originate over the Pacific Ocean; airflow is split by the Olympic Mountains to Seattle's west, then reunited to the east. When the air currents meet, they are forced upward, resulting in convection.[90] Thunderstorms caused by this activity are usually weak and can occur north and south of town, but Seattle itself rarely receives more than occasional thunder and small hail showers. The Hanukkah Eve Wind Storm in December 2006 is an exception that brought heavy rain and winds gusting up to 69 mph (111 km/h), an event that was not caused by the Puget Sound Convergence Zone and was widespread across the Pacific Northwest.

One of many exceptions to Seattle's reputation as a damp location occurs in El Niño years, when marine weather systems track as far south as California and little precipitation falls in the Puget Sound area.[91] Since the region's water comes from mountain snow packs during the dry summer months, El Niño winters can not only produce substandard skiing but can result in water rationing and a shortage of hydroelectric power the following summer.[92]

Between October and April, Seattle is mostly or partly cloudy six out of every seven days[72]

Climate data for Seattle (SeaTac Airport), 1981–2010 normals, extremes 1894–present[lower-alpha 1]

Demographics

Main article: Demographics of Seattle

Historical population		
Census	**Pop.**	**%±**
1860	188	—
1870	1,107	488.8%
1880	3,533	219.2%
1890	42,837	1,112.5%
1900	80,671	88.3%
1910	237,194	194.0%
1920	315,312	32.9%
1930	365,583	15.9%
1940	368,302	0.7%
1950	467,591	27.0%
1960	557,087	19.1%
1970	530,831	–4.7%
1980	493,846	–7.0%
1990	516,259	4.5%
2000	563,374	9.1%
2010	608,660	8.0%
Est. 2015	684,451 [2]	12.5%

Racial composition	2010[58]	1990[31]	1970[31]	1940[31]
White	69.5%	75.3%	87.4%	96.1%
—Non-Hispanic	66.3%	73.7%	85.3%[97]	n/a
Black or African American	7.9%	10.1%	7.1%	1.0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	8.6%	3.6%	2.0%[97]	n/a
Asian	13.8%	11.8%	4.2%	2.8%
Other race	2.4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Two or more races	5.1%	n/a	n/a	n/a

Religious composition of Seattle metro area (2014)[98]

Affiliation	% of population	
Christian	52	████████
Protestant	34	██████
Catholic	15	███
Other Christian	3	█
Buddhist	2	█
Hindu	2	█
Jewish	1	█
Other faiths	4	█
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	37	██████
Don't know	1	█
Total	**100**	██████████

According to the 2010 United States Census, Seattle had a population of 608,660 with a racial and ethnic composition as follows:[99]

- White: 69.5% (Non-Hispanic Whites: 66.3%)
- Asian: 13.8% (4.1% Chinese, 2.6% Filipino, 2.2% Vietnamese, 1.3% Japanese, 1.1% Korean, 0.8% Indian, 0.3% Cambodian, 0.3% Laotian, 0.2% Pakistanis, 0.2% Indonesian, 0.2% Thai)
- Black or African American: 7.9%

- Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 8.6% (4.1% Mexican, 0.3% Puerto Rican, 1.3% Colombian, 0.2% Guatemalan, 0.2% Salvadoran, 0.2% Cuban)
- American Indian and Alaska Native: 0.8%
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.4%
- Other race: 2.4%
- Two or more races: 5.1%

Seattle's population historically has been predominantly white.[31] The 2010 census showed that Seattle was one of the whitest big cities in the country, although its proportion of white residents has been gradually declining.[100] In 1960, whites comprised 91.6% of the city's population,[31] while in 2010 they comprised 69.5%.[99][101] According to the 2006–2008 American Community Survey, approximately 78.9% of residents over the age of five spoke only English at home. Those who spoke Asian languages other than Indo-European languages made up 10.2% of the population, Spanish was spoken by 4.5% of the population, speakers of other Indo-European languages made up 3.9%, and speakers of other languages made up 2.5%.

Seattle's foreign-born population grew 40% between the 1990 and 2000 censuses.[102] The Chinese population in the Seattle area has origins in mainland China, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan. The earliest Chinese-Americans that came in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were almost entirely from Guangdong province. The Seattle area is also home to a large Vietnamese population of more than 55,000 residents,[103] as well as over 30,000 Somali immigrants.[104] The Seattle-Tacoma area is also home to one of the largest Cambodian communities in the United States, numbering about 19,000 Cambodian Americans,[105] and one of the largest Samoan communities in the mainland U.S., with over 15,000 people having Samoan ancestry.[99][106] Additionally, the Seattle area had the highest percentage of self-identified mixed-race people of any large metropolitan area in the United States, according to the 2000 United States Census Bureau.[107] According to a 2012 HistoryLink study, Seattle's 98118 ZIP code (in the Columbia City neighborhood) was one of the most diverse ZIP Code Tabulation Areas in the United States.[108]

In 1999, the median income of a city household was $45,736, and

the median income for a family was $62,195. Males had a median income of $40,929 versus $35,134 for females. The per capita income for the city was $30,306.[109] 11.8% of the population and 6.9% of families are below the poverty line. Of people living in poverty, 13.8% are under the age of 18 and 10.2% are 65 or older.[109]

It is estimated that King County has 8,000 homeless people on any given night, and many of those live in Seattle.[110] In September 2005, King County adopted a "Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness", one of the near-term results of which is a shift of funding from homeless shelter beds to permanent housing.[111]

In recent years, the city has experienced steady population growth, and has been faced with the issue of accommodating more residents. In 2006, after growing by 4,000 citizens per year for the previous 16 years, regional planners expected the population of Seattle to grow by 200,000 people by 2040.[112] However, former mayor Greg Nickels supported plans that would increase the population by 60%, or 350,000 people, by 2040 and worked on ways to accommodate this growth while keeping Seattle's single-family housing zoning laws.[112] The Seattle City Council later voted to relax height limits on buildings in the greater part of Downtown, partly with the aim to increase residential density in the city centre.[113] As a sign of increasing inner-city growth, the downtown population crested to over 60,000 in 2009, up 77% since 1990.[114]

Seattle also has large lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations. According to a 2006 study by UCLA, 12.9% of city residents polled identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. This was the second-highest proportion of any major U.S. city, behind San Francisco[115] Greater Seattle also ranked second among major U.S. metropolitan areas, with 6.5% of the population identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.[115] According to 2012 estimates from the United States Census Bureau, Seattle has the highest percentage of same-sex households in the United States, at 2.6 per cent, surpassing San Francisco.[116]

In addition, Seattle has a relatively high number of people living alone. According to the 2000 U.S. Census interim measurements of 2004, Seattle has the fifth highest proportion of single-person

households nationwide among cities of 100,000 or more residents, at 40.8%.[117]

Economy

Seattle's economy is driven by a mix of older industrial companies, and "new economy" Internet and technology companies, service, design and clean

Washington Mutual's last headquarters, the WaMu Center, (now the Russell Investments Center) (center left) and its headquarters prior, Washington Mutual Tower (now the 1201 Third Avenue Tower) (center right).

technology companies. The city's gross metropolitan product was $231 billion in 2010, making it the 11th largest metropolitan economy in the United States.[118][119] The Port of Seattle, which also operates Seattle–Tacoma International Airport, is a major gateway for trade with Asia and cruises to Alaska, and is the 8th largest port in the United States in terms of container capacity.[120] Though it was affected by the Great Recession, Seattle has retained a comparatively strong economy, and remains a hotbed for start-up businesses, especially in green building and clean technologies: it was ranked as America's No. 1 "smarter city" based on its government policies and green economy.[121] In February 2010, the city government committed Seattle to becoming North America's first "climate neutral" city, with a goal of reaching zero net per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.[122]

Still, very large companies dominate the business landscape. Four companies on the 2013 Fortune 500 list of the United States' largest companies, based on total revenue, are headquartered in Seattle: Internet retailer Amazon.com (#49), coffee chain Starbucks (#208), department store Nordstrom (#227), and freight forwarder Expeditors International of Washington (#428).[123] Other Fortune

500 companies popularly associated with Seattle are based in nearby Puget Sound cities. Warehouse club chain Costco (#22), the largest retail company in Washington, is based in Issaquah. Microsoft (#35) is located in Redmond. Weyerhaeuser, the forest products company (#363), is based in Federal Way. Finally, Bellevue is home to truck manufacturer Paccar (#168).[123] Other major companies in the area include Nintendo of America in Redmond, T-Mobile US in Bellevue, Expedia Inc. in Bellevue and Providence Health & Services — the state's largest health care system and fifth largest employer — in Renton. The city has a reputation for heavy coffee consumption;[124] coffee companies founded or based in Seattle include Starbucks,[125] Seattle's Best Coffee,[126] and Tully's.[127] There are also many successful independent artisanal espresso roasters and cafés.[124]

Amazon headquarters building in South Lake Union

Prior to moving its headquarters to Chicago, aerospace manufacturer Boeing (#30) was the largest company based in Seattle. Its largest division is still headquartered in nearby Renton, and the company has large aircraft manufacturing plants in Everett and Renton, so it remains the largest private employer in the Seattle metropolitan area.[128] Former Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels announced a desire to spark a new economic boom driven by the biotechnology industry in 2006. Major redevelopment of the South Lake Union neighborhood is underway, in an effort to attract new and established biotech companies to the city, joining biotech companies Corixa (acquired by GlaxoSmithKline), Immunex (now part of Amgen), Trubion, and ZymoGenetics. Vulcan Inc., the holding company of billionaire Paul Allen, is behind most of the

development projects in the region. While some see the new development as an economic boon, others have criticized Nickels and the Seattle City Council for pandering to Allen's interests at taxpayers' expense.[129] Also in 2006, *Expansion Magazine* ranked Seattle among the top 10 metropolitan areas in the nation for climates favorable to business expansion.[130] In 2005, *Forbes* ranked Seattle as the most expensive American city for buying a house based on the local income levels.[131] In 2013, however, the magazine ranked Seattle No. 9 on its list of the Best Places for Business and Careers.[132]

Alaska Airlines, operating a hub at Seattle–Tacoma International Airport, maintains its headquarters in the city of SeaTac, next to the airport.[133]

Seattle is a hub for global health with the headquarters of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, PATH, Infectious Disease Research Institute, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. In 2015, the Washington Global Health Alliance counted 168 global health organizations in Washington state, many are headquartered in Seattle.[134]

Culture

Nicknames

From 1869 until 1982, Seattle was known as the "Queen City".[135] Seattle's current official nickname is the "Emerald City", the result of a contest held in 1981;[136][137] the reference is to the lush evergreen forests of the area. Seattle is also referred to informally as the "Gateway to Alaska" for being the nearest

Seattle Central Library

major city in the contiguous US to Alaska, "Rain City" for its frequent cloudy and rainy weather, and "Jet City"[137] from the local influence of Boeing. The city has two official slogans or mottos: "The City of Flowers", meant to encourage the planting of flowers to beautify the city, and "The City of Goodwill", adopted prior to the 1990 Goodwill Games.[138] Seattle residents are known as *Seattleites*.

Performing arts

Main article: Arts in Seattle

The façade of Marion Oliver McCaw Hall at Seattle Center, seen from Kreielsheimer Promenade, with the Space Needle in the background

Seattle has been a regional center for the performing arts for many years. The century-old Seattle Symphony Orchestra is among the world's most recorded and performs primarily at Benaroya Hall.[139] The Seattle Opera and Pacific Northwest Ballet, which perform at McCaw Hall (opened 2003 on the site of the former Seattle Opera House at Seattle Center), are comparably distinguished,[140][141] with the Opera being particularly known for its performances of the works of Richard Wagner[142][143] and the PNB School (founded in 1974) ranking as one of the top three ballet training institutions in the United States.[140] The Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras (SYSO) is the largest symphonic youth organization in the United States.[144] The city also boasts lauded summer and winter chamber music festivals organized by the Seattle Chamber Music Society.[145]

The 5th Avenue Theatre, built in 1926, stages Broadway-style musical shows[146] featuring both local talent and international stars.[147] Seattle has "around 100" theatrical production

companies[148] and over two dozen live theatre venues, many of them associated with fringe theatre;[149][150] Seattle is probably second only to New York for number of equity theaters[151] (28 Seattle theater companies have some sort of Actors' Equity contract).[148] In addition, the 900-seat Romanesque Revival Town Hall on First Hill hosts numerous cultural events, especially lectures and recitals.[152]

Between 1918 and 1951, there were nearly two dozen jazz nightclubs along Jackson Street, running from the current

Seattle Symphony Orchestra on stage in Benaroya Hall in Downtown Seattle. Benaroya has been the symphony's home since 1998.

Chinatown/International District to the Central District. The jazz scene developed the early careers of Ray Charles, Quincy Jones, Bumps Blackwell, Ernestine Anderson, and others.[153]

Early popular musical acts from the Seattle/Puget Sound area include the collegiate folk group The Brothers Four, vocal group The Fleetwoods, 1960s garage rockers The Wailers and The Sonics, and instrumental surf group The Ventures, some of whom are still active.[153]

Seattle is considered the home of grunge music,[13] having produced artists such as Nirvana, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Pearl Jam, and Mudhoney, all of whom reached international audiences in the early 1990s.[153] The city is also home to such

varied artists as [avant-garde jazz](#) musicians [Bill Frisell](#) and [Wayne Horvitz](#), [hot jazz](#) musician [Glenn Crytzer](#), [hip hop](#) artists [Sir Mix-a-Lot](#), [Macklemore](#), [Blue Scholars](#), and [Shabazz Palaces](#), [smooth jazz](#) saxophonist [Kenny G](#), [classic rock](#) staples [Heart](#) and [Queensrÿche](#), and alternative rock bands such as [Foo Fighters](#), [Harvey Danger](#), [The Presidents of the United States of America](#), [The Posies](#), [Modest Mouse](#), [Band of Horses](#), [Death Cab for Cutie](#), and [Fleet Foxes](#). Rock musicians such as [Jimi Hendrix](#), [Duff McKagan](#), and [Nikki Sixx](#) spent their formative years in Seattle.

The Seattle-based [Sub Pop](#) record company continues to be one of the world's best-known independent/alternative music labels.[153]

Over the years, [a number of songs have been written about Seattle](#).

Seattle annually sends a team of [spoken word](#) slammers to the [National Poetry Slam](#) and considers itself home to such performance poets as [Buddy Wakefield](#), two-time [Individual World Poetry Slam](#) Champ;[154] [Anis Mojgani](#), two-time National Poetry Slam Champ;[155] and [Danny Sherrard](#), 2007 National Poetry Slam Champ and 2008 Individual World Poetry Slam Champ.[156] Seattle also hosted the 2001 national Poetry Slam Tournament. The Seattle Poetry Festival is a biennial poetry festival that (launched first as the Poetry Circus in 1997) has featured local, regional, national, and international names in poetry.[157]

The city also has movie houses showing both [Hollywood](#) productions and works by [independent filmmakers](#).[158] Among these, the [Seattle Cinerama](#) stands out as one of only three movie theaters in the world still capable of showing three-panel [Cinerama](#) films.[159]

Tourism

See also: [Museums and galleries of Seattle](#)

Among Seattle's prominent annual fairs and festivals are the 24-day [Seattle International Film Festival](#),[161] Northwest Folklife over the [Memorial Day](#) weekend, numerous [Seafair](#) events throughout July and August (ranging from a [Bon Odori](#) celebration to the [Seafair Cup hydroplane](#) races), the Bite of Seattle, one of the largest [Gay Pride](#) festivals in the United States, and the art and music festival Bumbershoot, which programs music as well as other art and entertainment over the Labor Day weekend. All are typically

210 cruise ship visits brought 886,039 passengers to Seattle in 2008.[160]

100,000 people annually, as are the Seattle Hempfest and two separate Independence Day celebrations.[162][163][164][165]

Other significant events include numerous Native American pow-wows, a Greek Festival hosted by St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Montlake, and numerous ethnic festivals (many associated with Festál at Seattle Center).[166]

There are other annual events, ranging from the Seattle Antiquarian Book Fair & Book Arts Show;[167] an anime convention, Sakura-Con;[168] Penny Arcade Expo, a gaming convention;[169] a two-day, 9,000-rider Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic,[170] and specialized film festivals, such as the Maelstrom International Fantastic Film Festival, the Seattle Asian American Film Festival (formerly known as the Northwest Asian American Film Festival), Children's Film Festival Seattle, Translation: the Seattle Transgender Film Festival, the Seattle Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, and the Seattle Polish Film Festival.[171][172]

The Henry Art Gallery opened in 1927, the first public art museum in Washington.[173] The Seattle Art Museum (SAM) opened in 1933; SAM opened a museum downtown in 1991 (expanded and reopened 2007); since 1991, the 1933 building has been SAM's Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM).[174] SAM also operates the Olympic Sculpture Park (opened 2007) on the waterfront north of the downtown piers. The Frye Art Museum is a free museum on First Hill. Regional history collections are at the Loghouse Museum in Alki, Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, the Museum of History and Industry and the Burke Museum of Natural History

and Culture. Industry collections are at the Center for Wooden Boats and the adjacent Northwest Seaport, the Seattle Metropolitan Police Museum, and the Museum of Flight. Regional ethnic collections include the Nordic Heritage Museum, the Wing Luke Asian Museum and the Northwest African American Museum. Seattle has artist-run galleries,[175] including 10-year veteran Soil Art Gallery,[176] and the newer Crawl Space Gallery.[177]

The Seattle Great Wheel, one of the largest Ferris wheels in the U.S., opened in June 2012 as a new, permanent attraction on the city's waterfront, at Pier 57, next

Seattle Great Wheel

to Downtown Seattle.[178] The city also has many community centers for recreation, including Rainier Beach, Van Asselt, Rainier, and Jefferson south of the Ship Canal and Green Lake, Laurelhurst, Loyal Heights north of the Canal, and Meadowbrook.[179]

Woodland Park Zoo opened as a private menagerie in 1889, but was sold to the city in 1899.[180] The Seattle Aquarium has been open on the downtown waterfront since 1977 (undergoing a renovation 2006).[181] The Seattle Underground Tour is an exhibit of places that existed before the Great Fire.[182]

Since the middle 1990s, Seattle has experienced significant growth in the cruise industry, especially as a departure point for Alaska cruises. In 2008, a record total of 886,039 cruise passengers passed through the city, surpassing the number for Vancouver, BC, the other major departure point for Alaska cruises.[183]

Professional sports

Main article: Sports in Seattle

CenturyLink Field, home of the Seattle Seahawks and Seattle Sounders FC

Safeco Field, home of the Mariners

Club	Sport	League	Venue (capacity)	Founded	Titles	R Att
Seattle Seahawks	American football	NFL	CenturyLink Field (69,000)	1976	1	6
Seattle Mariners	Baseball	MLB	Safeco Field (47,574)	1977	0	4
Seattle Sounders FC	Soccer	MLS	CenturyLink Field (38,300 for Sounders FC matches)	2007	0	6

Seattle Storm	Basketball	WNBA	KeyArena (17,072)	2000	2	
Seattle Reign FC	Soccer	NWSL	Memorial Stadium (12,000; capped at 6,000 for most matches)	2012	0	6,3

Seattle has three major men's professional sports teams: the National Football League (NFL)'s Seattle Seahawks, Major League Baseball (MLB)'s Seattle Mariners, and Major League Soccer (MLS)'s Seattle Sounders FC. Other professional sports teams include the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)'s Seattle Storm, who won the WNBA championship in 2004 and 2010,[185] and the Seattle Reign of the National Women's Soccer League.

The Seahawks' CenturyLink Field has hosted NFL playoff games in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2015. The Seahawks have advanced to the Super Bowl three times: 2005, 2013 and 2014. They defeated the Denver Broncos 43-8 to win their first Super Bowl championship in Super Bowl XLVIII, but lost 24-28 against the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XLIX. Seattle Sounders FC has played in Major League Soccer since 2009, sharing CenturyLink Field with the Seahawks, as a continuation of earlier teams in the lower divisions of American soccer.[186] The Sounders have not won the MLS Cup but have, however, won the MLS Supporters' Shield in 2014[187] and the Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup on four occasions: 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2014.[188]

Seattle's professional sports history began at the start of the 20th century with the PCHA's Seattle Metropolitans, which in 1917 became the first American hockey team to win the Stanley Cup.[189] Seattle was also home to a previous Major League Baseball franchise in 1969: the Seattle Pilots. The Pilots relocated to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and became the Milwaukee Brewers for the 1970 season. From 1967 to 2008 Seattle was also home to an National Basketball Association (NBA) franchise: the Seattle SuperSonics, who were the 1978–79 NBA champions. The

CenturyLink Field

SuperSonics relocated to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and became the Oklahoma City Thunder for the 2008–09 season.[190][191]

The Major League Baseball All-Star Game was held in Seattle twice, first at the Kingdome in 1979 and again at Safeco Field in 2001.[192] That same year, the Seattle Mariners tied the all-time single regular season wins record with 116 wins.[193] The NBA All-Star Game was also held in Seattle twice: the first in 1974 at the Seattle Center Coliseum and the second in 1987 at the Kingdome.[194]

The Seattle Thunderbirds hockey team plays in the Canadian major-junior Western Hockey League and are based in the Seattle suburb of Kent.[195] Seattle also boasts a strong history in collegiate sports. The University of Washington and Seattle University are NCAA Division I schools. The University of Washington's athletic program, nicknamed the Huskies, competes in the Pac-12 Conference, and Seattle University's athletic program, nicknamed the Redhawks, competes in the Western Athletic Conference.

Parks and recreation

Lake Union Park, South Lake Union and downtown Seattle

Seattle's mild, temperate, marine climate allows year-round outdoor recreation, including walking, cycling, hiking, skiing,

An attraction of Green Lake Park is a 2.8-mile (4.5 km) trail around the lake.

snowboarding, kayaking, rock climbing, motor boating, sailing, team sports, and swimming.[196]

In town, many people walk around Green Lake, through the forests and along the bluffs and beaches of 535-acre (2.2 km^2) Discovery Park (the largest park in the city) in Magnolia, along the shores of Myrtle Edwards Park on the Downtown waterfront, along the shoreline of Lake Washington at Seward Park, along Alki Beach in West Seattle, or along the Burke-Gilman Trail.

Downtown Seattle from Gas Works Park

Gas Works Park features the majestic preserved superstructure of a coal gasification plant closed in 1956. Located across Lake Union from downtown, the park provides panoramic views of the Seattle skyline.

Also popular are hikes and skiing in the nearby Cascade or Olympic Mountains and kayaking and sailing in the waters of Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Strait of Georgia. In 2005, *Men's Fitness* magazine named Seattle the fittest city in the United States.[197]

In its 2013 ParkScore ranking, The Trust for Public Land, reported

that Seattle had the 10th best park system among the 50 most populous U.S. cities.[198] ParkScore ranks city park systems by a formula that analyzes acreage, access, and service and investment.

Government and politics

Main article: Government and politics of Seattle

Seattle is a charter city, with a Mayor–Council form of government. From 1911 to 2013, Seattle's nine city councillors were elected at large, rather than by geographic
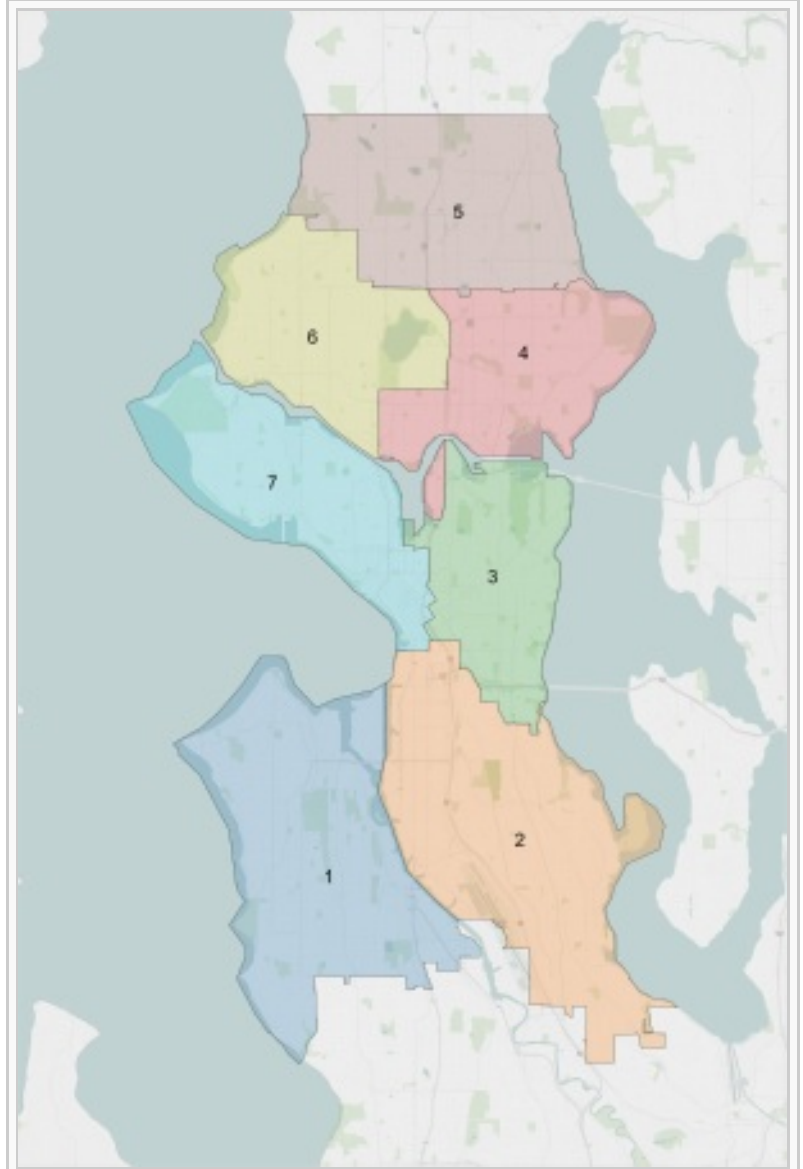
The city council consists of two at large positions and seven district seats representing the areas shown.

subdivisions.[199] For the 2015 election, this changed to a hybrid system of seven district members and two at large members as a result of a ballot measure passed on November 5, 2013. The only other elected offices are the city attorney and Municipal Court judges. All city offices are technically non-partisan.[200]

Like most parts of the United States, government and laws are also run by a series of ballot initiatives (allowing citizens to pass or reject laws), referenda (allowing citizens to approve or reject

legislation already passed), and propositions (allowing specific government agencies to propose new laws/tax increases directly to the people). Federally, Seattle is part of Washington's 7th congressional district, represented by Democrat Jim McDermott, elected in 1988 and one of Congress's liberal members.[201] Ed Murray is currently serving as mayor.

Seattle's political culture is very liberal and progressive for the United States, with over 80% of the population voting for the Democratic Party. All precincts in Seattle voted for Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama in the 2012 presidential election.[202] In partisan elections for the Washington State Legislature and United States Congress, nearly all elections are won by Democrats. Seattle is considered the first major American city to elect a female mayor, Bertha Knight Landes.[203] It has also elected an openly gay mayor, Ed Murray,[204] and a socialist councillor, Kshama Sawant.[205] For the first time in United States history, an openly gay black woman was elected to public office when Sherry Harris was elected as a Seattle city councillor in 1991.[206][207] The majority of the current city council is female, while white men comprise a minority.[208]

Seattle is widely considered one of the most liberal cities in the United States, even surpassing its neighbor, Portland, Oregon.[209] Support for issues such as same-sex marriage and reproductive rights are largely taken for granted in local politics. In the 2012 U.S. general election, an overwhelming majority of Seattleites voted to approve Referendum 74 and legalize gay marriage in Washington state.[210] In the same election, an overwhelming majority of Seattleites also voted to approve the legalization of the recreational use of cannabis in the state.[211] Like much of the Pacific Northwest (which has the lowest rate of church attendance in the United States and consistently reports the highest percentage of atheism[212][213]), church attendance, religious belief, and political influence of religious leaders are much lower than in other parts of America.[214]

Seattle also has a thriving alternative press, with the Web-based daily *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, several other online dailies (including *Publicola* and *Crosscut*), *The Stranger* (an alternative, left-leaning weekly), *Seattle Weekly*, and a number of issue-focused

publications, including the nation's two largest online environmental magazines, *Worldchanging* and *Grist.org*.

In July 2012, Seattle became the largest city in Washington state to ban plastic shopping bags.[215] In June 2014 the city passed a local ordinance to increase the minimum wage to $15 an hour on a staged basis from 2015 to 2021. When fully implemented the $15 hourly rate will be the highest minimum wage in the nation.[216]

On October 6, 2014, Seattle officially replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day, honoring Seattle's Native American community and controversies surrounding the legacy of Christopher Columbus.[217][218]

Education

Main article: Education in Seattle

Of the city's population over the age of 25, 53.8% (vs. a national average of 27.4%) hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and 91.9% (vs. 84.5% nationally) have a high school diploma or equivalent. A 2008 United States Census Bureau survey showed that Seattle had the highest percentage of college and university graduates of any major U.S. city.[219] The city was listed as the most literate of the country's 69 largest cities in 2005 and 2006, the second most literate in 2007 and the most literate in 2008 in studies conducted by Central Connecticut State University.[220]

Seattle Public Schools desegregated without a court order[221] but continue to struggle to achieve racial balance in a somewhat ethnically divided city

University of Washington Quad in spring

(the south part of town having more ethnic minorities than the north).[222] In 2007, Seattle's racial tie-breaking system was struck

down by the United States Supreme Court, but the ruling left the door open for desegregation formulae based on other indicators (e.g., income or socioeconomic class).[223]

The public school system is supplemented by a moderate number of private schools: five of the private high schools are Catholic, one is Lutheran, and six are secular.[224]

Seattle is home to the University of Washington, as well as the institution's professional and continuing education unit, the University of Washington Educational Outreach. A study by *Newsweek International* in 2006 cited the University of Washington as the twenty-second best university in the world.[225] Seattle also has a number of smaller private universities including Seattle University and Seattle Pacific University, the former a Jesuit Catholic institution, the latter Free Methodist; universities aimed at the working adult, like City University and Antioch University; colleges within the Seattle Colleges District system, comprising North, Central, and South; seminaries, including Western Seminary and a number of arts colleges, such as Cornish College of the Arts, Pratt Fine Arts Center, and The Art Institute of Seattle. In 2001, *Time* magazine selected Seattle Central Community College as community college of the year, stating the school "pushes diverse students to work together in small teams".[226]

Media

Main article: Media in Seattle

As of 2010, Seattle has one major daily newspaper, *The Seattle Times*. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, known as the *P-I*, published a daily newspaper from 1863 to March 17, 2009, before switching to a strictly on-line publication. There is also the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*,[227] and the University of Washington publishes *The Daily*, a student-run publication, when school is in session. The most prominent weeklies are the *Seattle Weekly* and *The Stranger*; both consider themselves "alternative" papers.[228] The weekly LGBT newspaper is the *Seattle Gay News*. *Real Change* is a weekly street newspaper that is sold mainly by homeless persons as an alternative to panhandling. There are also several ethnic newspapers, including the *The Facts*, *Northwest Asian Weekly* and the *International Examiner*, and numerous neighborhood

newspapers.

Seattle is also well served by television and radio, with all major U.S. networks represented, along with at least five other English-language stations and two Spanish-language stations.[229] Seattle cable viewers also receive CBUT 2 (CBC) from Vancouver, British Columbia.

Non-commercial radio stations include NPR affiliates KUOW-FM 94.9 and KPLU-FM 88.5 (Tacoma), as well as classical music station KING-FM 98.1. Other stations include KEXP-FM 90.3 (affiliated with the UW), community radio KBCS-FM 91.3 (affiliated with Bellevue College), and high school radio KNHC-FM 89.5, which broadcasts an electronic dance music radio format and is owned by the public school system and operated by students of Nathan Hale High School. Many Seattle radio stations are also available through Internet radio, with KEXP in particular being a pioneer of Internet radio.[230] Seattle also has numerous commercial radio stations. In a March 2012 report by the consumer research firm Arbitron, the top FM stations were KRWM (adult contemporary format), KIRO-FM (news/talk), and KISW (active rock) while the top AM stations were KOMO (AM) (all news), KJR (AM) (all sports), KIRO (AM) (all sports).[231]

Seattle-based online magazines Worldchanging and Grist.org were two of the "Top Green Websites" in 2007 according to TIME.[232]

Seattle also has many online news media websites. The two largest are *The Seattle Times* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

Infrastructure

Health systems

Main article: Medical facilities of Seattle

The University of Washington is consistently ranked among the country's top leading institutions in medical research, earning special merits for programs in neurology and neurosurgery. Seattle has seen local developments of modern paramedic services with the establishment of Medic One in 1970.[233] In 1974, a *60 Minutes* story on the success of the then four-year-old Medic One paramedic system called Seattle "the best place in the world to have a heart attack".[234]

Three of Seattle's largest medical centers are located on First Hill. Harborview Medical Center, the public county hospital, is the only Level I trauma hospital in a region that includes Washington, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho.[235] Virginia Mason Medical Center and Swedish Medical Center's two largest campuses are also located in this part of Seattle, including the Virginia Mason Hospital. This concentration of hospitals resulted in the neighborhood's nickname "Pill Hill".[236]

Located in the Laurelhurst neighborhood, Seattle Children's, formerly Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, is the pediatric referral center for Washington, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center has a campus in the Eastlake neighborhood. The University District is home to the University of Washington Medical Center which, along with Harborview, is operated by the University of Washington. Seattle is also served by a Veterans Affairs hospital on Beacon Hill, a third campus of Swedish in Ballard, and Northwest Hospital and Medical Center near Northgate Mall.

Transportation

Main article: Transportation in Seattle
Further information: Street layout of Seattle

The first streetcars appeared in 1889 and were instrumental in the creation of a relatively well-defined downtown and strong
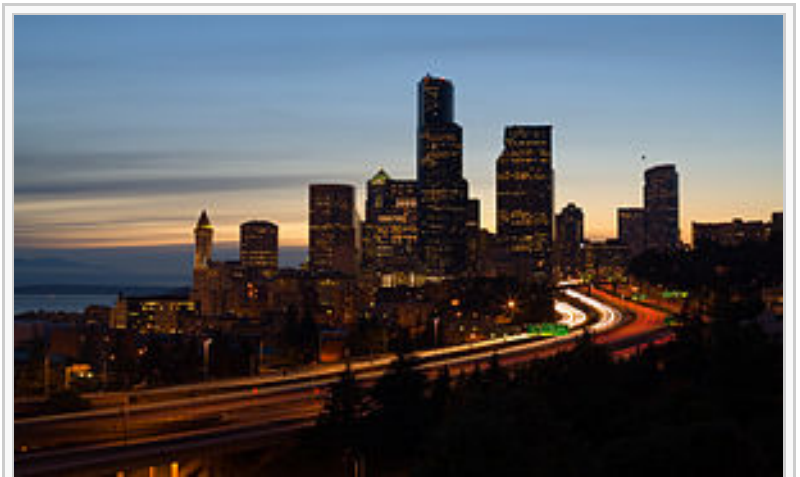
Interstate 5 in Washington as it passes through downtown Seattle

neighborhoods at the end of their lines. The advent of the automobile sounded the death knell for rail in Seattle. Tacoma–Seattle railway service ended in 1929 and the Everett–Seattle service came to an end in 1939, replaced by inexpensive automobiles running on the recently developed highway system. Rails on city

streets were paved over or removed, and the opening of the Seattle trolleybus system brought the end of streetcars in Seattle in 1941. This left an extensive network of privately owned buses (later public) as the only mass transit within the city and throughout the region.[237]

King County Metro provides frequent stop bus service within the city and surrounding county, as well as a South Lake Union Streetcar

King County Water Taxi and downtown Seattle

Streetcar line between the South Lake Union neighborhood and Westlake Center in downtown.[238] Seattle is one of the few cities in North America whose bus fleet includes electric trolleybuses. Sound Transit currently provides an express bus service within the metropolitan area, two Sounder commuter rail lines between the suburbs and downtown, and its Central Link light rail line between the University of Washington and Sea-Tac Airport. Washington State Ferries, which manages the largest network of ferries in the United States and third largest in the world, connects Seattle to Bainbridge and Vashon Islands in Puget Sound and to Bremerton and Southworth on the Kitsap Peninsula.[239]


Central Link light rail trains in the Downtown Seattle

According to the 2007 American Community Survey, 18.6% of Seattle residents used one of the three public transit systems that

serve the city, giving it the highest transit ridership of all major cities without heavy or light rail prior to the completion of Sound Transit's Central Link line.[240] The city has also been described by Bert Sperling as the fourth most walkable U.S. city and by Walk Score as the sixth most walkable of the fifty largest U.S. cities.[241][242]

Seattle–Tacoma International Airport, locally known as Sea-Tac Airport and located just south in the neighboring city of SeaTac, is operated by the Port of Seattle and provides commercial air service to destinations throughout the world. Closer to downtown, Boeing Field is used for general aviation, cargo flights, and testing/delivery of Boeing airliners.

The main mode of
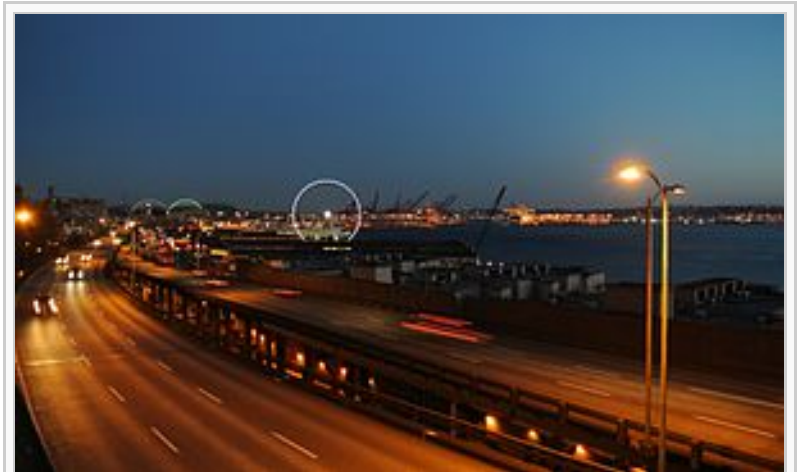
Alaskan Way Viaduct, port of Seattle on the right, stadium in the background

transportation, however, relies on Seattle's streets, which are laid out in a cardinal directions grid pattern, except in the central business district where early city leaders Arthur Denny and Carson Boren insisted on orienting their plats relative to the shoreline rather than to true North.[243] Only two roads, Interstate 5 and State Route 99 (both limited-access highways), run uninterrupted through the city from north to south. State Route 99 runs through downtown Seattle on the Alaskan Way Viaduct, which was built in 1953. However, due to damage sustained during the 2001 Nisqually earthquake the viaduct will be replaced by a tunnel. The 2-mile (3.2 km) Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement tunnel was originally scheduled to be completed in December 2015 at a cost of US$4.25 billion. Unfortunately, due to issues with the worlds largest tunnel boring machine (TBM), which is nicknamed

"Bertha" and is 57 feet (17 m) in diameter, the projected date of completion has been pushed back to 2017. Seattle has the 8th worst traffic congestion of all American cities, and is 10th among all North American cities.[244]

The city has started moving away from the automobile and towards mass transit. From 2004 to 2009, the annual number of unlinked public transportation trips increased by approximately 21%.[245] In 2006, voters in King County passed proposition 2 (Transit Now) which increased bus service hours on high ridership routes and paid for five bus rapid transit lines called RapidRide.[246] After rejecting a roads and transit measure in 2007, Seattle-area voters passed a transit only measure in 2008 to increase ST Express bus service, extend the Link Light Rail system, and expand and improve Sounder commuter rail service.[247] A light rail line from downtown heading south to Sea-Tac Airport began service on December 19, 2009, giving the city its first rapid transit line with intermediate stations within the city limits. An extension north to the University of Washington opened on March 19, 2016;[248] and further extensions are planned to reach Lynnwood to the north, Des Moines to the south, and Bellevue and Redmond to the east by 2023.[249][250] Former mayor Michael McGinn has supported building light rail from downtown to Ballard and West Seattle.[251][252]

Utilities

Main article: Utilities of Seattle

Water and electric power are municipal services, provided by Seattle Public Utilities and Seattle City Light respectively. Other utility companies serving Seattle include Puget Sound Energy (natural gas, electricity); Seattle Steam Company (steam); Waste Management, Inc and CleanScapes, Inc. (curbside recycling and solid waste removal); and CenturyLink, Frontier Communications and Comcast (telecommunications and television).

About 90% of Seattle's electricity is produced using hydropower. Less than 2% of electricity is produced using fossil fuels.[253]

Notable people

Main article: List of people from Seattle

Sister cities

Seattle is partnered with:[254]

- 🇮🇱 Beersheba, Israel (since 1977)[255]
- 🇳🇴 Bergen, Norway (since 1967)[255]
- 🇵🇭 Cebu, Philippines (since 1991)[255]
- 🇨🇳 Chongqing, China (since 1983)[255]
- 🇳🇿 Christchurch, New Zealand (since 1981)[255]
- 🇰🇷 Daejeon, South Korea (since 1989)[255]
- 🇮🇪 Galway, Ireland (since 1986)[255]
- 🇵🇱 Gdynia, Poland (since 1993)[255]
- 🇻🇳 Haiphong, Vietnam (since 1996)[255]
- 🇹🇼 Kaohsiung, Taiwan (since 1991)[255]
- 🇯🇵 Kobe, Japan (since 1957)[256]
- 🇨🇲 Limbe, Cameroon (since 1984)[255]
- 🇲🇽 Mazatlán, Mexico (since 1979)[255]
- 🇰🇪 Mombasa, Kenya (since 1981)[255]
- 🇫🇷 Nantes, France (since 1980)[255]
- 🇭🇺 Pécs, Hungary (since 1991)[255]
- 🇮🇹 Perugia, Italy (since 1993)[255]
- 🇮🇸 Reykjavík, Iceland (since 1986)[255]
- 🇰🇭 Sihanoukville, Cambodia (since 1999)[255]
- 🇮🇩 Surabaya, Indonesia (since 1992)[255]
- 🇺🇿 Tashkent, Uzbekistan (since 1973)[255][257]

See also

- National Register of Historic Places listings in Seattle, Washington
- Seattle Freeze
- Seattle process
- Seattle tugboats
- Tillicum Village

Seattle portal

Washington portal

United States portal

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- Official website of the City of Seattle
- Historylink.org, history of Seattle and Washington
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