

BOISE, ID

Garden of delights

With picnic baskets, lawn chairs and blankets in hand, visitors can enjoy music under summer skies in the Meditation Garden at the Idaho Botanical Garden in Boise.

The Great Garden Escape Concert Series includes a musical lineup of jazz, bluegrass, rock, blues, soul and Celtic music, with concerts on August 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29.

The serene Meditation Garden, which features indigenous plants such as peonies, is one of 13 theme gardens in the 33-acre Botanical Garden complex. A stream runs through the garden and



GAIL SHUNWAY/GETTY IMAGES

Families can learn more about insects at the beautiful Idaho Botanical Garden, which is also hosting summer concerts.

into a fish pond with a fountain. Nearby are a large swinging bench and graceful willow trees.

In addition to the concerts, the Idaho Botanical Garden is hosting "Bug Day" on August

24 to educate people about insects. Children can gather in a shady spot on the grass for a game of bug bingo, in which pictures of insects take the place of numbers on the game sheet.

They can also compare insect and human abilities in the Insect Olympics. After watching a grasshopper jump three times its body length, kids have the opportunity to see what they can do in comparison. Or, participants can go head-to-head with butterflies in a minute-long wing/arm-flapping contest.

In catch-and-release activities, children catch insects in nets to study, and then let them go. Bug Day participants will receive a Certificate of Bugology.

For more information, call 208-343-8649, or visit www.idahobotanicalgarden.org.

—Jessie DeLaunay

BILLINGS, MT

Saddling up

City slickers can become cattle-wrangling cowboys and cowgirls at a working ranch near Roundup, Montana, about 50 miles north of Billings.

During the five-day Roundup Cattle Drive, run by a group of local working cattle-ranch owners and experienced horse people, each day starts at 7 A.M. with a chuckwagon breakfast. By 9 A.M., guests are saddled up and on the range, where they gather and drive 250 to 500 head of cattle each day.

Split into groups of five, the novice cow hands are teamed with wranglers who show them the ropes. After lunch on the trail, afternoons feature more cattle work or scavenger hunts for arrowheads, porcupine quills and turkey feathers amid the area's jack pines and sandstone rocks.

Hot showers await saddle-sore riders back at camp, followed by a chuckwagon dinner.

Evenings include live country music by the Mack family local band, and guests can jangle their spurs to the Montana two-step on a portable dance floor. Sleeping quarters are teepee-style tents.

The Roundup Cattle Drive takes place August 18 to 22 this year.

For more information, call 800-257-9775, or visit www.roundupcattledrive.com. —Jeff Jones

VICTORIA, BC

Sippin' cider

An apple a day in medieval England didn't just keep the doctor away. It was also believed to enhance battlefield prowess, fuel poetic inspiration and ensure male heirs, according to the owners of Merridale Ciderworks. Well, at least if it had been transformed from its original form into its fermented alter ego: cider.

Although the Vancouver Island cidery can't promise legendary benefits such as poetic ability, the company does offer the chance to try an "honest artisan cider" that owner Janet Docherty says mirrors the flavor and craftsmanship of ciders produced centuries ago.

Merridale, located in the Cowichan Valley 45 minutes north of downtown Victoria, prides itself on use of quality apples, a natural, chemical-free fermentation process and production of Old English ciders.

Scruppy, Merridale's best-known cider, gets its name from English farmworkers who used to steal or "scrump" apples to make notoriously strong cider. Another popular



COURTESY MERRIDALE CIDERWORKS

This 1867 press is on display at Merridale Ciderworks.

cider is the honey-sweetened Cyser, fashioned after a mead dating back to the Viking days. Other offerings include a nontraditional berry cider, nonalcoholic apple cider and apple cider vinegar. Merridale offers complimentary tours and tastings. For more information, call 250-743-4293, or visit www.merridalecider.com.

—Lisette Austin