

WASHINGTON STATE

You're entering Forks, an area we call . . . the 'Twilight' zone

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Special to The Miami Herald

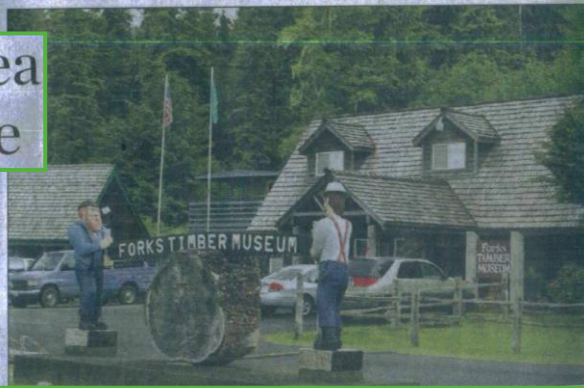
It's a rain-soaked hamlet with a population of 3,000 souls, and just one traffic light, as unlikely a tourist hotspot as you'll ever see. But the tiny town of Forks, Wash., has been transformed by *Twilight*, the wildly popular young adult book series by Stephenie Meyer.

Searching for a setting for her vampire-themed novel, Meyer learned that the Olympic Peninsula in Washington state

was the rainiest place in the continental United States — perfect for sun-shunning vampires. As Meyer writes on her website, she was looking for a town that was "small,

*TURN TO 'TWILIGHT', 6J

SEE SAWS: Until *Twilight* came around, the Forks Timber Museum was the sole tourist attraction in this old logging town.



'Twilight' zone: Hit book sparks dawn of tourism

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out-of-the-way, and surrounded by forest," and she discovered Forks. A visit to the area confirmed it: Forks was the right place for her vampire-boys-meets-girl love story to bloom.

Four years after the first book in the series was released, *Twilight* is a publishing juggernaut, earning comparisons to *Harry Potter*. The series, now grown to four books, is a perennial presence on *The New York Times* bestseller list and has sold 70 million copies worldwide. The second *Twilight* movie, *New Moon*, hits theaters on Nov. 20. The first, now available on DVD, has earned more than \$380 million so far.

Alas, there won't be a movie premiere in Forks, since the closest cinema is more than an hour away. And the *Twilight* movies weren't even filmed here. But "Twilight" fans have embraced Forks in a big way, and they're happy to fork over their tourist dollars to capture some of the magic.

VAMPIRE VISITORS

Most residents don't seem to mind that vampire vogue has brought some tourism lifeblood to this former logging town, where the sole tourist attraction had always been the Forks Timber Museum. Travis Belles, a guide with Dazzled by *Twilight* Tours, says, "With the logging industry dead, it's been a real blessing for the town."

When the first *Twilight* novel came out, the local librarian hosted an event, and about 35 people came, says Diane Schostak of the Olympic Peninsula Visitor Bureau. "And then the books really took off, and visitor counts started to



PHOTOS BY VALERIE HENSCH/OLYMPIC PENINSULA VISITOR BUREAU

DRIVING TOURISM: A replica of Bella's truck sits in front of the Forks Visitor Information Center, above. Below, the Miller Tree Inn Bed & Breakfast, where the innkeepers speak 'Twilightese.'

More than 1,500 fans showed up in September for Stephenie Meyer Day/Bella's Birthday Celebration, hosted by the Forks Chamber of Commerce, featuring a *Twilight* characters look-alike contest and Quillete storytelling. About 5,500 guests (and counting) have taken the Dazzled by *Twilight* tour (at \$39 a pop) since Annette Root launched the business in March. Thanks to *Twilight* mania, visitation at the Forks Visitor Center was up 77 percent last January, typically an off month for the Pacific Northwest. As of August, more than 67,000 tourists have visited Forks this year.

Not bad for a town that averages 10 to 12 feet of rain per year.

TAKING THE TOUR

Now, it's *Twilight* time again, and here's what you'll find on your *Twilight*-themed vacay to Forks. Entering town, you'll see the "Welcome to



MILLER TREE INN

Forks" sign, which Travis Belles describes as, "the most famous light-up sign in the world, since the Hollywood sign doesn't light up!" Everyone scrambles up to take a picture. Why resist?

Next, stop by the Forks Visitor Information Center and pick up a self-guided tour map to several of the locations mentioned in the books. While you're there, check out the replica of Bella's red truck.

On your own, do a drive-by of Forks High School, where Bella goes to school (and 60 actual students graduated last year), Forks Outfitters

(where Bella worked with Mike Newton), Forks Hospital (the fictional Dr. Cullen even has a parking spot) and the Forks Police Station, where "Charlie Swartz" was employed.

Not on the map are the Miller Tree Inn Bed & Breakfast (aka the Cullen House) and the Swan house, the residence that served as the inspiration for Bella's home.

Follow Route 101 to route 110 and LaPush, another town prominently featured in the series. Here, you'll cross the "Treaty Line" and explore the real ancestral home of the Quillette Tribe, and the fictional home of Jacob and his pack in *Twilight*. There's parking at the beach. Walk along starkly beautiful First Beach, where Bella first learns about the Cold Ones, and admire the towering sea stacks off shore, battered by pounding surf.

Of course, you can see all of these sites on a guided Dazzled by *Twilight* tour, where they ratchet up the fun factor with a cardboard cut-out of Edward in the tour van, music from the movie soundtrack, a locally-recorded *Twilight* rap song, and lots of lively commentary that will make no sense to anyone who hasn't read these books.

Tour guides are, naturally, rapturous when asked if they like *Twilight*, but nobody more so than owner Annette Root. "Vampires aside, what really speaks to me is this powerful love story, and the fact that these are good morals for our time," she says.

Fans, largely female, cover all age ranges, according to Root. "We

Olympic National Park



Shame on you if you visit Forks and you don't get to the magnificent — and wet — Olympic National Park. The Hoh Rain Forest Visitor Center, 19 miles southeast of Forks (an hour's drive), is a good point of entry. The Hoh is one of the few temperate rain forests in the world, and it's a wonder, a primeval forest of giant cedars strung with tree ferns and club moss, looking like something out of Dr. Seuss. 360-565-3110; www.nps.gov/olym.

There are two inviting places to stay within the park that are open all year: Kalaloch Lodge (866-525-2562; www.visitkalaloch.com), a string of 44 cabins sitting on a bluff on the Pacific Ocean. Rates from \$128. Lake Quinalt Lodge (800-562-6672; http://visitlakequinalt.com), a classic 1926 timber lodge set on a lakeside. Rates from \$110.

have a group of women in their 60s and 70s who come into the shop every week for their *Twilight* fix," she says.

Root's Dazzled by *Twilight* flagship store in downtown Forks stocks everything *Twilight* you can imagine, and then some: books, art, posters, DVDs, body products, clothing, jewelry, and, of course, those giant cardboard cutouts of stars Edgewise. And will there be a fifth book in the series? After a partial draft of what would have been

book No. 5, *Midnight Sun*, was illegally posted on the Internet, Meyer stopped working on it and left the question of another book unanswered — for now.

offers a Bella Burger. Pacific Pizza serves "Bellasagna," and the Smokehouse Restaurant sells Bella Berry Pie. For after dinner, Annette Root's *Twilight* mini-empire has the *Twilight* Lounge.

When will it end? Not for a while, it would seem. In 2010, the DVD of *New Moon* will be released, followed by the theatrical release of a third movie, *Eclipse*. And will there be a fifth book in the series? After a partial draft of what would have been

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A 'Twilight' adventure in Forks

Getting there: Alaska Airlines offers the region's only nonstop service to Seattle, leaving from Miami, a flight just under seven hours.

Other carriers serve the route from Miami or Fort Lauderdale with a change of planes and flight times of 8½-hours-plus. Roundtrip airfare from Miami starts around \$280 (the nonstop is about \$20 more); from \$250 from Fort Lauderdale. From Seattle, take the car ferry across Puget Sound to Port Angeles (about three hours); in another 90 minutes, you'll be at Forks.

Weather: Spring and fall are cool and wet. The greatest rainfall occurs in December and January, when daytime temperatures average in the 40s. Snowfall is typically light in low-lying areas, but heavy at higher elevations. Summer is warm and dry with frequent fog; low 70s are common.

Where to stay: For sheer *Twilight*-ness, you can't beat the Miller Tree Inn Bed & Breakfast (aka Cullen House, for its resemblance to the Cullen home in the books). They play it up, too; "Emme Cullen" leaves notes on the message board, and the innkeepers speak "Twilightese." The farmhouse has eight guest rooms with private baths; rates from \$90. 800-943-6563. www.millertreeinn.com.

Tours: Dazzled by *Twilight* (360-374-8689; http://dazdazzledbytwilighttours.com/tour) offers several 2-3 hour tours for about \$40. Evergreen Escapes (866-233-1620; www.evergreeneescapes.com/twilight_tour.asp) offers a full-day tour from Seattle for \$285.

Information: Forks Chamber of Commerce, 800-443-6757; www.forkswo.com. Olympic Peninsula travel planner, 800-942-4042; www.OlympicPeninsula.org. A new website targets "Twilight" fans: www.ExperienceWA.com/Twilight.