

Have a blast on a budget in Portland

The Rose City offers lots of low-cost family attractions, plus some great side trips

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PORTLAND—Portland is not A-listed among the glamor cities, and Portlanders tend not to care if other cities have taller buildings or a bigger this or that. Over time, the city has followed its own path.

The city on the Willamette River doesn't try to be more than it is. Therein and elsewhere lies much of its affordable charm. There is plenty to do that is free or surprisingly cheap compared to more glittery money pits, and Oregon has no sales tax.

Some Portlanders take themselves a bit seriously, but generally it is an unpretentious, eclectic city that welcomes like-minded people, one where everyone fits in somewhere.

Try www.goseeportland.com to see what other visitors and locals think of hundreds of places. Only a few get multiple mentions, which says more for variety than for consensus. Also try www.POVA.com for discount packages.

If you're out, about and Twittering, a new feature will connect you to people with fast answers: www.travelportland.com/visitors/twitter.html. Meanwhile here are some ideas:

Knocking around

Portland is full of quick hits. Consider:

- The Japanese Garden overlooks the city in Washington Park (adults, \$8). A short walk from the Japanese Garden is the world-famous International Rose Test Garden, which is free. Portland is called the Rose City for a reason.

Also in Washington Park is the Oregon Zoo, served by an underground station on the light rail, and the kid-friendly Children's Museum and World Forestry Center. Abutting Washington Park is the 7,000-acre Forest Park. Click on "Find a Park" at www.portlandonline.com/parks for information on the parks and gardens.

- Powell's City of Books, 1005 W. Burnside, claims to be the world's largest independent used and new bookstore. Entry is free and it does seem like a city. You even get a map. The exit fee depends on your self control, www.powells.com.

- Local craftsmen show their wares down-

town at the Saturday Market near the Burnside Bridge, www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com.

- The Portland Aerial Tram runs from the South Waterfront up to Oregon Health & Science University, the University of Oregon's medical school and hospital. Round trip is \$4 with a staggering view. It runs frequently; www.portlandtram.org.

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- The Chinese Garden, in what's left of Portland's once-raucous Chinatown, is downtown. Artisans were brought from China to build it; www.portlandchinesegarden.org (\$8.50).

- The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, just across the river from downtown, is hands-on and kid-oriented with its own naval submarine, the USS Blueback, open for tours, www.omsiedu, 1945 S.E. Water Ave. (adults \$11, children \$9, submarine tours additional \$5.50). For kids 7-18, OMSI also has superb summer science camps, from marine biology to high-desert fossil beds, four to 10 days long, as well as family programs that accommodate adults and younger children.

- Portland is among the nation's more bike-friendly cities. Rentals: www.yelp.com/reviews/12_Portland_OR/bikerentals_page_0.html. (If you're bringing Ol' Brown-Eyes, it's among the more dog-friendly too, but ask your hotel first.)

- 'Hoods: Trendy 23rd Street in Northwest Portland has tempting shops, galleries and restaurants. The Hawthorn district in close-in Southeast is a bohemian-lite street of coffee houses, hole-in-the-wall restaurants and interesting shops.

And if you wonder how we got this way, visit the Oregon Historical Society Museum downtown. Thoughtful exhibits and a gift shop good for books and more: www.ohs.org (\$11).



Wine and beer

The state has nearly 400 wineries, and some near Portland grow Pinot Noir that has put the French in the shade. Many offer free tours and tastings. Start with www.oregonwine.org.

Portland has about 30 micro-breweries. Many give tours and tastings. www.oregon.com/beer/beer.cfm.

Portland is in love with hefty brews with spine and character. The Oregonian has a beer columnist. At least one restaurant has a beer steward. It has been written that you can get into a fist fight here over who makes the best India Pale Ale. Yet Portlanders aren't all beer snobs. The city is a prime Pabst Blue Ribbon market.

If you prefer water, resort to one of the "Benson Bubbler" brass drinking fountains scattered around town by lumber baron Simon Benson in the early 1900s in hopes that his workers would forsake the keg and show up reasonably sober.

Night life

If you're up for some helling around, or a quiet evening of good jazz, the city is awash with clubs and bars with mostly local entertainment for a minimal cover charge, or none. Major plays and concerts frequently visit. For listings, pick up a free Willamette Week newspaper from a street box or the Friday arts and entertainment section of The Oregonian, or visit www.oregonlive.com/entertainment.

Food: Portland shines with scores, maybe hundreds, of good choices. A list of favorites invites the sin of omission. However:

On a hot summer evening, head east 20 miles to Troutdale and up the Sandy River to Tad's Chicken & Dumplings, which still resembles the classic road house it once was. This is no-nonsense American cooking, featuring fresh Northwest ingredients. Get a seat by the window overlooking the river.

Years back someone shot out part of the neon sign so that it

read, "Tad's Chick Dump." It still does on one side. You can buy a Tad's Chick Dump T-shirt.

Downtown there's Dan & Louis Oyster Bar, 208 S.W. Ankeny St., where Portlanders have gone for fresh local seafood since 1907, or Fratelli, 1280 N.W. Hoyt St., for an interesting take on Italian food. There are endless pricier places in the Pearl District in the historic Northwest part of town.

Carts around downtown serve inexpensive spicy Indian curries, Mexican dishes, Middle East specialties and more. Line up for a takeaway lunch with students, businessmen or maybe a judge, for a quick lunch. Strike up a conversation. Many Portlanders love talking about their city.

In the 1970s, waves of Vietnamese boat people arrived. Vietnamese restaurants abound, especially along a section of Northeast Sandy Boulevard. Try the ubiquitous and inexpensive pho, a traditional noo-

ue soup.

Many lesser-known, small places are scattered around town with the fresh local ingredients that the restaurateurs insist on.

Lodging and getting around: Accommodations are in many price ranges, often lower on the east (non-downtown) side of the Willamette River. Or consider bed and breakfasts. They aren't always much cheaper but can be more fun than a cookie-cutter hotel room. Owners usually are helpful.

Staying out a ways doesn't mean isolation.

Tri-Met, the area's light rail, streetcar and bus system, is among the nation's best. A day pass is \$4.75. Individual fares vary by zone. Details at www.trimet.org. At the airport, Tri-Met serves the city center, vastly cheaper than a taxi.

Side trips: Day trips (or one-nighters) out of Portland could include the Oregon Coast and the Hatfield Marine Science Center (free but donations welcome, very kid-friendly) or the Oregon Aquarium, both in Newport, or to Astoria and Fort Clatsop, where Lewis and Clark spent the winter of 1805-1806. There is a replica of their fort.

Astoria has the magnificent Columbia River Museum with the riveting story of the Columbia River bar, dubbed the Pacific Graveyard for the ships that wrecked crossing it and the men who died.

In late March, free whale-watching stations appear along the coast manned by trained volunteers as gray whales migrate north and often come close to shore. They go the other way in often-stormy

December.

Whale-watching excursions, about \$20, are often available out of Depoe Bay and Newport on the central coast and elsewhere. Excursions depend on weather so be flexible and call ahead. A close-in pod of grays stays just off the central coast much of the year. There is ample inexpensive lodging; www.coastvisitor.com/home.

Mount Hood

There is also great day-hiking in the Cascades and the Columbia River Gorge.

About 90 minutes east on Mount Hood there is Timberline Lodge, a stately old pile built during the Depression by President Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, with good restaurants and fine work inside by WPA artisans. www.timberlinelodge.com.

Mount Hood is also a major ski destination with late-season skiing.

Multnomah Falls, 620 feet high, about 45 minutes east on Interstate 84, is among Oregon's more-visited attractions. The old Historic Highway heading back to town takes you by other waterfalls and up a time warp of a twisty highway.