

## TRAVEL

## Point your wagon west and head for Portland

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My first thought was, "Wow, the pioneers really weren't crazy for traveling all the way here."

Nestled on the banks of the Willamette River, and known as the City of Bridges, Portland is once again becoming a prime migration point for vacationers.

You can't pump your own gasoline, for environmental reasons. The maximum highway speed is 55 mph in most areas. (This is a good thing. You don't want to miss any scenery.)

I found the most distinguishing characteristic of Portland to be the pleasure of exploring the city on foot. The streets are immaculate and the buildings downtown aren't tall enough to prevent sunlight from finding its way in. Rated one of the Top 10 best walking towns in the nation, by *Walking Magazine*, Portland offers a safe, friendly atmosphere and wonderful sightseeing opportunities.

For eco-tourists, Portland provides many opportunities to marvel at the beauty of the Pacific Northwest. Also known as the City of Roses for its rose-friendly climate, Portland hosts a 25-day Rose Festival in June, which includes a floral parade, air show and arts festival.

One of the more traditional attractions is the Portland International Rose Test Garden in Washington Park. One of the nation's oldest and largest rose test gardens, it is truly a feast for the eyes — 4.5 acres of roses on the steps of a garden, and a spectacular view of Mount Hood.

## Day trips

Washington Park itself has many walking trails, and in addition to the rose garden, is home to the Japanese Gardens and Vietnam Veterans Living Memorial. Visiting the rose gar-

den and memorial are free, but there is a small admission fee (well worth it!) for the Japanese Gardens.

One of the most popular activities for weekend entertainment is exploring the enormous Saturday Market in downtown Portland which features many forms of art, jewelry, specialty foods and street performers. For those interested in general shopping, Pioneer Square Mall just blocks away offers four levels of popular clothing and merchandise stores.

There are many opportunities for great day trips outside the city.

When visiting the Columbia River Gorge, take the Columbia River Scenic Highway. This historic thoroughfare winds its way over the cliffs and down to the river, offering breathtaking views of the valley from the edges of the gorge. Lush virgin forests tower on all sides of the highway, and beautiful cliffs sprout nearly 70 freshwater falls down their grizzled, moss-covered sides.

Also for gorge-goers, Multnomah Falls is a must-see. Take in the view from the bridge, or hike one mile to the very top of the falls on a winding trail with no guardrails. *Tip No. 1: Don't wear sandals when climbing.*

And as a reward for hiking miles uphill, treat yourself to the seven-course *World Famous Farm Breakfast* at the historic Columbia Gorge Hotel. The near century-old villa-style hotel is perched just above its own natural waterfall on the Columbia River. *Tip No. 2: Don't try climbing Multnomah Falls after the seven-course breakfast.*

The Oregon coast is less than two hours west of the city. I visited Cannon Beach, where the more adventurous can tiptoe between piles of stepping stones to stand beside the trademark monolithic boulders.

*Tip No. 3: Be mindful of the*

*tide. I was rather surprised to find myself waterlogged to the shins as I dawdled over which rocks to step on.*

My first visit to Portland took place two days after a magnitude 6.8 earthquake struck the Seattle/Portland area in late February. In fact, some of the windows at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport had been replaced by tarps and wooden boards from the damage.

Much to my disappointment, there were no aftershocks during my trip, but it was rather eerie to see Tsunami Evacuation Route signs along the coast. The rugged terrain in parts of Oregon can make for rather treacherous travel, and many cars have stalled tires and snow chains for protection.

## Mount St. Helens

For a slightly longer but fascinating day trip, journey to Mount St. Helens, visible from the city and lies just across the river in Washington. We drove directly into the blast zone, and up toward the massive volcano amidst acres of fallen trees stripped bare in the catastrophic May 1980 eruption. Scars from volcanic mudflows that ravaged the Toutle River Valley are still widely visible.

## Other tips

Something to bring on your trip:

A taste for microbrew. Portland hosts the Oregon Brewers Festival in July, and is known for its large variety of beers and ales.

Something to leave at home:

Michiganspeak. Oregon is Oregon (the "g" is pronounced like "guest") ... not Ore-gahn. Willamette is Wil-LOM-met ... not Wille-Met.

For more information on Portland, visit [www.pova.com](http://www.pova.com).



Breathtaking views: Dan and I at Multnomah Falls in the Columbia River Gorge, Oregon in March. The view from Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument in Washington. The Toutle River Valley near St. Helens.

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