



In the City:

PORTLAND

BY LESLIE FORSBERG

The soothing sounds of *Summertime*, played by a cello and guitar duo, set a relaxed mood as my teenage daughter, Kirsten, and I sampled velvety gnocchi made from a surprise ingredient—nettles. We were at 23Hoyt, one of Portland, Ore.'s, many innovative local-foods restaurants. Dining is at the top of my list when visiting Portland. After all, the Food Network named the city its Delicious Destination of the Year in 2007.

Food is only one of many reasons to visit the Rose City, though. Visitors here can kayak on the Willamette River; enjoy any of more than two dozen brewpubs, and stroll through lovely Chinese and Japanese gardens. It's one of the most walkable cities in the U.S. And it's one of the quirkiest.

Maybe it's the joy of living here that brings out Portlanders' free-spirited attitudes and zaniness. Cases in point: the Velveteria, a museum devoted to black-velvet paintings; the now-famous poster of former Portland mayor Bud Clark posing, raincoat open, in front of a statue with the words "Expose Yourself to Art"; and the three young women, arm in arm, skipping joyfully down the sidewalk as we exited the restaurant.

The food, attractions—including outdoor art and splashing fountains everywhere—and the world's largest independent bookstore, Powell's City of Books (a Portland

icon), are all big draws. But on a sunny weekend morning, one of the most popular places to be is the Portland Farmers Market.

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Held Saturdays March through December on Portland State University's leafy campus, the Portland Farmers Market is a popular breakfast and lunch spot. Shoppers can snatch up fresh produce, honey, jams and chocolates; stop by the Recipe Station to taste and learn about new seasonal produce; and enjoy chef demonstrations, kid's cooking classes and live music (on select Saturdays).

Kirsten and I moved with the tide of shoppers stuffing bags with fresh-cut flowers, fat bundles of crimson-stalked Swiss chard and tender young tomato plants. A modern-day Daniel Boone, complete with fringed buckskin jacket, reigned over a corner stall lush with musky, earthy mushrooms. Spongelike morels and crackly capped shiitakes nestled in baskets next to ruffly, pine-cone-like fungi with a sign saying "Maitake."



The Strolling Pond Garden is Portland Japanese Garden's largest of five gardens and is home to Heavenly Falls (above), a representation of the Milky Way complete with the Big Dipper.



STEVE HAMBUGHEN

Popping a sauteed sample into her mouth, Kirsten, 14, declared that mushrooms were now edible. “Mom, can we get some?” she entreated.

The profusion of plant life at the market was no coincidence. Portland, at the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers, is blessed with the bounty of the Willamette Valley, a 100-mile-long “garden” at its western border. Fifty miles east of the city, the slopes of Mount Hood lure skiers on winter weekends and hikers in summer, and the 80-mile-long Columbia River Gorge is a magnet for wind-surfers and waterfall lovers.

GREEN LIVING

There’s plenty of recreation in the city, too. The Portland metro area has 37,000 acres of green space, including 288 public parks and 166 miles of trails. In the middle of the city, Washington Park is home to the conservation-oriented Oregon Zoo, Portland Japanese Garden, World Forestry Center–Discovery Museum, Portland Children’s Museum and one of the West Coast’s most scenic places—the International Rose Test Garden. Here, expansive terraces with the frothy blooms of 7,000 roses spill down a hillside, with snow-capped Mount Hood commanding a regal presence at the center of the view. One of the most surprising city parks is actually an extinct volcanic cinder cone—Mount Tabor.

Portland is green in another sense of the word, too. In 2008, it was declared



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the top green city in the nation by Popular Science magazine, which noted that half the city’s power comes from renewable sources, and a quarter of the work force commutes by bike, car pool or public transportation. In fact, with MAX Light Rail connecting the city to the airport and a well-connected web of public transportation throughout the city, there’s no need for travelers to rent a car when visiting Portland.

ARTFUL APPEAL

After our farmers’ market visit, we climbed onto a streetcar, which zipped through a tunnel of elms to the Pearl District, where historical brick warehouses along tree-lined streets are now appealing urban dwellings. Because art galleries rub elbows with fashionable restaurants here, residents are in the midst of culture just by stepping outside.

We disembarked at Nob Hill, a leafy

The Treehouse Adventure at the Portland Children’s Museum (left) allows kids to hear stories and climb into the giant tree. Powell’s Books’ (below) custom of mixing new and used books on the same shelf has helped it grow to seven locations and an impressive Web presence.

OUR TOWN

My favorite restaurant is Andina, in the Pearl District. They serve Peruvian cuisine, and I love tapas.

Willow Myrick, retail assistant manager

The 3-D Center of Art and Photography is a grassroots nonprofit with all things 3-D, from Civil War-era “stereo cards” to computer-generated 3-D art. It’s funky, fun and oh, so Portland.



Ivy Manning, chef and cookbook author

We have a unique fast-food restaurant here that’s just amazing. Burgerville is all about sustainability. Everything they serve comes from local farms. Their berry shakes are unbelievable.

Sally Lewis, marketing director

neighborhood where one-of-a-kind boutiques, many of them in tidy Victorians, are tucked alongside numerous restaurants. Outdoor tables populate the sidewalks here—a natural in Portland, given the city’s abundance of sunshine and generally mild climate. A shop called Dazzle drew us in with its jewel-tone silk skirts, while at Gilt, vintage necklaces formed a riot of cut-glass blossoms. And at Mama Ró, the vibrant Italian ceramics and flowery tablecloths were so festive they nearly danced. All in keeping with this lively, fun-filled city of roses.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

For information, call (800) 962-3700 or visit www.travelportland.com. For maps, a *TourBook* guide and travel reservations, contact your AAA Travel agent or AAA.com/travel.

H&A

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