



New Year's Eve bonfire
with Wanderlust Tours

Oregon for Earth Lovers

Travel in the Beaver State is environmentally friendly fun

BY MATT ALDERTON

Beavers might not be the first things that come to mind when one thinks of Oregon. But maybe they should be. The state animal since 1969, they put Oregon on the map more than 200 years ago when hunters and trappers arrived to cash in on the lucrative fur trade. It's been "The Beaver State" ever since.

It's not just their historical importance that makes beavers beloved in Oregon, however. It's also their environmental

aptitude: When they build dams, beavers spawn vital wetlands that support wildlife and vegetation, replenish the water table, reduce erosion and eliminate pollution — all of which can mitigate the effects of climate change. That makes the American beaver an ideal mascot for Oregonians, whose appetite for environmentalism is as synonymous with Oregon as skiing is with Colorado and oranges with Florida.

"When people experience Oregon and see the grandeur of our scenic settings ... they understand why we care so much



about the environment,” says Linea Gagliano, director of communications for Travel Oregon, the state’s tourism agency. “Part of the Oregonian ethos is our love for the outdoors. We like to be outside, and we want to make sure the outdoors is something people can continue experiencing in Oregon for generations.”

Oregonians aren’t alone. A 2019 survey by travel website Booking.com found that 72 percent of global travelers think people need to make sustainable travel choices to help preserve the planet. If you’re among them, Oregon is where it’s at.

Start your trip with a car-free stay in Portland. Upon arriving at Portland International Airport, reach downtown via the MAX light rail, a low-emissions trip that takes 38 minutes and costs just \$2.50. Once there, public transit is easy and plentiful aboard not only the light rail, but also buses — the city is currently testing five all-electric buses powered by 100 percent wind energy — and the Portland Streetcar. Or, traverse the city on two wheels: Portland has more than 300 miles of bike-friendly lanes, paths and trails, not to mention 1,000 bikes that can be rented from

125 bike-share stations across the city.

Green hotels and restaurants are the rule, not the exception. A favorite is **The Nines Hotel** (thenines.com), which recycles 80 percent of its waste, is lit entirely with energy-efficient LEDs and has energy-saving smart thermostats and dual-flush toilets in all of its guest rooms. It also has a rooftop garden with beehives, an on-site mushroom garden and a subterranean food lab where aquaponic, aeroponic and hydroponic farms supply homegrown ingredients for the hotel’s signature restaurant, **Urban Farmer** (urbanfarmerportland.com). This farm-to-table steakhouse’s commitment to sustainability is so thorough that even the candles are eco-friendly, rendered from beef fat.

No trip to Portland is complete without a burger from **Burgerville** (burgerville.com) — a regional fast-food chain that serves fresh, local ingredients, recycles its cooking oil into biodiesel and offsets its electricity use with renewable energy credits — and a beer from **Hopworks**

Urban Brewery (hopworksbeer.com), a water- and energy-efficient brewery.

If you prefer wine to beer, retreat farther into the Willamette Valley, home to scads of sustainable wineries that practice organic and biodynamic farming. In Beaverton,

Cooper Mountain Vineyards

(coopermountainwine.com), for example, hosts a weekly Biodynamic Tasting & Tour that showcases sustainable viticulture. **Soter Vineyards** (sotervineyards.com) in Carlton likewise offers a culinary Provisions >



72%
of global
travelers
think people
need to make
sustainable
travel
choices.

SOURCE: BOOKING.COM

Tasting that pairs biodynamic wines with meat and produce that are cultivated on-site.

Although you'll need a car to navigate the Willamette Valley, you can minimize your carbon footprint in an electric vehicle. In fact, if you travel the **Oregon Wine Country Electric Vehicle Byway** (plugandpinot.com) — a network of wineries that offer charging stations — wine and wattage are always nearby. The byway stretches from Gaston in the north to Elkton in the south. In the middle is Salem, the state capital. Nearby, in Rickreall, is **Left Coast Estate** (leftcoastwine.com), a solar-powered winery that's known for wood-fired pizza and old-growth white oak forests that are carefully conserved.

While you're in Salem, stay at **The Grand Hotel** (grandhotelsalem.com) and eat at **Rafns' Restaurant** (rafns.com). The former utilizes green cleaning products, LED lighting and composting. The latter is known for its dedication to local, organic ingredients.

From Salem, head south to Lane County for a pedaling good time. Stay at the **Graduate Eugene** (graduatehotels.com/eugene), which offers complimentary bike rentals. Then, check out one of the area's scenic bikeways. The Covered Bridges Scenic Bikeway in Cottage Grove, for instance, traverses six covered bridges over the course of 36 miles. In McKenzie Bridge, the McKenzie Pass Scenic Bikeway's 36.1-mile route crosses meadows, forests and 2,000-year-old lava flows. If that is too challenging, catch the Lane Transit District No. 91 bus in downtown Eugene, which is an eco-friendly way to travel the byway, a scenic route connecting riverside towns along 34 miles of Highway 26 into the Cascades.

Conclude your trip in Bend or Medford, east and south of Lane County, respectively. Bend is known for its adventuresome outdoors. Stay at the **Oxford Hotel** (oxfordhotelbend.com), which is powered by 100 percent renewable energy and furnished with all-natural mattresses. Then take a tour with **Wanderlust Tours** (wanderlusttours.com), where naturalist guides educate tour-goers about the environment



Willow-Witt Ranch

“Part of the Oregonian ethos is our love for the outdoors. We like to be outside, and we want to make sure the outdoors is something people can continue experiencing in Oregon for generations.”

— LINEA GAGLIANO, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR TRAVEL OREGON



Left Coast Estate

while engaging in activities like hiking, kayaking, caving and snowshoeing.

Instead of adventure, Medford is known for agriculture. Sample its bounty in nearby Ashland, home of **Standing Stone Brewing Company** (standingstonebrewing.com) and **Willow-Witt Ranch** (willowwitranch.com). Standing Stone is a sustainable brewery and restaurant that's serviced by its own farm with free-range cattle,

sheep and chickens, beehives and an extensive composting operation through which it processes kitchen and brewing waste. Comprising 445 acres, Willow-Witt is a farm and ranch dedicated to land conservation and restoration; powered by solar and micro-hydro energy, it offers hiking, guided tours and overnight farm stays that are simple, serene and sustainable — just like Oregon. ■