

WASHINGTON COUNTY, OREGON: ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

Portland's "Next-Door Neighbor" Is one of the Pacific Northwest's Emerging Travel Destinations



Washington County, Oregon, is a hidden gem of the Pacific Northwest. Situated between Portland and the Oregon Coast, this burgeoning region in northwestern Oregon - part of the Northwest's renowned "silicon forest" - mixes urban, high-tech businesses with serene natural and agricultural settings. The destination boasts a multitude of celebrated attractions and amenities, such as local wineries, nature parks and preserves, golf courses and shops (tax-free, as Oregon enjoys no sales tax).

The region is easily accessible, with light rail access from Portland International Airport and downtown Portland to larger cities in the county, such as Beaverton and Hillsboro. With a diverse selection of lodging properties, Washington County offers affordable room rates and low lodging taxes, as well as convenient, free parking.

Many world-renowned companies are headquartered in Washington County, among them are sports, shoe and apparel giant, **Nike**; outdoor and recreational clothier, **Columbia Sportswear**; and legendary optical instrument and binocular manufacturer, **Leupold and Stevens** and Oregon's largest employer, high-tech giant **Intel**.

Ironically, many of these internationally recognized corporations are just a stone's throw from the heart of Washington County's agricultural areas. It is the co-habitation of a thriving urban core with a successful agricultural zone that has defined Washington County as an ideal destination for both leisure and business travelers.

Rural and Agritourism

Farm lands are abundant in the area, with crops ranging from vegetables, berries and fruits to wine vineyards, hazelnut groves and lavender fields. Several farms that dot the agricultural zones of Washington County offer tours, allowing urban dwellers to learn more about the functions of a working farm. During seasonal months, many farms have produce stands or are open as "u-pick" farms, allowing the public to pick their own produce, apples, berries or flowers.

A drive through the region's agricultural areas, via the **Vineyard & Valley Scenic Tour Route**, takes travelers by many of these farms, vineyards and wineries, as well as by alpaca farms, some of which are open to the public and have gift shops that sell yarn and other goods made from alpaca wool. Another popular area attraction is the **L-Bar-T Bison Ranch**, a working ranch which sells fresh bison meat, jerky and other products.

Farmers' markets are extremely popular in Oregon, with many of Washington County's communities holding weekly markets during the season (May through October) offering local produce, meats, wines and baked goods. The largest, the **Beaverton Farmers' Market** has become a draw for residents in the Portland Metropolitan area as well as for visitors.

Wine Tourism

Oregon's wine country is known for its exquisite Pinot Noir, and Washington County is home to 22 wineries, many with regular tasting-room hours, where visitors may sample the state's signature grape. This burgeoning wine region has continued to thrive with new wineries entering the landscape each year. Also making its home in Washington County is **SakéOne**, the only American-owned and operated saké brewery in the world. Located in Forest Grove, the brewery (or *kura*) offers tours and tastings daily, further demystifying this traditional Japanese beverage to visitors.

During warmer months, many of the wineries play host to live music, such as **Montinore Estate's** Sunday jazz concert series or **SakéOne's** "Sakétini Saturdays". Memorial Day and Thanksgiving weekends are an especially busy time for Washington County's wine tourism, as most wineries - including those that are not regularly open to the public - open their doors for public tastings.

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Outdoor and Adventure Tourism

As more travelers seek outdoor vacation experiences, Washington County becomes a fitting location for those who want to experience nature at its best. Nature lovers can take in the sights and sounds of Washington County's multitude of outdoor opportunities.

Wildlife and bird watching is plentiful, as the county houses several wetlands and nature preserves, such as the **Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge** and **Jackson Bottom Wetlands**. Outdoor recreation also is a popular pastime, with miles of biking and hiking trails, water recreation spots and hundreds of parks each offering a multitude of experiences and opportunities, including picnicking, nature walks, disc golf and more.

In June 2010, adventure seekers can include Washington County into their travel plans with the opening of **Tree to Tree Adventure Park**, the first aerial park to open in the western U.S. This adventure park features zip lines, wobbly bridges, ropes and other tree-top obstacles.

Golf Tourism

The region has 12 public and semi-private golf courses, ranging from executive nine-hole to championship 18-hole courses. Unlike other golf destinations on the West Coast, Washington County's golf courses are more affordable for the average golf tourist.

High-profile courses, such as **The Reserve Vineyards and Golf Club** and **Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club**, have hosted some of the biggest names in the sport, in addition to some of golf's most prestigious professional and amateur events.

Retail Tourism

Residents of neighboring states have long been known to make pilgrimages to Oregon for shopping excursions, because of the state's well-known sales-tax-free status. This exempt status, as well as the diversity of shopping experiences, makes Washington County an ideal retail tourism location.

Marathon shoppers can break a sweat with myriad shopping venues in Washington County. The region is a tax-free shopping paradise, from high-end, European-style lifestyle centers, such as **Bridgeport Village** and **The Streets of Tanasbourne**, and retail centers and malls featuring national retailers, such as **Washington Square**, to quaint antique stores and artisan shops featuring art from local and regional artists.

Washington County's best-kept secrets offer some of the most rewarding and affordable experiences in the Pacific Northwest. And when combined with other attractions in the region, such as wine tasting, shopping and dining, Washington County is an ideal destination for sophisticated, travelers.

About Washington County, Oregon

Washington County, Oregon, is scenically situated between Portland and the Oregon Coast, and is only minutes away from downtown Portland. The county spans 727 square miles, and includes the growing communities of Banks, Beaverton, Cornelius, Durham, Forest Grove, Gaston, Hillsboro, King City, North Plains, Sherwood, Tigard, Tualatin and Wilsonville. Washington County is home to world-class golf courses; award-winning wineries; an array of outdoor recreation opportunities, including lush, natural and scenic wetlands and wildlife preserves; superb dining; and exceptional shopping, from lifestyle centers and mall to boutiques and antiques. Its thriving corporate business parks house some of the largest high-tech and industrial companies in the world, such as Nike, Columbia Sportswear and Intel. For more information on the region, visit the Washington County Visitors Association's website, <http://www.visitwashingtoncountyoregon.com>, or call 503-644-5555, toll-free, 800-537-3149.

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