

JUNE | JULY 2019

BOULEVARD

VICTORIA LIFE AT ITS FINEST

The
EPICUREAN
Issue

WHAT'S COOKING?

Trends to keep the kitchen fresh, functional

AT HOME BY THE SEA

Unique, oceanside dwelling is homeowners' dream house

DREAMY DESSERTS

It's strawberry season!
Bring on the berries

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Jewels of Oregon

Coastlines, wine and city life
converge within a three-hour
drive in this beautiful state

|> BY LAUREN KRAMER

The state's incredible diversity shines at these three destinations, which also offer luxury boutique inns and hotels, exquisite farm- and sea-to-table meals, fabulous guided tours and the bonus of a tax-free shopping environment.

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TAKE to Oregon's highways and experience wild ocean beauty on the untamed coastline, sip exquisite pinot noir in the Willamette Valley and the feel pulse of city life in Portland — all within three hours of each other.

The state's incredible diversity shines at these three destinations, which also offer luxury boutique inns and hotels, exquisite farm- and sea-to-table meals, fabulous guided tours and the bonus of a tax-free shopping environment.

I started my journey in Cannon Beach, an iconic Oregon coastal town where the white-sand shoreline is dominated by Haystack Rock, a 235-foot-tall (72-metre) sea stack. This is the beach you dream about when you imagine romantic long walks on soft sand with only the sounds of wind in your hair and the roar of ocean waves.

As soon as I checked into the Stephanie Inn, a luxury property whose grassy slopes converge on the sand, I knew I'd have to wrench myself away. The ultra-opulent hotel manages to stay unpretentious and throughout the day plies its guests with complimentary baked delicacies, wine and nightcaps.

Immediately upon arrival, I felt cared for and nurtured.

"Would you like a private bonfire on the beach tonight, with s'mores?" the front desk receptionist asked as she directed me to my room.

Although my massive bedroom, with its whirlpool tub, soft linens and private deck beckoned, the bonfire sounded like the perfect finale to a brilliant beach day. So after a long walk on the

beach and a sumptuous halibut dinner at the hotel restaurant, I sat before a roaring fire watching the sunset as hefty rabbits chased each other across the sand and birds wheeled and dived around Haystack Rock.

Cannon Beach is a picturesque seaside community with boutiques, galleries, ice cream parlours and a walkable retail. But the proximity of two great state parks, Oswald West and Ecola, was more alluring. I headed for the Cape Falcon trail in Oswald West State Park, a five-mile circuit that leads through lush forests filled with gnarly tree roots, past tree trunks with impressive girths and to beach look-outs from stupendously high promontories. Surfers tackled the waves below and children frolicked on the long stretch of beach. I sat mesmerized by the beauty of this vista, the ocean stretching as far as the eye could see.

In spring, some 20,000 grey whales migrate past the Oregon coast on their way to Alaska's rich feeding grounds.

"Some of them get distracted by Oregon's great fish stock and stick around," joked Matt Goodwin, a guide from the Headlands Lodge, the boutique property where I spent my second night in Pacific City. We were hiking up the steep sand dunes next to Cape Kiwanda, a sandstone bluff that extends into the sea like a fishtail. Our feet were sinking deep into the soft sand as we huffed and puffed to the summit, but the view from the peak was worth it: endless stretches of sand on either side of the bluff, rough waters foaming as they sprayed against volcanic rock and sea stacks circled by birds. Before we descended, my heart raced at the sight I'd been longing for: the crusty back of a grey whale surfacing below.

Oregon's geography is shaped by the Coast Range on one side and the Cascades on the other. Between them lies the Willamette

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Valley, the state's burgeoning wine country, which begins just an hour's drive from the coast. The meandering hills and dales of the valley are heavily populated with wineries, the majority of them small family enterprises. I spent the night at one of them, the Black Walnut Inn & Vineyard, a palatial, Tuscan-style inn that sits high on a hill overlooking rows of neatly planted vineyards. The 15-acre property has expansive rooms, cosy, fireplace-lit nooks and warm decor, making it a fabulous place to breathe in the beauty of the region.

Within a 20-mile radius of the inn are some 250 wineries, their fabulous wines garnering industry awards and respect for their sophisticated notes. Throw a stone in any direction and chances are, you'll hit a vineyard. To get a sense of the breadth of the valley, I boarded a helicopter and took to the skies for a Tour DeVine. Lifting to 800 feet, the valley spread before us, its springtime foliage a lush, electric green. Vineyards ran in comb-like patterns across the land, interspersed with picturesque farm homes.

"This is the ultimate all-terrain vehicle," said our pilot, Trent, as we flew over the twisting Willamette River. We stopped at Zenith Vineyard and sipped an exquisite pinot gris as we learned about the 90-acre wine farm and the extent to which Oregon's vintners have become an accepted staple in the world of viticulture.

"Our winemakers received a huge confidence boost in 2016, when *Wine Spectator* named the Willamette Valley wine region of the year," noted Jenn Stein, our host. "It gave them the assurance that their wine profiles had validity and could hold their own."

Our second descent was at Maysara Vineyard, where, over a picnic lunch, we learned about biodynamic farming, a series of holistic practices focussed on pesticide-free, clean, conscious plantings.

"We believe this allows for a superior expression of our terroir in our wines," explained Moe Momtazi, who planted the vineyard in 1997. "And consumers are becoming more conscious of what they put into their bodies and starting to realize that not all wine is equal."

On the beach at Stephanie Inn.



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Continuing on my exploration of Oregon, the farmland receded quickly from view as I drove into Portland, a city bursting with personality.

"I like to think of Portland as the middle child in a family," joked Jerod Goss, who drives visitors around the city in a six-seater electric tuk-tuk. "It's the one that acts out a lot!"

We shuttled through Washington Park to check out the expansive, meticulously cared-for rose garden, and made a circuit through the Pearl District, pausing at Powell's Books. The country's largest independently-owned bookstore, it occupies a full city block. It's a place where you could easily lose yourself in literature for weeks.

This is a city of contrasts: the affluent and the homeless; the big national retailers and the upwelling of small, independently owned stores. There's also the ethos of sustainability and greener lifestyles and the embrace of a funky, alternative, quirky approach to food, culture and everything in between.

For the ultimate souvenir of a memorable Oregon journey, we stopped for a scent consultation at Fumerie Parfumerie in the Division neighbourhood, one of Portland's most charming and eclectic districts. The store features lesser-known, small-production scents from all over the world and is a great place to sniff your way through a leisurely afternoon as you identify the scent that mystifies, intrigues and defines you most.

Taking deep inhalations of myriad perfumes, we learned the difference between earthy and sweet, fruity and citrus, marine and gourmand. I chose one reminiscent of Oregon's woody trails and foaming coastline tinged with sea salt. Each spray brings me back to an unforgettable journey through this spectacular state. ①

IF YOU GO:

Stephanie Inn (stephanieinn.com) in Cannon Beach and Headlands Lodge (headlandslodge.com) in Pacific City are two spectacular oceanside boutique properties with fabulous amenities. The Cape Falcon hike in Oswald West State Park (oregonstateparks.org) is unforgettable.

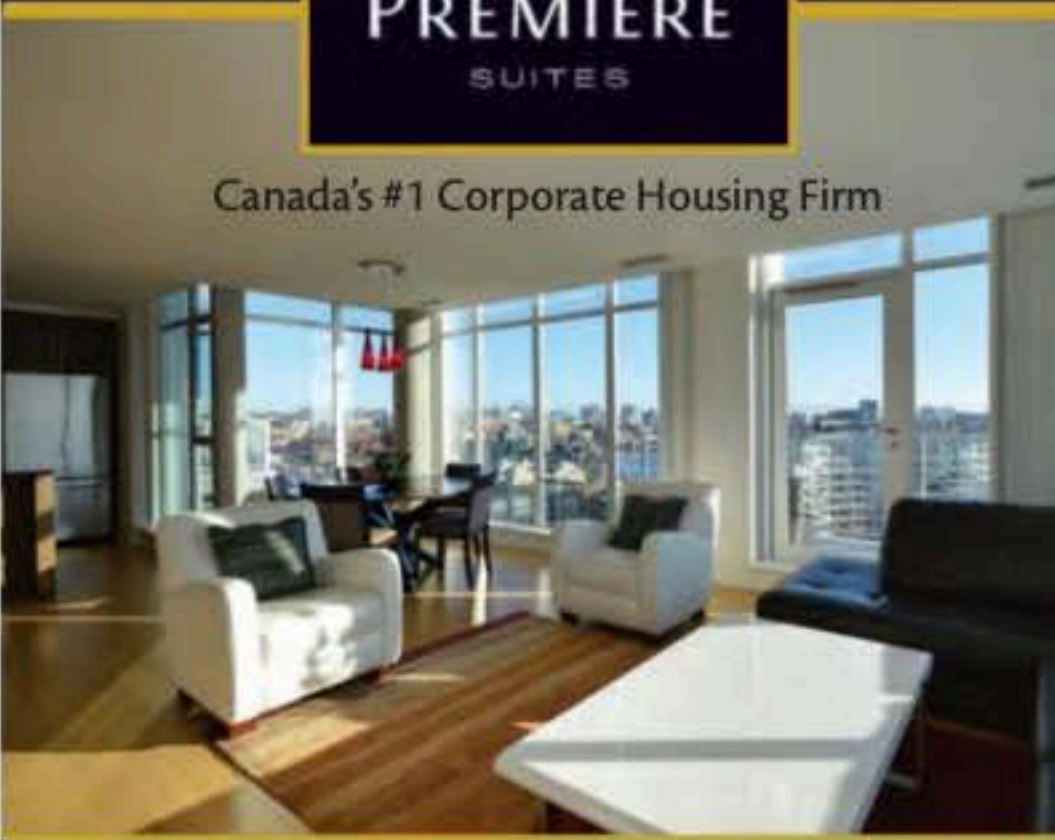
The Willamette Valley's Black Walnut Inn (blackwalnutvineyard.com) offers palatial, Tuscan-style lodging. Helicopter wine tasting is offered by Precision LLC (tourdevinebyheli.com)

In Portland, try a tuktuk city or beer-tasting tour with ETuk Ride (etukride.com). Scent consultations at Fumerie Parfumerie (fumerie.com) are free. For a meal in one of Portland's hot spots, head to Departure Lounge (departureportland.com)

A resource for all things travel related in Oregon is traveloregon.com

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