

Beat the Crowds: Refreshing Urban Escapes

# northwest

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# Beat the Crowds:

## Refreshing Urban Escapes

The Northwest is blessed with a trio of glittering metropolises—Seattle, Portland and Vancouver, B.C.—where an eclectic menu of choices and attractions lie within easy reach, often with throngs of fellow travelers. Next time you plan an urban escape, consider the Northwest's smaller gems, each with its own vibe, where big-city amenities mingle compatibly with small-town charm. Your reward will be shorter lines and some delightful surprises you just might have all to yourself.

*by Allen Cox*

Bellevue sits nestled between Lake Washington and the Cascade Mountains



## Spokane, Washington

City planners in Spokane have worked tirelessly to revitalize the downtown core, and it shows. The city's new life is best characterized by the epic renovation of the Davenport Hotel, first opened in 1914 as a model of Belle Epoque style. Decades later it fell into a sad state, only to be refurbished with painstaking attention to detail after the dawn of the new millenium. The hotel today stands as a testimony to its prior gilded glory. Take time to poke around the lobby and ballrooms to get a sense of the scope of the restoration.

Within walking distance you'll find a number of attractions you won't want to miss. Riverfront Park, downtown, straddles the banks of Spokane River and has the second largest urban waterfall in the country. The Ice Palace (outdoor ice skating) and the Spokane Falls Sky Ride are but a few of this 100-acre park's features.

If you're up for dinner and a show, check out Northern Quest Resort & Casino's star entertainment line-up, with dinner at AAA Four Diamond-rated Masselow's. Or investigate the shows at INB Performing Arts Center,

downtown, and dine at any one of The Davenport Hotel Collection's restaurants.

**Fun find:** Barrister Winery proves that lawyers do have redeeming qualities. Case in point: two lawyers who opened a winery in a 100-year-old industrial garage downtown, and have hit their stride. Stop by the tasting room for a sample (don't miss the "Rough Justice" Red Blend). Call ahead to inquire about a tour of the cellar and you just might get sentenced to a barrel tasting. Also worth a visit is the award-winning Dry Fly Distillery, a short drive from downtown.

### THE DETAILS

*visitspokane.com, spokaneriverfrontpark.com, davenporthotelcollection.com, inbpac.com, northernquest.com, barristerwinery.com, dryflydistilling.com.*

## Bellevue, Washington

Seattle's cousin to the east has come of age, with big city amenities and attractions. This eastside city is stylish, sophisticated, fun and

definitely approachable for couples, friends or family travel.

Bellevue is a city for browsing. You can easily spend a weekend on foot in the downtown core. Dining, the arts, shopping, entertainment and night life are steps from your hotel if you've chosen the Hyatt Regency Bellevue or the newly renovated Westin Bellevue.

The main shopping core is The Bellevue Collection in the heart of downtown, consisting of hundreds of retail brands at Bellevue Square, Lincoln Square and Bellevue Place, all linked by sky bridges over city streets. Be sure to catch the exhibits at the Bellevue Arts Museum, always provocative, informative and world-class. Nearby, The Shops at the Bravern offer additional temptations. Don't pass up an excursion to Main Street in old downtown Bellevue where you can treat yourself to the sublime at the renowned Fran's Chocolates.

When night falls and the lights come on, downtown Bellevue sparkles with dining spots and clubs. A few to consider are: Lot No. 3 for exquisite craft cocktails and comfort food, KORAL Bar & Kitchen for it's crowd-pleasing contemporary American menu, Monsoon East for modern Vietnamese cuisine, or El Gaucho for an a la carte steak splurge and over-the-top service. No doubt, with so many choices within the downtown core, you'll sniff out your



The Davenport Hotel Lobby



The Bellevue Collection



own favorites. For entertainment, head straight to Lincoln Square for a headliner comedy club, "high-end" bowling, theaters and more.

**Fun find:** When it's time to get outdoors, hit the trail at Mercer Slough Nature Park, an extensive wetland and Environmental Education Center near downtown Bellevue. The trails are easy and great for kids. Bring a camera: The view across the winter wetlands and woods to the highrises of downtown Bellevue is a keeper.

## THE DETAILS

[visitbellevuewashington.com](http://visitbellevuewashington.com), [bellevue.hyatt.com](http://bellevue.hyatt.com), [westinbellevuehotel.com](http://westinbellevuehotel.com), [bellevuearts.org](http://bellevuearts.org), [downtownbellevue.com](http://downtownbellevue.com), [bellevuesquare.com](http://bellevuesquare.com), [thebravern.com](http://thebravern.com), [lotno3.com](http://lotno3.com), [koralbellevue.com](http://koralbellevue.com), [monsoonrestaurants.com/east](http://monsoonrestaurants.com/east), [elgauch.com](http://elgauch.com), [ci.bellevue.wa.us/mercerc\\_slough.htm](http://ci.bellevue.wa.us/mercerc_slough.htm).

## Eugene, Oregon

When you go to Eugene, make Inn at the 5th your home base. This relatively new hotel is a perfect blend of sustainability and luxury. With its AAA Four Diamond rating, it ranks as one of the Northwest's finest destination hotels.

If a historic B&B is more your comfort zone, the Market District is home to the Campbell House, an elegant and superbly run inn.

This 150-year-old city, known as "Tracktown USA" and the home of the Oregon Ducks, sits snugly in the southern reaches of the Willamette Valley. That means fresh, local foods and great wine, expressed by two of Inn at the 5th's neighbors. LaVelle Vineyards' Tasting Room sits beside the hotel, a perfect place to unwind with a wine flight. And there's no better place to savor local flavor than at Marché Restaurant, also adjacent to the inn. Eugene is an epicenter of Oregon's bounty. With its impressive wine list and knowledgeable sommelier,

Marché has earned its place in what has become one of the world's finest wine and culinary regions.

In the morning, head to the Fifth Street Public Market, adjacent to the Inn at the 5th, for your favorite espresso drink and fresh artisan pastry at Marché Provisions. (Tip: For a wake-up call, try the scrumptious lemon-ginger pound cake.) While you're there, provision a rustic picnic of bread, charcuterie and cheese for the afternoon, or get gourmet box lunches to go.

Head to one of Eugene's best kept secrets: 80-acre Hendricks Park, the city's oldest, near the University of Oregon. Find the world-renowned rhododendron and native plant garden. Marvel at 200-year-old Douglas firs. Meander the paths to retreat into the tranquility of nature.

**"Eugene is an epicenter of Oregon's bounty."**

**Fun Find:** The Whiteaker Arts District (known as The Whit) has a hip and funky vibe (in a good way). It's home to murals, wineries, cafes and Ninkasi Brewing Co., worth a stop for a sample board of their fine brews. If hunger strikes, nearby choices will give you a real feel for the genuine Eugene: Papa's Soul



Fifth Street Public Market

Kitchen, Cornbread Cafe (vegan) or New Day Bakery. And, for a taste of another fine winery's pours, go to nearby Territorial Vineyards & Wine Company's Tasting Room. All are in The Whit, just west of downtown.

## THE DETAILS

[eugenecascadescoast.org](http://eugenecascadescoast.org), [innat5th.com](http://innat5th.com), [lavellevineyards.com](http://lavellevineyards.com), [5stmarket.com](http://5stmarket.com), [marcherestaurant.com](http://marcherestaurant.com), [marcheprovisions.com](http://marcheprovisions.com), [eugene-or.gov](http://eugene-or.gov), [campbellhouse.com](http://campbellhouse.com), [ninkasibrewing.com](http://ninkasibrewing.com).

## Boise, Idaho

With Boise's down-home, welcoming vibes, a visit here is as comfortable as slipping on your favorite sweater on a cold day. Rich in history, culture, arts, entertainment and great casual dining, you won't experience a dull moment.





Ann Morrison Park and the Boise Foothills

Here, retro is in and refurbished lodgings abound: Hotel 43, with its cozy yet uber-stylish décor; The Modern Hotel and Bar, a renovated Travelodge that is enjoying a new, mid-century modern, minimalist life, and whose bar serves possibly the best craft cocktails west of the Rockies; and The Riverside Hotel, a sprawling 14-acre property, refurbished with a “Mad Men” touch (check out the hotel’s Sapphire Lounge for its sexy time-warp décor and an evening of live jazz).

Downtown Boise is wonderfully walkable. Visit Julia Davis Park for its concentration of cultural sites. Begin at the Boise Art Museum’s 34,800-square-foot facility, and, if you’re traveling with children, visit its interactive ARTexperience Gallery. If you’re there on a weekend, pick up Art Activity Packs for the kids to make their museum experience extra fun. Other attractions at the park are Idaho State Historical Museum; Idaho Black History Museum; Discovery Center of Idaho, a hands-on science

center; and the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial, an outdoor plaza and garden known for the artistic and timeless presentation of its meaningful message.

While you’re exploring downtown, head to the Basque Block on Grove St. According to exhibits at The Basque Museum & Cultural Center, Idaho has the largest community of Basque people outside the Basque region bordering Spain and France. At the Basque Museum, learn about their culture, customs and language, and how they became a part of the fabric of Idaho’s cultural heritage.

Finally, when night falls, head to The Flicks theater to grab a bite at the cafe and take in an indie film with the locals.

**Fun Find:** The Old Idaho Penitentiary expelled its last inmate and closed its infamous doors in 1973 after 100 years of continuous operation. Today, “The Old Pen” welcomes visitors to tour its rose-gardens, cell blocks, solitary confinement cells (aka “Siberia”) and gallows.

Idaho Historical Society guides offer an informative if not creepy walk through this old-school prison. It’s located on the edge of town, and is well worth the visit.

## THE DETAILS

*boise.org, hotel43.com, themodernhotel.com, riversideboise.com, parks.cityofboise.org/parks-locations/parks/julia-davis-park, thebasqueblock.com, theflicksboise.com, history.idaho.gov/old-idaho-penitentiary.*

## Victoria, B.C.

Lace doilies. Silver tea service. Hushed, polite conversation in walnut-paneled parlors. That’s the Victoria experience many remember.

Fast forward to the 21st century. Not a lace doily in sight. Today, B.C.’s provincial government seat presents a vibrant, youthful face. There’s no denying the city is steeped in history and tradition—that’s part of its charm—but present-day Victorians are marching to a more





Selkirk Trestle bridge on the Galloping Goose Trail in Victoria

contemporary cadence, and this makes this diverse city an exciting place for a getaway. The fun of Victoria is fashioning your own experiences. Here are a few suggested stops worthy of consideration.

Visit the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (AGGV) to view the works of one of Canada's most beloved early-20th-century painters, Emily Carr, showing through June 30, 2013. If you wish to immerse yourself further in Carr's life, characterized by her contemporaries as "bohemian," tour the Emily Carr House, her family home on Government Street near Parliament.

Silk Road, a popular shop in Chinatown, is about all things tea and aromatherapy. Stop in for a 2:00 p.m. Tea Tasting on Saturday or Sunday, and learn from a tea master how to select and sip tea properly. Linger and treat your complexion to a green tea facial in the shop's on-site spa—yes, men love it too.

Hit the Galloping Goose Trail, a rail-to-trail recreation path that traces the old railroad route from the Inner Harbour to the foothills. Either bicycle or walking shoes will do. Victoria has been deemed

Canada's fittest city, so you'll be in good company. Plan your excursion; this trail is 60 km. long with legs in two directions from Victoria. You might even pack a picnic to pause at a scenic spot along the way before you do an about face for your return to the city.

Victoria has no shortage of great lodging. A few recommendations are: Hotel Grand Pacific, ideally located right on the Inner Harbour; and any one of Victoria Historic Inns, a collection of charming in-city mansions. Also on the harbour, you'll find exceptional comfort and service at The Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Hotel and Spa, and, of course, tradition and grand

style await at The Fairmont Empress. For more intimate lodging, reminiscent of an old country inn, try Spinnakers Brewpub & Guest House on the bay; here, you'll find a diverse

**"British Columbia's capital city, enjoys extremely mild temperatures all year round."**

and excellent menu, great craft beers and luxurious rooms.

**Fun Find:** Victoria Bug Zoo houses the biggest ant farm in Canada, exhibits of more than 50 species of exotic live insects from around the world, and some bugs that, with supervision, you can even handle. (Want to hold a tarantula? Here, you can do it.) It's both creepy and educational, a fun attraction for the whole family.

## THE DETAILS

[tourismvictoria.co](http://tourismvictoria.co), [aggv.ca](http://aggv.ca), [emilycarr.com](http://emilycarr.com), [silkroadtea.com](http://silkroadtea.com), [gallopinggoosetrail.com](http://gallopinggoosetrail.com), [hotelgrandpacific.com](http://hotelgrandpacific.com), [victoriashistoricinns.com](http://victoriashistoricinns.com), [deltahotels.com](http://deltahotels.com), [fairmont.com/empres-victoria](http://fairmont.com/empres-victoria), [spinnakers.com](http://spinnakers.com), [bugzoo.bc.ca](http://bugzoo.bc.ca)



Victoria's Inner Harbour