

The Alaska Airlines logo is written in a white, stylized script font across the top of the page. The background of the entire page is a photograph of a young person in traditional Alaskan regalia, including a large feathered headdress and a white tunic with blue and yellow geometric patterns.

Alaska Airlines®

JUNE 2009

**Summer
Celebrations**
Festivals showcase
Alaska's rich cultural heritage

Portland's *Rich Palette*

Fine art, recreation and dining opportunities abound

By Vi Ho

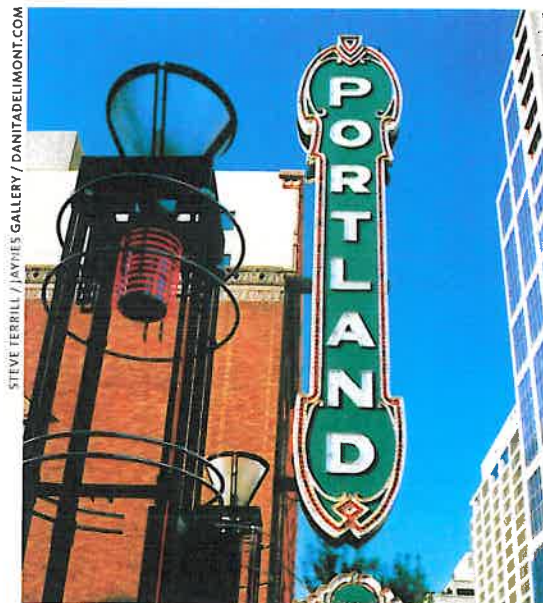
IT'S ANOTHER SUNNY SATURDAY in Portland, Oregon: Wake to a bustling brunch scene, take in an hour of mountain bike-riding in Forest Park, go to a museum, and stop by one of the many sidewalk cafes scattered throughout the city. When it comes to arts and recreation, this city has abundant opportunities. Vast amounts of public space, many miles of biking trails and dog-friendly parks all help give Portland a small-town feel, but with a population of 580,000 and acclaimed art and restaurant offerings, Portland also has big-city appeal.

"The city enjoys world-class opera, symphony, theater and ballet from its major arts producers; it sports an exciting mix of entertainment that spans all spectrums," says Christopher Mattaliano, Portland Opera general director. "Like the food scene, there's literally something here to suit every taste."

After indulging in a delightful breakfast of scrambled eggs, crispy apple-wood-smoked bacon and a side of cheese grits at the Tin Shed, I hop on my metallic-green bicycle with a cushiony seat. In true pedal-friendly Portland fashion, I ride west across the Willamette River on the Broadway Bridge.

The Willamette River, which passes through Oregon's wine country to the south, flows north through Portland, dividing it in two. Downtown is situated on the west side and 12 bridges connect the two sides. The mighty Columbia River to the north of town provides a natural border between Oregon and Washington and absorbs the Willamette before continuing nearly 100 miles northwest to the Pacific Coast.

I'm on my way to the Portland Farmers Market—not to be confused with the arts-and-crafts Saturday Market. The Farmers Market takes place in the grassy South Park Blocks downtown, near Portland State University, every Saturday from March through December 19. The park is a stretch of 12 blocks with trees, sculptures and grassy open areas. The lush expanse is flanked by many of the city's theaters, civic buildings and museums.



STEVE FERRILL / JAVIER'S GALLERY / DANITADELMONT.COM

ROBERT REYNOLDS, COURTESY: POVA

Opposite: Children play with cow sculptures at the Portland Farmers Market in the South Park Blocks. Top: A 65-foot Portland sign welcomes visitors to the beautifully restored Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, home of the Oregon Symphony. Above: Wildwood Trail winds for 30 miles through 5,100-acre Forest Park in northeast Portland.

90 percent of its gallery space to the permanent collection, which includes contemporary and modern art, English silver and two floors of Native American art.

I find intricate baskets woven from a variety of plants, including sedge, and ornate baby cradles made with leather and wool cloth, and adorned with intricate beads arranged into colorful floral designs.

A special exhibit, "APEX: Chris Jordan," has selections from Jordan's "Running the Numbers: An American Self-Portrait" series. Each of the Seattle-based artist's pieces in the exhibit offers a striking, often startling, visual representation of the statistics of modern life. I'm fascinated by a print that, from afar, looks like a plain canvas. When I look closer, I see images of thousands of cell phones—426,000 to be exact. The image depicts the approximate

LODGING & DINING

LODGING

INN AT NORTHRUP STATION

Bright prints, festive furniture and vibrant artwork at this hotel provide stimulating topics for conversation. Located along Portland's streetcar line, this boutique hotel has everyone in the family in mind with two TVs, three phones and a fully equipped kitchen in each room. Rates start at \$149. 503-224-0543; www.northrupstation.com.

THE HEATHMAN HOTEL

Located next to the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, this hotel is also close to the Portland Art Museum and Pioneer Courthouse Square, a popular city park. The hotel also features curated art exhibits and the James Beard Award-winning Heathman Restaurant. Rates start at \$189. 800-551-0011; www.heathmanhotel.com.

HOTEL DELUXE

This glittering boutique hotel pays homage to Hollywood's golden era, and each floor is categorized by different directors from that time. Enjoy soft sheets and panoramic city views. Rates start at \$119. 503-219-2094; www.hotel-deluxe.com.

DINING

DEPARTURE RESTAURANT + LOUNGE

Go up to the 15th floor of the Nines Hotel by elevator, to this restaurant with ocean liner accents, two outdoor patios and gorgeous views of downtown Portland. This lovely restaurant and lounge offers Japanese small plates, more than 30 specialty sakes and shochu (a distilled beverage native to Japan). 503-802-5370; www.departureportland.com.

PINE STATE BISCUITS

Who would've thought a small stand at the Portland Farmers Market would quickly grow to a hot spot filled with biscuit-baking aromas, six days a week? The shiitake-gravy biscuits are a local favorite. 503-236-3346; www.pinestatebiscuits.com.

TORO BRAVO

Order several small plates at this Spanish-inspired tapas shop. Watch the chefs in action from the bar as they prepare scrumptious dishes. Start with the salty cod fritters and a refreshing sangria. 503-281-4464; www.torobravopdx.com.

—V.H.

number of cell phones retired in the United States every day.

Jordan's exhibit runs through July 12 and is part of the museum's APEX series, which focuses on Northwest art and artists. From consumer goods to energy use, I ponder the numbers as I leave the museum and go home to get ready for dinner.

After freshening up, I drive with Tim, my dinner date, to the Urban Farmer, an upscale restaurant inside the Nines hotel. The restaurant has a seven-story atrium, and the interior is a mix of chic steak house and simple farmhouse. Decorative rows of wheat and other grasses accent the dining area, while video scenes of Portland play on the wall: The video-imagery display is part of the hotel's extensive art collection, which includes sculptures, paintings and installations.

Tim opts for the American Wagyu Bavette. It's pan-seared and served perfectly rare.

"I think this is the best steak I've ever had," he says. I try a bite, and it tastes deliciously tender and rich—heartier than my delicate Pacific cod.

After dinner, we drive to the Keller Auditorium, which hosts operas, jazz concerts, ballet and modern-dance performances, as well as national tours of Broadway productions. Tonight we're here to see the award-winning Broadway musical *Wicked*, the untold story of the witches in *The Wizard of Oz* before Dorothy dropped in.

As we await the performance in the lobby, we gaze out the floor-to-ceiling windows at the spectacular Ira C. Keller Fountain, where water flows smoothly over stone terraces, pooling in several places and falling dramatically in others. Once inside the nearly 3,000-seat auditorium, we marvel at the wonderful acoustics and special effects that include flying monkeys. I'm pleased to find that the Broadway hit *Rent* will be here June 23–28.

FOREST PARK

The next morning, I enjoy a hearty breakfast at the diner-style Stepping Stone Cafe in Northwest Portland, with its amusing tagline of "You eat here because we let you." If you can eat their

COURTESY: POVA



The Portland Art Museum displays approximately 42,000 objects.