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Posh Portland

Explore this Northwest gem for a surprisingly sophisticated weekend **BY NATHAN COOPER**



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP A suite at The Nines. Oysters at Le Pigeon. Design depot Canoe. Tapas destination Toro Bravo. Uptown's retro-chic Hotel Deluxe. The Ace Hotel.

Craving a dose of urban sophistication, Californians typically envision grand journeys to far-flung capitals of cool like London, New York or Shanghai. Fascinating escapes, no doubt, but tough to swing for a weekend.

These days, a far more manageable alternative awaits significantly closer to the Golden State at the intersection of Oregon's Columbia and Willamette rivers. After a decade-long migration of bon vivants from around the country, Portland has evolved into a quirky and sparkling urban gem infused with an epicurean, nature-obsessed way of life.

The leading places to stay fall within the vicinity of downtown, on Portland's more polished Westside. **Ace Hotel** (503-228-2277; acehotel.com)—albeit on the no-frills end of the hospitality spectrum—charms with a style that recalls a hunting lodge reimagined by Martin Margiela. The most fashionable new hotel, **The Nines** (503-222-9996; thenines.com), fills the top floors of a downtown tower with Regency-inspired furniture and a whimsical library lounge.

Up the hill from the city's center, in the rapidly evolving Uptown neighborhood, **Hotel deLuxe** (503-219-2094; hoteldeluxeportland.com) taps into 1940s glamour with velvets galore and a buzzing cocktail lounge.

Beyond taking in the ecological splendor of the trails winding through Portland's sprawling Washington Park or popping into urbane boutiques such as objet emporium **Canoe** (503-889-8545; canoeonline.net), sampling the city's exceptional cuisine is the main event.

Many of the most in-demand tables are on the Eastside. Gourmands make pilgrimages to pint-sized eateries such as tapas spot **Toro Bravo** (503-281-4464; torobravopdx.com). French boîte **Le Pigeon** (503-546-8796; lepigeon.com) or chef Naomi Pomeroy's modern tasting menu venue **Beast** (503-841-6968; beastpdx.com).

Zippering around the walkable city, it's easy to begin wondering why Portland isn't overrun by refugees from more expensive or less livable corners of the country, as well as how Portland has managed to maintain its authentic and palpably independent vibe as its profile has soared in recent years. A big part of it, alas, is the all-too-real role played by the city's mythically soggy climate. The secret to falling in love with Portland? Visit between May and September. Just when the city's roses and charms have you firmly in their grip, remember it rains there the other eight months of the year. ●