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GO > LAYOVER

By Julian Smith
Photographs by
Kurt Hettle



Pacific Panache

PORTLANDERS SEEM TO BE ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF ... WELL, EVERYTHING. WELCOME TO THE WEST COAST CAPITAL OF COOL.

PORTLAND, OREGON, GETS SO MUCH FAWNING PRESS, you start to think there has to be a catch. This year alone, the City of Roses has graced top-ten lists of the cleanest and most eco-friendly places in the country, and it has been voted one of the best places to have a baby and to make an independent movie.

If there is a downside to this über-green metropolis, sandwiched between the Cascade Range and the wild Oregon coast, it's the lingering gray winters, says Jamin Aasum, a senior designer for Mahlum Architects, one of the city's leading sustainable-design firms, with dozens of notable projects around the city to its credit. "The quality of life here is incredible," he says as he unwinds on Manzanita Beach, after a surf session nearby, "though by spring you're definitely ready for some sun." Still, he adds, even the downside has an upside: The moderate year-round temperatures are perfect for running.

Aasum should know. The Oregon native has clocked a four-minute mile and barely missed qualifying for the 1988 Olympic team in the 1,500 meters. Still racing at 49, Aasum (pronounced, fittingly, "awesome") has also taken up cycling, skiing, kayaking, and surfing, all of which, he says, can be found in the city limits or close by. Portland isn't all about the outdoors, though. "We have fantastic restaurants with locally produced beers, wine, and cheeses, and world-class chefs to put it together," he continues. "It's a place that's all about balance—personally, professionally, and physically."

CITY WITH A YOUTHFUL FACE

From left, reputed to have some of the city's most sophisticated food, Bluehour has a great bar, as well; architect Aasum on a rare sunny day.

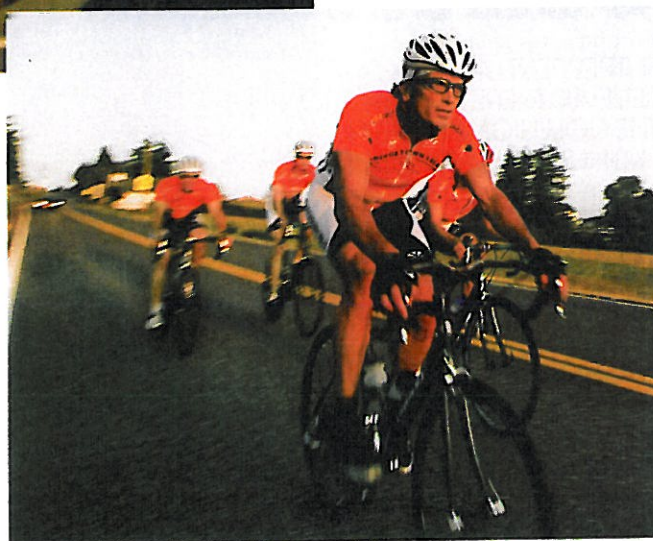
METROPOLITAN PURSUITS

Clockwise from above, the best burger in town at **Bluehour**; Aasum spins with some friends down **Skyline**; the **Hotel deLuxe**; **St. Honoré Boulangerie**.

1 When he's in training mode, Aasum runs intervals on the trails of **Forest Park**, the country's largest urban forest reserve. "It's a near-wilderness experience only 15 minutes from my office," he says with obvious relish. After a quiet run among old-growth Douglas firs, grab a café au lait and the perfect croissant at **St. Honoré Boulangerie** (sthonorebakery.com), where a statue of the patron saint of bakers overlooks wicker baskets full of crusty loaves.

2 Portland has more bike commuters per capita than any U.S. city, and an afternoon roll along the Willamette River, with views of five Cascade volcanoes, will convince you that it's not all about saving gas. The **40-Mile Loop** bike trail (40mileloop.org) crosses three bridges as it circles the city. If you want more views for less mileage, take Northwest Cornell Road from downtown up to Skyline Drive along the crest of Forest Park. Should you visit in autumn, bring your bike for the **Cross Crusade** (crosscrusade.com), the world's largest participatory cyclocross series. Even if you're just watching, it's hard to resist the thrill of throngs of fans cheering on hundreds of mud-caked racers.

3 Aasum steers visiting guests toward the **Hotel deLuxe** (hoteldeluxeportland.com), voted the city's top boutique hotel for its mix of art deco style and ultramodern amenities. Head past the lobby's shark-skin lamps to find the cozy Screening Room theater, showing



works by regional filmmakers. In summer, the Northwest Film Center (nwfilm.org) offers flicks, food, and live music on the hotel rooftop.

4 With so much fresh produce available nearby, the standards at Portland eateries have climbed so high it's tough to find a food cart that doesn't use local organic ingredients. Aasum calls the burgers at **Blue-hour** (bluehour-online.com) the best in town, especially after a hard workout. If you're still in your trainers, sit at the bar and order it medium-rare with homemade relish and a pint of Trippel Belgian ale. Alternatively, if you've already show-

ered, opt for a table and the seared sea scallops wrapped in smoked bacon or the artisan foie gras steak with roasted figs.

5 Local style teeters somewhere between hiking casual and hipster. Stand out in the crowd with a tailored suit from **Mario's** (marios.com), a Portland fashion institution that stocks Isaia, Corneliani, and Zegna. For a contemporary touch, pick up a shirt by John Blasioli, a designer who has outfitted local musicians the Decemberists, at **A Broken Spoke** (abrokenspoke.com). ☺



> Home to Pink Martini and the Shins, Portland is edging out Seattle as the alt-music epicenter. Catch the talent at the **Doug Fir** (dougfir-lounge.com), a timber-wall space

with outstanding acoustics.
> Escape to the ocean in **Manzanita**, 90 minutes west, where you can take an early bike ride along the seaside cliffs, then grab fresh oysters at the Manzanita Seafood Market.
> Beat the winter

blues on sunny Mount Hood, an hour's drive east, with skate skiing at the **Teacup Lake Nordic Club** (teacupnordic.org). Afterwards, enjoy a Glenlivet and panoramic views of the 11,235-foot peak at **Charlie's Mountain View**

(charliesmountainview.com).
> Don't miss the house-cured charcuterie plates at **Higgins** (higgins.ypguides.net), a downtown favorite that blends Pacific Northwest flavors with French culinary panache.
> To blow off

steam after a workweek, Aasum likes to drive his Alfa Romeo Spider up the Columbia River Gorge, past Hood River's windsurf armada and up narrow **Fulton Canyon** to the wheat fields and the silence of the high desert.