

exploring

our world

LILLY LONGSHORE

Beautiful Portland

After we passed the fourth bumper sticker that read “Keep Portland Weird,” we had to wonder what’s behind that phrase.

With businesses like Voodoo Donuts, where one can enjoy cereal-adorned vegan donuts while legally getting married (voodoodoughnut.com), or events like the Urban Idiotarod, where “idiots” in costumes race modified shopping carts from pub to pub, anything can happen here. It’s what makes Portland, Ore., well, weird.

Portland’s off-beat culture is surpassed only by its natural beauty. With plenty of wheelchair accessible sights, there is much to do.

City of Roses

My husband accompanied me on my wheelchair-friendly tour starting with the International Rose Test Garden, one of the six attractions at Washington Park (washingtonparkpdx.org/attractions).

I rolled along the brick Queen’s Walk over the plaques from Rose Festivals dating back to 1907 with a spectacular view of downtown and snow-capped Mount Hood.



INGRAM PUBLISHING/THINKSTOCK

Washington Park in Portland, Ore., is home to the famous International Rose Test Garden.

The 10,000-plus roses planted throughout the four-and-a-half acres displayed an array of hues from rich reds to delicate yellows and pinks — all experimental hybrids with new colors and fragrances. Each variety had its own rosy scent — robust, sweet or light.

A train whistle blew behind us. It was the zoo train filled with giggling, waving kids completing its loop around Washington Park. This historic train is wheelchair accessible.

Close to downtown, sounds of lively marimbas filled the air as we neared the Portland Saturday Market in the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District (portlandsaturdaymarket.com).

We squeezed by booths of jewelry made from Mount Saint Helen’s ash, handmade pottery and retro tie-dyed T-shirts. Smells of fried elephant ears and pad Thai wafted past us. I could see a ship, the Portland Spirit, gliding by Waterfront Park down the Willamette River, beginning its lunchtime cruise.

A Sense of Serenity

Tucked away on Portland’s urban eastside is The Grotto, a serene 62-acre spiritual sanctuary and botanical gardens open to all seeking tranquility and inspiration (thegrotto.org).



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The Queen’s Walk features a bronze star honoring each Rose Festival queen since 1907.



Portland Saturday Market

Officially called The National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother, it's home to a handful of Catholic Servite friars who live in the rustic stone monastery and care for the expansive grounds.

We took the shaded path on the plaza level through ferns and firs, past the Stations of the Cross and the gift shop to the outdoor sanctuary. At the center of a 110-foot cliff wall in the sanctuary cove was a life-size marble replica of Michelangelo's Pietà, flanked by two large stands of flickering candles. The peaceful, open atmosphere where smells of damp earth and burn-

Portland's off-beat culture is surpassed only by its natural beauty.



The Grotto Monastery

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ing candles drifted in the air created a mood for contemplation.

For \$4.50 each, we took the elevator up to the botanical gardens. Multitudes of flowers surrounded saintly statues along meandering paths. The Meditation Chapel perched on top of Rocky Butte offered a phenomenal

view of Mount Saint Helens and the Columbia River. It provided a sense of serenity, a gem in this busy city.

Normal Vancouver

Across from Portland, on the north bank of the swiftly flowing Columbia River, Vancouver, Wash., has a dif-

ferent feel (visitvancouverusa.com). Here the bumper stickers read "Keep Vancouver Normal."

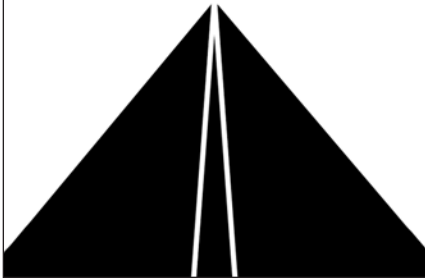
Vancouver is green-minded and has a small-town appeal even though it's the fourth-largest city in Washington.

Historically, Vancouver was the location of the central headquarters



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Carved out of the face of a cliff, The Grotto is approximately 30 feet wide, 30 feet deep and almost 50 feet high, and features a replica of Michelangelo's Pietà.



Among the many U.S. generals to have served at Fort Vancouver were George C. Marshall, Ulysses S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Omar Bradley and George Pickett.



The McLoughlin House became one of the first national historic sites designated in the western United States in 1941.

and main supply depot for the British Hudson’s Bay Company. Now called Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, this spot was the original end of the Oregon Trail (fortvan.org).

It was where John McLoughlin, Chief Factor for Hudson’s Bay, assisted many destitute Americans at the end of their long journey to the west.

Ranger Robert Gutierrez took us through the McLoughlin House at the fort’s entrance.

A long dining table meticulously set for more than a dozen guests was displayed in the spacious, green-painted dining room. All the walls in the house were brightly painted cherry red, vibrant blue or brilliant green.

“The color green was thought to aid in digestion,” Gutierrez told us. “Bright paints were a status symbol back then.”

As I passed a fine china teapot Gutierrez added, “This supply depot was called the ‘New York City of the West.’ You could get Brazilian tobacco, Italian glass beads — supplies from literally all over the world.”

The other structures of the pioneer village included a blacksmith shop, jail and a counting house. The



The McLoughlin House is restored to help tell of the life and accomplishments of John McLoughlin, known by many as the “Father of Oregon.”

Pearson Air Museum and Officer’s Row adjacent to the village are well worth a visit.

A Dynamic Refuge

On Vancouver’s north edge, the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge offers fan-



A nutria, a South American rodent, at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

This 5,217-acre reserve is one of about 550 wetland refuges nationwide. We drove the 4½ mile Auto Tour through Oregon ash and oak tree stands, past grassy fields, sloughs and marshlands. Flocks of dusky Canada geese cackled loudly as they feasted on grass roots.

“There’s a blue heron!” my husband exclaimed as he pointed to a large bird wading in a shallow slough on long, dark stick legs.

A nutria (an invasive South American rodent) slipped into the pond beside us, silently swimming away.

A hooded merganser dove under the water as we approached. I saw a lot on this short drive.

I wheeled down the Kiwa trail, an accessible 1.4-mile packed gravel and boardwalk loop. It took us over marshlands and through oak woods. A red-winged blackbird sang as he perched on a cattail poking high out of the marshy water.

The vibrant bird calls and earthy smells of decomposing vegetation were stimulating. I was delighted to have easy access to this dynamic refuge.

For more information on the Portland area, visit travelportland.com. ■

tastic opportunities for viewing wildlife native to America’s diminishing wetlands (fws.gov/ridgefieldrefuges).

An advertisement for the KEMPF DARIOS Digital Accelerator Ring. The background is a photograph of a car's interior, showing a white leather steering wheel with a Mercedes-Benz logo, a dashboard with a digital display, and a view of a mountain landscape through the windshield. The text "Update your hand controls!" is overlaid at the top. The DARIOS logo and "Digital Accelerator Ring" are in the upper right. The KEMPF logo is in the bottom left. Contact information and a QR code are in the bottom right.

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