

Below, from top: Woodward Canyon Winery's Cabernet Franc vineyard in Walla Walla; Willakenzie Estate, Willamette Valley. Opposite: Canoe Ridge Vineyard, Columbia Valley



THEY do things differently out here. Nike, Microsoft, Starbucks and the odd volcanic eruption aside, the Pacific Northwest is America's capital of understatement.

Down the coast in California, flash and extravagance are the norm. The wine industry follows suit in the Napa and Sonoma Valleys where wineries function as theme parks and getting a table at chef Thomas Keller's French Laundry becomes more important than the meal itself.

Up north, spectacular scenery – majestic mountains, carpets of ever-green forests, rushing rivers – does the shouting. Everything else just goes about life with a quiet ease.

Oregon caught the world's attention with sumptuous Pinot Noirs, these days her Pinot Gris are drawing accolades and awards. Washington State, Oregon's neighbour to the north, has quietly turned into one of the country's most watched wine-producing regions and is now America's second largest producer of premium wines.

Portland is big enough to offer first-class hotels, excellent restaurants and lots of antique stores without the less desirable trappings – traffic, noise, urban sprawl – of a large metropolis. Constant reminders of the surrounding natural beauty are on every corner: bronze bears frolic in fountains, traffic yields to the majestic elk statue smack in the middle of Main Street and the

Willamette River babbles through the centre of the city. The snowy peak of stately Mount Hood frames Portland, on clear days the remnants of Mt St Helens and other, still intact, volcanoes add an extra touch of drama.

ON THE TOWN

You don't need to leave town to sample many wine gems. Oregon Wines on Broadway, a congenial wine bar downtown, is a great source of Oregonian wines as well as those from neighbouring states. As expected, Willamette Valley Pinot Noirs, from wineries like Domaine Serene and Beaux Frères, play a starring role.

A few blocks away, Greg Higgins matches the delights of Pacific Northwest wines with gorgeous food. The northwest is known for excellent seafood, and his smooth, unpretentious restaurant is a perfect place to explore the bounties from the region's ocean and rivers. Up in the northwest district, a favourite setting for shopping, dining and people-watching, Vitaly Paley also pairs the region's fine vintages with superlative cooking.

To stay in Portland, both the Hotel Lucia and the Heathman Hotel provide creature comforts with style.

With Portland as your base, an hour's drive places you in the centre of the North Willamette Valley wine region. Function definitely takes precedence over style in the quiet

The wild west

The Pacific Northwest ranges from bustling city Seattle to wild, remote Walla Walla. LYNN ELSEY recommends the best places to visit, sleep and eat

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valley. Wineries are usually small. It is rare to find anything other than wine to buy. Some are only open for tasting by appointment, others, such as Beaux Frères, not at all.

OREGON GUIDE BOOK:

Wineries

■ **WILLAKENZIE ESTATE**

Tasting: Daily in the summer, Fri–Sun in the winter.

and by appointment. Laughlin Road, Yamhill.

Tel: +1 503 662 3280

Don't Miss: Emery and Alette Pinot Noir, 2000 Pinot Gris

■ **DOMAINE DROUHIN OREGON**

Tasting: Open by appointment Wed–Sat. Dundee.

Tel: +1 503 864 2700

Don't Miss: Louise Drouhin Pinot Noir, Chardonnay Red Hills Estate

■ **ARCHERY SUMMIT WINERY**

Tasting: Thu–Sun; reservations required.

Archery Summit Road, Dayton.

Tel: +1 503 864 4300

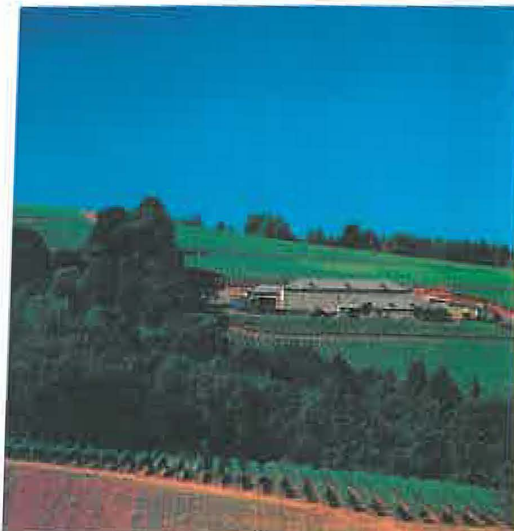
Don't miss 1999 Archery Summit Estate; 2000 Vireton-Blanc des Collines Rouges

■ **BRICKHOUSE VINEYARDS**

Tasting: By appointment. Lewis Rogers Lane.

Newberg. **Tel:** +1 503 538 5136





Above, clockwise from top left: Seven Hills Vineyard, Walla Walla; Seven Hills Vineyard; Archery Summit Winery and vineyard, Oregon. Opposite, from top: Bernard Lacroute of Willakenzie Estate, Willamette Valley; Canoe Ridge Vineyard, Columbia Valley

Dining

- HIGGINS, 1239 SW Broadway.
Tel: +1 503 222 9070

- PALEYS PLACE, 1204 NW 21st Ave.
Tel: +1 503 243 2403

- OREGON WINES ON BROADWAY, 515 SW Broadway. Tel: +1 503 228 4655

- JOEL PALMER HOUSE, 600 Ferry Street, Dayton. Tel: +1 503 864 2995 (call for directions).
A must for fungi aficionados

Accommodation

- HOTEL LUCIA, 400 SW Broadway.
Tel: +1 503 225 1717

- HEATHMAN HOTEL, 1001 SW Broadway.
Tel: +1 503 241 4100

More info: Portland Oregon Visitors Association, 1000 SW Broadway, Suite 2300, Portland, OR 97205. Tel: +1 503 275 9750

Visitors who venture to the eastern side of the Cascade Mountains should prepare for a visual shock. While the western slopes of the Pacific Northwest are defined by swathes of

emerald, eastwards green gives way to brown rolling hills. Central Washington is as dry and sunny as the coastal flank is wet and cloudy. Sagacious Pinots deflect to fuller-bodied Cabernets and Merlots.

Walla Walla is a five-hour drive from almost everywhere. The journey from Portland takes you smack through the gorgeous Columbia Gorge into the heart of a wilder west.

For years Walla Walla was off the beaten track. The small college town was best known for its occasional mention as a generic remote location and its delicious sweet onions.

Leonetti set up shop in 1977; an auspicious precursor to the 30+, often highly acclaimed, wineries in the area today. Walla Walla's wine industry is informal, small and often innovative. The proof is in the buildings. Wine is poured in old school houses, trolley stations and mills. Reinger Winery was founded in the original 'crash house'

(runway fire engine house) at the Walla Walla Airport.

Walla Walla's remote location helps retain the low-key flavour of the area but, fortunately, the gourmands have found their way to the city's historic brick-building downtown.

'You can't go wrong with Whitehouse-Crawford,' says Darcey Fugman-Small, of Woodward Canyon Winery, 'it's the nicest place in town.' Other favourites include Creektown Café, perfect for alfresco dining, and the Grapefields wine bar with its 'cool atmosphere and good food'.

WALLA WALLA GUIDE BOOK

Wineries

- L'ECOLE NO 41
Tasting: Daily (call during winter) in the old schoolhouse, 41 Lowden School Road.
Tel: +1 503 525 0940

- CAYUSE VINEYARDS
Tasting: Fri-Sun or by appointment, East Main

Street, Walla Walla. Tel: +1 509 526 0686
 Don't miss: 1999 Syrah Walla Walla Valley

WOODWARD CANYON

Tasting: Daily, Lowden. Tel: +1 509 526 4129
 Don't Miss: 2000 Walla Walla Valley and Columbia Valley Merlots, all the Cabernet Sauvignons and Columbia Valley Chardonnay

REININGER WINERY

Tasting: "If we're here, we're open."
 Appointments useful. C Street, Walla Walla.
 Tel: +1 509 522 1994
 Don't Miss: 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley, 1999 Merlot Walla Walla Valley

CANOE RIDGE VINEYARD

Tasting: Daily, Cherry Street, Walla Walla.
 Tel: +1 509 527 0885
 Don't miss: Vineyard Chardonnay

Dining

GRAPEFIELDS, 4 E Main Street

Tel: +1 509 522 3993

WHITEHOUSE-CRAWFORD RESTAURANT,

55 Cherry Street, Walla Walla.
 Tel: +1 509 525 2222

Accommodation

MILL CREEK INN, 2014 Mill Creek Road, Walla Walla. Tel: +1 509 522 1234. This old wheat ranch offers cottage, barn and hayloft accommodation with fantastic views.

MARCUS WHITMAN HOTEL, 6 West Rose Street, Walla Walla. Tel: +1 509 525 2200. A historic building in the town centre.

More info: Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 644, Walla Walla, WA 99362. Tel: +1 509 525 0850

After the ochre and western tones of Central Washington, Seattle feels like an oasis of sophistication. Lakes, rivers and bays anchor the rolling hills. Mount Rainier looms in the background. Unlike Portland, Seattle bustles. Skyscrapers and sports stadiums dominate the downtown skyline, restaurants, pricey boutiques and Starbucks coffee stores fill in the gaps.

Sandwiched between the commerce, trees and water are some of the state's finer wineries. Though they operate their tasting rooms in the Seattle area, most

source their grapes from vineyards in the Yakima, Walla Walla and Columbia Valley regions.

Although a bona fide member of the laid-back Pacific Northwest fraternity, Seattle does it with a dose of worldly-wise consumerism. The area's oldest winery, Chateau Ste Michelle, borders on the winery-as-event theme. The stately winery offers a variety of classes, concerts, and even a glass art gallery along with award-winning wines. But it is still worth a visit.

For something more subdued, visit Cadence. The perfunctory building, in an industrial downtown Seattle location, houses one of the city's top wineries. And in the leafy Woodinville area, DeLille and Hedges shouldn't be missed.

For accommodation, the Willows Lodge provides plush, lodging and is well located for wine touring. But if city living beckons, make a beeline for the Alexis Hotel in the heart of Seattle.

Seattle-ites are proud of their bounty. Local wines garner special attention and the wine merchants are delighted to point you in the direction of delicious unsung heroes. Restaurant wine lists are often treasure troves of unknown but worth-discovering newcomers as well as hard-to-find gems (such as Leonetti Cabernet Sauvignon).

For dining, Cascadia and Campagne match terrific wines with stylish fare; Ray's Boathouse adds a bay-front setting.

SEATTLE GUIDE BOOK

Wineries

CHATEAU STE MICHELLE

Tasting: Daily, Woodinville.
 Tel: +1 425 415 3632

DELILLE CELLARS

Tasting: By appointment only, Fri preferred. Woodinville. Tel: +1 425 489 0544
 Don't Miss: Velvet Syrahs, Chaleur Estate Yakima Valley Red, Chaleur Estate Blanc.

CADENCE WINERY

Tasting: By appointment, Seattle.
 Tel: +1 206 381 9507
 Don't Miss: Reserve 2000, Tapteal 2000, Ciel

du Cheval, Spring Valley 2000.

HEDGES CELLARS

Tasting: Mon-Sat, Issaquah.
 Tel: +1 425 391 6056
 Don't miss: Red Mountain Reserve, Three Vineyards.

Dining

CASCADIA, 2328 First Ave.

Tel: +1 206 468 8884

CAMPAGNE, 86 Pine St.

Tel: +1 206 728 2800

RAY'S BOATHOUSE, 6049 Seaview Ave. NW.

Tel: +1 206 789 3770

Accommodation

ALEXIS HOTEL, 1007 First Avenue, Seattle.

Tel: +1 206 624 4844. Superlative service.

THE WILLOWS LODGE, 14590 NE 165th St.

Woodinville. Tel: +1 425 424 3900. Lodge-style accommodation.

For free information and visitor guides call Washington State Tourism on +44 (0) 20 7978 5233 or visit www.experiencewashington.com



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