

MARCH+APRIL 2014



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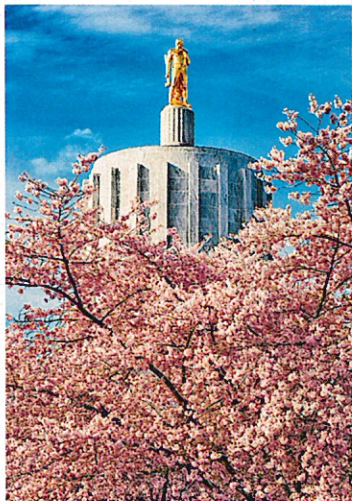
## Willamette Valley<sup>26</sup>

The Dalles, Ore.<sup>19</sup>

Favorite restaurants<sup>22</sup>

Spokane, Wash.<sup>13</sup>





Left to right, the capitol statue gleams in Salem; Albany's carousel earns its stripes; in Eugene, Goody's sweetens the Fifth Street Public Market.

# The Willamette by interstate

Taking I-5 through Oregon? Don't miss these sights in three lively cities along the way.

*Spring is the time of awakening and renewal* in the Willamette Valley. Swollen by snowmelt and rain, the Willamette River rolls north through downtown Eugene, meandering up to Albany and Salem. The river has shaped the cities' history and industry, and the cities in turn have created riverside greenbelts that embellish the urban scene.

**EUGENE** The city's downtown core and Whiteaker district are undergoing vibrant makeovers that last year alone added more than 20 new businesses. The trend is perhaps best exemplified by the swank Inn at the 5th and its neighbor, the Fifth Street Public Market. At the market you'll find victuals that include artisan burgers and pan-seared duck breast; shops for kitchenware, flowers, jewelry, and wine; and a day spa. It's a short walk from there to the Hult and Shedd performing arts centers and to the revitalized Broadway corridor. But the jewel of downtown remains Eugene's network of parks. The Ruth Bascom Riverbank Trail System proffers 12 miles of paved paths. Pedestrian and bike bridges join acres of green space, playgrounds, wildlife habitat, and running trails. Hendricks Park, an 80-acre woodland garden, boasts some 6,000 varieties of rhododendrons that reach peak bloom during April and May. [eugenecascadescoast.org](http://eugenecascadescoast.org).

**ALBANY** The founding brothers of Albany, Walter and Thomas Monteith, came West from New York in 1848. Their two-story wood-frame house and general store is now a history museum. A carousel with 52 animals that are being carved and painted by volunteers will one day live

near Monteith Riverpark on the Willamette. You can tour the workshop on First Avenue, then stroll to First Burger for a Samaritan General Hospital: a pound of organic beef, plus bacon, ham, cheese, and, the menu brags, "not a single vegetable!" Or find fine dining across from the carousel museum at Sybaris Bistro, where the chef, Matt Bennett, was a 2011 and 2012 semifinalist for a James Beard Foundation Award as the Northwest's best. [albanyvisitors.com](http://albanyvisitors.com).

**SALEM** Like Eugene, Oregon's capital prides itself on its waterfront greenbelt, which includes the 1,000-acre Minto-Brown Island Park wildlife sanctuary. Riverfront Park is kid friendly and peaceful, with a volunteer-carved carousel that, unlike Albany's, is already twirling. At the nearby capitol gardens, cherry trees blossom in spring. The capitol building features marble sculptures and Depression-period murals that depict pivotal events in Oregon's history. Climb 121 steps to the observation deck and stand beneath the 23-foot, 8.5-ton statue symbolizing the state's pioneer spirit. Local foodies extol the tiny Word of Mouth Bistro, upscale-dineresque Wild Pear, and chic Orupa. Ditto the desserts at the Little Cannoli Bakery in the restored Reed Opera House. Originally a stop on the vaudeville circuit, the renovated Historic Elsinore Theatre serves up classic films as well as a full menu of performing arts, from ballet to stand-up comedy. [travelsalem.com](http://travelsalem.com). — M.M.