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Road Trip: Willamette Valley

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Hike to the top of Marys Peak, the highest point in the Coast Range, for gorgeous view of the valley and the Coast. (Photo credit: Justin Bailie)



Salem gives visitors the chance to explore Oregon's past at the Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill. (Photo credit: Ron Cooper)

Nestled between the mist-covered Coast Range and the soaring Cascade peaks, the Willamette Valley stretches for more than 130 miles from Carlton to Cottage Grove. This fertile region is home to the state's famed pinot noir vineyards, its [first scenic bikeway](#), a [national water trail](#) and some of the state's most valuable heritage sites. Plan your road trip for a taste of the Willamette Valley.

Pay a visit to the state capital of [Salem](#) for a tour of art, architecture, history and heritage. Salem gives visitors the chance to explore Oregon's past at the 19th-century Historic Deepwood Estate, the Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill and the Oregon State Capitol building — a classic example of modern Greek architecture that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Just a few short miles off of I-5, the town of [Albany](#) provides an immersion in Oregon's gastronomic culture with standouts like Sybaris Bistro, First Burger and Frankie's Restaurant. Check out the local liquid culture at [4 Spirits Distillery](#), Calapooia Brewing, Deluxe Brewing Company and Sinister Distilling.

Off-the-beaten path [Brownsville](#) retains the small-town charm that made it famous in the Hollywood blockbuster "Stand By Me" more than 30 years ago. Celebrate Stand By Me Day every July or take a self-guided tour of filming locations anytime. Brownsville is a great spot to jump on the Willamette Valley Scenic Bikeway or the Willamette River National Water Trail.

It's not called Track Town, USA for nothing. As home to the Oregon Ducks, the talented and tragically short-lived Steve Prefontaine and the roots of Nike, [Eugene](#) offers running inspiration for the New Year. Watch the pros race at the annual Prefontaine Classic on May 27 and 28,

2016, or run for fun with the locals at Eugene Running Company. And for the carbo load, don't miss the town's [excellent beer scene](#).

You'll find more signature Oregon craft beer in [Corvallis](#) — home to the Oregon State University Beavers. Hike to the top of Marys Peak, the highest point in the Coast Range, for gorgeous view of the valley and the Coast, and check out the old growth trees in Peavy Arboretum.

Underneath its charm lies a mix of ambition, community spirit and passion about business that makes [McMinnville](#) a town small of stature with options you'd expect in a large city. Don't miss tastes of R. Stuart, Nick's Italian Cafe and Community Plate.

Formerly the "Hop Capital of the World," [Independence](#) once saw more than half of the world's hops pass through town. Today you can get a taste of locally grown heritage hops at Rogue Ale's Chatoe Rogue tasting room and hop farm.