

# BLOCK PARTY

It's fine to choose sides in Portland, everyone else does, writes

**Stephanie Holmes**

**S**ince its foundation in 1851, Portland, Oregon has been a city divided. The mighty Willamette River – pronounced "Will-AM-ette, goddammit," as any Portlander will proudly parrot – splits the city, East and West. Its presence is inescapable, a thick stripe of blue-grey, punctuated by 12 bridges of varying architectural style.

Another thing Portlanders will often tell you is which side of the city is best. You're either an East-sider or a West-sider and your life will largely centre around that part of the city. Why cross the river when you have everything you need right on your doorstep?

Famous for its craft beer and doughnuts, beards and tattoos, record stores and book shops, museums and markets, urban wineries and restaurants, you'll find a mirror image of city life reflected back at you, whichever direction you're facing.

If you're pressed for time, pick a side of the city and you'll still find everything you need, without having to step foot over the river. These recommendations are all within a few blocks of each other – totally walkable and all doable within a day.

## WEST SIDE

Start your day with breakfast at the Ace Hotel, one of the city's trendiest accommodation providers. Whether you're staying here or not, you can eat at onsite cafes Breakfast 215 or Stumptown Coffee Roasters – the latter is a Portland-owned independent chain, founded in 1999.

When you're fully caffeinated, head across the road to Union Way, a shopping arcade with nine shops and restaurants, including Danner, a famous Oregon boot brand, and Bridge and Burn, a local clothing label.

Exit on W Burnside St and get a fix of pre-loved fashion at Buffalo Exchange, an excellent thrift store where you can find some suitably hipster bargains. Then, head across the road to Powell's City of Books, the world's largest independent bookstore and a Portland institution. Occupying a full city block between W Burnside St and NW Couch St, it has about 6300sq m of floor space, nine colour-coded rooms and more than 3500



The Willamette River snakes its way through Portland. Photos / Getty Images

different sections. Give yourself plenty of time to browse ... and be prepared to leave with a bundle of books.

All this is bound to have worked up an appetite – head back to Union Way for a bowl of steaming, delicious noodles at Boxer Ramen, then take the 10-minute walk to Voodoo Doughnuts. By the time you get there you'll have made enough room in your stomach for a sweet treat that's as good on your Instagram feed as it is on your tastebuds.

From here, your choice is grape or grain. Head north to Deschutes Brewery Portland Public House, an Oregon craft brewery whose headquarters are in Oregon's alpine town Bend. The Portland pub has more than 20 taps with Deschutes famous beers, as well as a selection of seasonal and experimental brews. Or, head south to Park Avenue Fine Wines, a bar inside a wine shop where you can sip on a tasting flight, or grab a bottle from the hundreds on sale in the store and drink it in the bar for a \$10 corkage fee.



If the beer/wine has lubricated your shopaholic gene, head to Wild Fang, which perfectly sums up Portland like no other store in the city. It's a feminist, non-gendered clothing store founded by two female former Nike employees (Portland is home to Nike, too). The label supports and donates money to causes and charities supporting marginalised communities, including Planned Parenthood and the Malala Fund.

You're spoiled for choice for dinner, but it wouldn't be Portland without a visit to a food truck. The Alder Street Food Cart Pod, once the city's biggest collection of trucks, is closing at the end of this month to make way for a new hotel development, but in Portland, you don't need to go far to find another one – go to TravelPortland.com to find something that takes your fancy.

Finish the night at The Hoxton, a new hotel in Old Chinatown that has made itself a community destination as well as a place for tourists to lay their heads. Try the rooftop taqueria Tope, or the basement cocktail bar, so discreet it doesn't even have a name.

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Powell's City of Books, which claims to be the world's largest independent bookstore. Photo / Travel Portland

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## EAST SIDE

Things are a bit grittier over here, especially on E Burnside St, which was once known locally as heroin alley. Burnside is steadily cleaning up its act, helped in part by locals Kelsey Bunker and Tod Breslau who, in 2002, redeveloped a rundown motel, launching it as The Jupiter – now one of the coolest places in town. Stay here, or at The Jupiter Next across the road, also redeveloped by Bunker and Breslau, this time building on a rundown burger restaurant and used car lot.

If you're looking for a workout, Evolution Healthcare and Fitness is at the back of Jupiter Next and guests get discounts on their fitness classes, massage, acupuncture and altitude training.

Breakfast at The Doug Fir Lounge, a famous music venue and bar/restaurant on site at The Jupiter. You'll get classic eggs/bacon/bagel/pancake-type fare (served daily from 7am-11am, and until 3pm on weekends) and bottomless filter coffee, in a retro log-cabin-style decor with huge windows looking out to Burnside's early morning comings and goings. Or, if you just need a quick, sugar hit, walk 10 minutes east to

Voodoo Doughnut Too, an Eastside outpost of the famous Portland chain, which can often have queues out the door.

Heading west along Burnside St, you'll find a selection of shops to browse – try Redux Boutique for jewellery and accessories from local designers, Hattie's Vintage Clothing for second-hand treasures, and Machus for international designer men's clothing.

Time for coffee? A proper coffee, not an American poor imitation? Head north to Cup and Bar, where the brews from Trailhead Coffee Roasters (who have their roastery on site) will be almost as good as you'll get at home.

You're on holiday, you deserve to relax, so why not spend the afternoon kicking back over a beer, wine or spirit, or two? It's what Portland would want. As well as close to 60 breweries, Portland is also home to craft cider producers, distilleries and urban wineries, where grapes are brought in from vineyards around Oregon and blended and aged on site.

Try Cider Riot (house ciders, live music and events), Wild Roots Spirits (craft vodkas, tasting room, and bottles for purchase), the Natian Tasting Room (15 craft beers on tap), Base Camp Brewing Company (beers plus food cart tucker),



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and Coopers Hall Winery and Taproom (44 taps of wine, beer and cider, plus food).

Save room for dinner; the Eastside has so many great options you'll wish you packed a second stomach. Close to the Jupiter, you'll find Le Pigeon and Canard, fine-dining and casual restaurants, respectively, from acclaimed executive chef Gabriel Rucker.

Around the corner is Nong's Khao Man Gai, a popular food truck serving Hainanese chicken rice, and Marukin Ramen, a casual Japanese noodle joint that's always buzzing. If you're happy to walk a little further, the cocktails and modern American-style food at Trifecta, or the Russian dishes and plentiful vodka at Kachinka, come highly recommended.

If you're still not ready for bed after all that, you'll find live music most nights at Doug Fir or the Bossanova Ballroom, also on E Burnside.

Whichever side you choose, the heartbeat of the city is the same. And no matter how fast the city changes – new bars, restaurants, hotels and residents – Portland's one constant is the Willamette River. Each day it flows unstoppable, the city's guiding compass.

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