

COME HOME TO COMFORT

COUNTRY LIVING

BIG THE BARGAIN ISSUE

\$10 GARDEN MIRACLES **132** DEALS & STEALS **16** BUDGET MAKEOVERS

This porch chair is just \$59! See pg. 88

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out and about

Small towns we love, bird-watching 101, plus pet advice from our favorite country vet

TRAVEL

10 Reasons to Visit Ashland, Oregon

We asked locals Jennifer Bright and Laurel Walter to help us uncover this lively little town's best shops, events, and jalepeño-corn pancakes—so you can bypass the visitors' center and hit the ground running.

1. This is our "Cineplex."

Built in 1937, the Art Deco Varsity Theatre on Main Street screens blockbusters as well as indie flicks. But the real treat, according to Bright and Walter, remains the film house's entirely unique popcorn, topped with butter and a dusting of brewer's yeast (541-482-3321).

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC LYNXWILER

TRAVEL



Ashland Springs Hotel

2. Our 1925 hotel trumps cookie-cutter digs.

The 70-room Ashland Springs Hotel on Main Street boasts the comfiest beds in town and a free Continental breakfast that's actually worth rising for (from \$99 per night; ashlandspringshotel.com). Another great option: Ashland Mountain House, an 1850s B&B just outside town (from \$125 per night; ashlandmountainhouse.com).

MEET YOUR TOUR GUIDES

Fifteen years ago, best friends Jennifer Bright (near right) and Laurel Walter convinced their husbands to leave Los Angeles for Ashland, Oregon. "We'd had it with the big city—and wanted our kids to grow up in a small town," recalls Walter, who now owns Twist, an interior-styling business, with Bright. "This place has a wonderful Mayberry quality," she adds, "but there's also a lot going on." Good thing, then, that the duo has narrowed it down to this list of the best things to see and do.



3. Shakespeare is alive and well here!

Founded in 1935, the celebrated Oregon Shakespeare Festival stages 11 plays between February and November each year. "The Bard put Ashland on the map," says Walter. This year's schedule includes *Macbeth*, *Henry VIII*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, among other plays (tickets start at \$20; osfashland.org).



Lithia Park

4. Locals own all the shops downtown.

"Prize feels like a modern general store," says Walter. "Owner Jennifer Davis stocks everything from sundresses and jewelry to notecards and quirky vintage finds" (prizeshoppe.com). Bright is partial to Ashland Recycled Furniture: "The shop gives new life to old stuff and has prices one step above a garage sale" (541-482-7585). Want to pick up a great vacation read? Swing by Bloomsbury Books, which stocks best sellers plus works by area authors (541-488-0029).

5. There's a swimming hole in the middle of town.

On summer afternoons, residents go to the crystal-clear reservoir at Lithia Park, a 93-acre oasis in the heart of the city, to swim and sunbathe. The park also features Japanese gardens, swan ponds, tennis courts, hiking trails, and playgrounds. "Seeing Lithia Park usually seals the deal with people who are considering relocating here," says Walter (ashlandchamber.com).

Prize



TRAVEL

6. This nice fellow's your river guide.

Matt Dopp, co-owner of Kokopelli River Guides, offers more than a dozen white-water rafting and kayak trips on the Rogue and Klamath rivers, both of which lie within a 20-minute drive of town. Of all the excursions offered, the 18-mile day trip on the Upper Klamath ranks as Dopp's favorite: "The river is dam-controlled, so there's consistent white water. It's for people who really like to paddle—and get wet" (kokopelliriverguides.com).



Kokopelli River Guides

7. A perfect cappuccino costs just \$3.

At Mix Sweet Shop, order a coffee made with Portland's famous Stumptown beans, plus a croissant or lemon-meringue tart, advises Walter (541-488-9885).



Mix Sweet Shop

9. We've got freebies in spades.

The Green Show, a 35-minute performance by musicians and dancers held prior to the Shakespeare Festival's evening presentations, costs exactly nothing. On weekends from May through October, check out the free live music at the Lithia Artisans Market downtown. And if you're around on the first Friday of the month, take part in Art Walk, a gratis self-guided tour of 30-plus galleries. For the latest local events, pick up a complimentary copy of *Sneak Preview*, says Bright.

8. Did we mention the food?

Before heading out to one of the dramas at the Shakespeare Festival, tuck into Chateaulin Restaurant's three-course, prix fixe French dinner (\$29.95; chateaulin.com). For a delicious, farm-to-table meal, nab a table at Larks, in the Ashland Springs Hotel (ashlandspringshotel.com). If you're craving shepherd's pie or just a pint, hit the Black Sheep pub (theblacksheep.com). "You've got to sample their jalapeño-corn pancakes," raves Bright.



Chateaulin Restaurant

10. And amazing day trips are within a short drive.

Less than 65 miles from Ashland, in Oregon's Southern Cascades, visitors can canoe, hike wooded trails, and fish for brown trout at Lake of the Woods, a 1920s mountain lodge and resort with 26 historic cabins (lakeofthewoodsresort.com). For oenophiles, southern Oregon has dozens of wineries to tour. Walter's favorite, Edenvale, lies just 15 miles away in Medford. "I like their spicy Rogue Syrah," she says, "and the tastings take place in a beautiful historic home" (edenvalewines.com).



Lake of the Woods

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (6, 7, 8) JOHN VALLS