

TRIP PLANNER:  
WINE COUNTRY  
PG. 106

Beer Yoga?

DIY: Wood  
Accent Wall

Buddy Guy's  
Accidental Salad

# 1859

Oregon's Magazine

THE  
*Wine*  
ISSUE

**WINE COUNTRY'S  
HIDDEN GEMS**

NEW TASTING ROOMS

SUSAN SOKOL BLOSSER'S MEMOIR

BEER FOR WINE LOVERS

LIVE | THINK | EXPLORE | OREGON

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# Olympia as Destination

More than a stop between Seattle and Portland

*written by Adam Sawyer*

Ingrid Barentine, Grit City Photography

Olympia's proximity to the water makes it a hub for outdoor recreation.

SOMEHOW, DESPITE MY semi-romantic recollections of the punk group Rancid and work as a travel writer, I had never, until recently, visited Olympia, Washington. Heading up from Oregon, the Capital City used to signify only that I was on the backstretch of my drive to Seattle. I know that for some, it serves as an affordable home base for exploring the South Sound or the Olympic National Forest. A solid plan, but after spending time there it is evident that Olympia has blossomed into far more than a jumping-off point or an I-5 afterthought. It is a legitimate destination all its own.

At the core of the city is a vibrant, walkable downtown area. Capital Way is the epicenter, with waves of food, drink, culture and outdoor activity radiating out in all directions. If you want to set up camp in the heart of it all, the Governor Hotel is your best bet. The boutique accommodations afford views of the State Capitol, its namesake lake, the Puget Sound, and even the Olympic Mountains, assuming atmospheric conditions cooperate. If you

prefer to hang your hat for the evening in more tranquil environs, the Inn at Mallard Cove sits on the banks of Hogum Bay, just around the corner from the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). It's a scant 11 miles from downtown Olympia but is as secluded and serene a setting as you'll access via automobile.

The outdoor recreation options in the immediate vicinity are superb and relatively underused, beginning with the aforementioned Nisqually NWR. The 7,400-acre refuge is visited by more than 200 bird species annually and is home to one of the more interesting hiking experiences in the Northwest. The Nisqually Estuary Trail concludes with a mile-long elevated boardwalk that terminates at a viewing platform in the middle of the slough. Spring is when bald eagles begin nesting and migratory birds arrive, so bring your camera.

Roughly 16 miles southwest of town you'll find the Mima Mounds Natural Preserve. The origins of the mysterious, dome-shaped







Ingrid Barrentine



USFWS/poh-whitehead



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Three Magnets Brewing offers plenty of craft beer options. A pair of adult great horned owls perch by their nest at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. Mima Mounds Natural Area Preserve has paved walking paths.



## OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON

### EAT

**The Brotherhood Lounge**  
thebrotherhoodlounge.com

**Dillinger's Cocktails & Kitchen**  
dillingerscocktailsandkitchen.com

**Three Magnets Brewing Co.**  
threemagnetsbrewing.com

**Fish Tale Brewpub**  
fishbrewing.com

**Gardner's**  
gardenrestaurant.com

**Eastside Big Tom**  
eastsidebigtoms.com

### STAY

**Governor Hotel**  
coasthotels.com

**Inn at Mallard Cove**  
theinnatmallardcove.com

### PLAY

**222 Market**  
222market.com

**Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge**  
fws.gov/refuge/Billy\_Frank\_Jr\_Nisqually

**Mima Mounds Natural Preserve**  
dnr.wa.gov/MimaMounds

mounds are still up for debate. It could have been gophers, glaciers or aliens. Whatever the case, they are particularly worth visiting in spring when the mounds erupt with color. Camas lilies, shooting stars and an armada of other wildflowers adorn the grasslands in purple, blue and yellow. And if you're hungry for more, the Mima Mounds butt up against the 91,650-acre Capitol State Forest and its miles of hiking trails.

Quality drink options run the gamut. The Brotherhood Lounge is a glorious local dive bar that provides stiff, cheap drinks. As an added bonus, the needle doesn't scratch off the record when out-of-towners walk through the door. If you prefer a smart cocktail with a well-executed small plate, then Dillinger's Cocktails & Kitchen is more your speed. Craft beer aficionados

have two top-tier options with Three Magnets Brewing Co. and the Fish Tale Brewpub kitty-corner from each other on Legion Way.

When it's time to eat a proper dinner, Gardner's consistently delivers with ultra-fresh, local, seasonal and scratch-made takes on the classics and beyond. If you prefer something more casual and handheld, Eastside Big Tom mastered the art of the classic American cheeseburger seventy years ago. And any meal of the day can be procured at the great 222 Market. Under a single roof, you'll find a creperie, bakery, bistro, broth bar, gelato bar, oyster bar, food market, flower shop and a distillery.

This is Olympia. It's not up and coming. It has arrived. ■