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THE CAPITAL OF *Cool*

BY ADAM SAWYER

When was the last time you planned to spend some quality time in your state's capital? A decade or two ago, you would have had every right to question the soundness of such an act. But things have changed. It seems that state capitals, particularly those on the West Coast, don't get their proper due as destinations. I know this from having visited Sacramento and Salem in recent years. While nobody was looking, those towns became vibrant representations of their respective states with plenty for visitors to see and experience.

Olympia, Washington, is making a strong case for being the West Coast capital of cool. What many once considered an I-5 afterthought between Seattle and Portland has become an eclectic town with tons of charm, culture and culinary cred—and a superb choice for a getaway. Invigorated by exciting new markets, restaurants and lounges, as well as time-tested institutions, Olympia's downtown is walkable and lively.

If you prefer to hang your hat in the heart of it all, consider The Governor—no, not the elected official, the hotel (coasthotels.com). It provides boutique accommodations with views of the State Capitol, Capitol Lake, Puget Sound and even the Olympic Mountains on clear days. If you'd like to be a bit removed from the city core, the Swantown Inn & Spa (swantowninn.com) resides in a quiet residential neighborhood that is far enough away to serve as a retreat but still close enough to easily access downtown attractions. This Victorian mansion turned bed & breakfast is strikingly well-appointed and painstakingly restored, and it's on the historical register. The breakfasts are sumptuous, and the on-site day spa offers a variety of treatment options.

The breadth of quality eating and drinking options in town might be the biggest surprise for those that haven't explored it lately. And it's anchored by the Olympia Farmers Market, on the north edge of downtown. Going on its 44th season, the top-tier market is open year-round and showcases the bounty of the area any time of year.

To start the day, consider a stop at the Batdorf & Bronson Coffeehouse (batdorfcoffee.com). This coffee-lover's coffeehouse has been roasting exceptional single-origin and blended beans in and around Olympia for more than 30 years, and they show no signs of slowing down. Once your juices are flowing, walk to the 222 Market (222market.com) for breakfast. This conglomeration of all things artisanal is a must see. There's a bakery, creperie, broth bar, oyster bar, distillery, a gelato shop and more. Put a pin in most of that for now, and head for the market's Bread Peddler (breadpeddler.com) for a scratch-made first meal.

Olympia is set at the south end of the Salish Sea. Islands, peninsulas, miles of shoreline, forests, trails and verdant farmland make up the city's surrounds. For outdoor recreation, there are remarkable options in town and just outside of it. Tumwater Falls Park is home to three tumbling cascades in a scant, but varied and scenic half-mile loop just south of Capitol Lake. For more of a wilderness experience, take the 6.5-mile round-trip hike to Mima Falls in the Capitol Forest, a 30-minute drive from downtown. Or venture 10 miles east to the birder's paradise that is the 7,400-acre Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge with its boardwalk trail that leads a mile out into the middle of a slough.

For lunch, there is perhaps no finer purveyor of handheld heaven than the 5th Ave Sandwich Shop (5thavesandwich.com). Get a "Hot Oly" and see just how impactful meat

Autumn

28

Olympia, Washington

WHEN YOU GO

experienceolympia.com

Olympia Farmers Market,
olympiafarmersmarket.com

Bigelow House,
olympiahistory.org

Puget Sound Estuarium,
sseacenter.org/puget-sound-estuarium

WET Science Center,
wetsciencecenter.org

Hands-on Children's Museum, hocm.org

Capitol Theater,
olympiafilmsociety.org/calendar

Washington Center for Performing Arts,
washingtoncenter.org

between bread can be on your life. Or, grab a bite at the Budd Bay Cafe (buddbaycafe.com) for fresh fare on the waterfront.

Take a break from food momentarily to visit any number of fascinating historic sites, including a tour of the Capitol building, the fifth largest masonry dome on the planet and home to the world's largest collection of Tiffany lights, including a 10,000-pound chandelier hanging under the dome. Also, worth a visit is the city's oldest residence, the Bigelow House, built in the 1850s, now a museum.

If you brought the kids along, the Puget Sound Estuarium, the WET Science Center and the Hands-on Children's Museum are perfect family options.



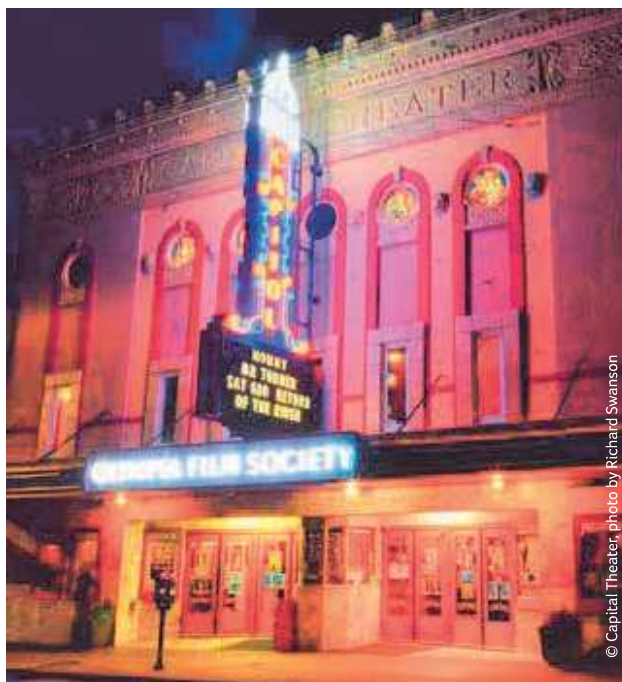
Chef Frank Magana

© Three Magnets Brewing, photo by Ricky Osborne Photography



Proprietor Nathan Reilly

© Three Magnets Brewing, photo by Nigel Barrentine



© Capital Theater, photo by Richard Swanson

RUTLEDGE CORN MAZE

by Kaitlynn Mann

Rutledge Corn Maze in Olympia, Washington, is a multi-generation family-farm favorite. After more than 100 years of working the land, the family debuted its first annual corn maze in 2000. Each year since, after months of planning, the maze's new design is planted using a tractor and GPS in just six hours and enjoyed the following fall.

The 2018 design was a partnership between Rutledge and the American Cancer Society. It included a pink ribbon, representing October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month and raised awareness and funds for the Society. More past causes include firefighter burn victims and military appreciation. Rutledge has also created a "Twilight: Breaking Dawn" maze and three Seahawks-themed mazes, one of which was requested by the Seahawks.

In addition to the corn maze, Rutledge offers cow-train rides, yard games and attractions and zombie paintball for the older kids and adults. At night, stick around for the haunted maze. And before you leave, be sure visit their pumpkin patch to pick the perfect potential jack-o'-lantern.

The Rutledge Corn Maze is part of the Thurston Bountiful Byway. To learn more, visit rutledgecornmaze.com.



Yelm-Tenino Trail

Prime the pump for the evening with drinks at the prohibition-themed Dillinger's Cocktails (dillingerscocktailsandkitchen.com), the Dockside Bistro & Wine Bar (docksidebistro.com) or Three Magnets Brewing (threemagnetsbrewing.com). Or hit all three—they're within walking distance of one another. When you're ready for dinner, Ricardo's Kitchen & Bar (chefricardo.com) is the place for steaks or indulge in comfort classics at Pellegrino's Italian Kitchen (pellegrinositaliankitchen.com) downtown.

For evening entertainment, see what's happening at the historic Capitol Theater or the Washington Center for Performing Arts, just a block away from each other. And if you feel like a nightcap, The Brotherhood Lounge (thebrotherhoodlounge.com) is where you'll want to find yourself. The friendly local haunt is rich with character and characters. (Caution: The barkeeps have a propensity for heavy-handed pours.)

Olympia is about 60 miles south of Seattle. For more information, check out experienceolympia.com. 🚲

THURSTON BOUNTIFUL BYWAY

If you're in the area for a getaway, you'll want to set aside some time to explore the Thurston Bountiful Byway. The 60-mile sojourn through the countryside south of town visits farms, wineries, markets, breweries, distilleries and even some Mother Nature-made gems. Here are some highlights.

Take a break from driving via foot or bicycle through the canopied corridors of the Chehalis Western Trail or the Yelm-Tenino Trail. Both these Rails-to-Trails projects parallel or intersect with the Byway.

Millersylvania State Park features 3,300 feet of freshwater shoreline on Deep Lake. Hiking paths visit all corners of a park that also offer many shaded camping options.

The origins of the mysterious, dome-shaped knolls of the Mima Mounds Natural Preserve are still up for debate. But the paved trail that winds through them is unique, eerily beautiful and thought provoking.

Visit the Sandstone Distillery, Top Rung Brewing, or the Stottle Winery for a taste of the area's artisanal liquid assets. And summer through fall, stop in at the Evergreen Valley Lavender Farm or Helsing Junction Farm for a wide array of just about everything that can be grown here.

For more information about each stop along the Thurston Bountiful Byway, visit experienceolympia.com/thurston-bountiful-byway.