

# YEAR'S END *in Oregon*

THROUGH THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY AND DOWN THE PEOPLE'S COAST, THIS STATE'S WESTERN REGIONS ARE A MAGIC DECEMBER GETAWAY

BY AMBER GIBSON



Left: Haystack Rock  
Right: Fairsing Vineyard, a visit option on the Tour DeVine by Heli itinerary

**T**hick forested bluffs, sloping dunes, secret coves, and peaceful beaches—the Oregon coastline is nothing if not dramatic. All 363 miles of it are also free and open to the public, thanks to the Oregon Beach Bill passed in 1967, making this state's the only ocean-adjacent public shoreline in the country. It's known as "The People's Coast," and in a number of its stretches you can drive right onto the beach and set up a bonfire.

From Portland, the coast is an easy day trip, and the Willamette Valley is not far either. On the same parallel as Burgundy, the valley—surrounded by mountains on three sides—is known for its pinot noir, but the Burgundian-style chardonnay and Champagne-method sparkling wines are world-class, too. The loop through the valley, out to the Tillamook Coast and back to Portland, can easily be done over a long weekend with no more than a few hours of driving.

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Oregon, especially its oceanfront, is often thought of as a summer destination, but locals know that it's beautiful year-round. A beach stroll is still glorious in December days—average 50°F, and ocean-facing guestrooms are great for getting cozy and watching dramatic winter storms. Plus, whale watching, fishing...even surfing are year-round activities, and Ecola State Park and Oswald West State Park are superb opportunities for hiking.

The Willamette Valley—a roughly 150-mile stretch from Portland to Eugene—comes alive during autumn harvest, followed by a more peaceful cellar season. During this calmer time, there's a good chance that you can get one-on-one time with the winemakers themselves for an educational and personalized tasting experience. Nearby Yamhill Valley (a wondrous stretch of rolling hills, world-class wineries, and farm stands) hosts the Oregon Truffle Festival each February, celebrating the state's black and white truffles in the most decadent and delicious fashion.

Another bonus for visitors is that the Beaver State has no sales tax, which makes shopping that much more appealing. Portland fragrance design studio Maak Lab rivals any Parisian parfumerie,

and the curated collection of chocolate bars at Cacao highlights city chocolate makers like Xocolatl de David and Cloudforest. When it comes to fashion, One Imaginary Girl's colorful prints and the easy-breezy vintage-inspired dresses by Amelia are sure hits, perfectly capturing Portland's fun-loving nature.

## ATTRACTION

### JACOBSEN SALT CO.

Many of the top chefs across the country use salt made here, including Brandon Jew at Mister Jiu's in San Francisco and Edouardo Jordan at Seattle's JuneBaby. This small operation in Netarts Bay makes America's best sea salt, including up to 20 different infusions for visitors to sample. Although public tours of the works aren't available, you can get



a glimpse of the old oyster processing plant where briny bay water is processed. It takes two weeks to go from bay to bag—filtering then simmering the water, harvesting crystals, then dehydrating and hand sifting each flake. 9820 Whiskey Creek Road, Tillamook, [jacobsensalt.com](http://jacobsensalt.com)

### ECOLA STATE PARK

A short drive north from downtown Cannon Beach, this old-growth Sitka spruce rainforest stretches along nine miles of coastline, dotted by hiking trails, picnic areas, and viewpoints. Keep an eye out for wildlife like deer, elk, bald eagles, and migrating gray whales. Haystack Rock is also found here—rising 235 feet from the shoreline edge. Tillamook Head, another high promontory in the park, was described by Captain William Clark of Lewis and Clark explorer fame as having “the grandest and most pleasing prospects which my eyes ever surveyed.” 84318 Ecola Park Road, Seaside, [oregonstateparks.org](http://oregonstateparks.org)

## WHERE TO STAY

### ATTICUS HOTEL

This 36-room boutique establishment in downtown McMinnville (the heart of Oregon wine country) is impossibly quaint and charming. Everything from tea and coffee to artwork and furniture is locally sourced, and the hotel's earnest commitment to community is appar-

ent. Its sleek, modern design is complemented by rustic charm. With friendly, earnest service, Dutch bikes to borrow, and unlimited complimentary espresso at reception, there's no better home base for exploring the Willamette Valley. 375 Northeast Ford Street, McMinnville, [atticushotel.com](http://atticushotel.com)

### HEADLANDS COASTAL LODGE & SPA

The first luxury resort to open on Oregon's coast in a decade, all 33 rooms of this beachfront property have private balconies with views of the Pacific Ocean and Haystack Rock. (There are ocean views from the free-standing tubs and showers, too!) Pantries on each floor are stocked with Oregon-made treats, and adventure coaches will help craft a custom itinerary. During summer, they'll take you kayaking and surfing, and in winter there's whale-watching, fishing, tidepooling, and storm gazing beside the fireplace. Tidepools Spa has an outdoor hot tub and excellent Naturopathica treatments, from an invigorating eucalyptus and peppermint leaf deep-tissue massage to a nourishing seaweed wrap. 33000 Cape Kiwanda Drive, Pacific City [headlandslodge.com](http://headlandslodge.com)

### STEPHANIE INN

This romantic beachfront hideaway blends traditional charm with modern amenities like a Tesla house car. All 41 rooms and suites include Jacuzzi tubs, fireplaces, and views of Haystack Rock

PHOTO BY MARTIN NORTH



This page, top: Atticus Hotel Lux Bunkroom  
This page, bottom: Brunch on an Oregon Wine Country Helicopter Tour  
Next page: Novel presentation at Castagna restaurant

PHOTO BY SIONNIE LAFOLLETTE

and the Pacific. Daily culinary demonstrations, tastings of local wine and beer before dinner, and fresh-baked cookies in the lobby will keep you satisfied between meals. Just don't spoil an appetite for dinner, because the Stephanie Inn Dining Room serves just about the most exquisite fare on the coast, including a signature Dungeness crab-stuffed Petrale sole with tarragon beurre blanc. 2740 South Pacific Street, Cannon Beach, [stephanie-inn.com](http://stephanie-inn.com)

## DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

### OREGON WINE COUNTRY HELICOPTER TOUR

Tour DeVine by Heli is the premier helicopter tour operator in the Willamette Valley, and its personalized journeys span McMinnville, Eola-Amity, and Chehalem. Choose two or three stops from a selection of 30 winery partners, including great biodynamic varieties at Maysara and killer Champagne-method sparkling wine at ROCO Winery. Helicopters can accommodate

groups of up to five, and breakfast and picnic lunch from Red Hill Market are included with the tour. The copter's cargo pod can accommodate five cases of wine, too, so you can take some favorites home. 3800 Northeast Three Mile Lane, McMinnville, [tourdevinebyheli.com](http://tourdevinebyheli.com)

### GUIDED CRABBING AND FISHING

Charter a classic flat-bottomed Dory boat for catching Dungeness crab or fishing for steelhead trout. While crabbing is always in season, winter brings the biggest bounty. Drop traps in the bays or catch

from a dock, and Tillamook County's five main rivers start filling with steelhead in December. Friendly guides ensure a family-friendly activity that'll reap delicious rewards. Clean and cook the catch at the marina, or have it flash frozen and shipped home. 29200 US-101, Rockaway Beach, [kellysbrightonmarina.com](http://kellysbrightonmarina.com)

## DINE AND DRINK

### THISTLE RESTAURANT

The small chalkboard menu at this unassuming spot changes daily, reflect-



PHOTO BY ANDREA JOHNSON PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO BY MARIELLE DEZURICK

ing whatever is freshest from nearby farms like Oakhill Organics and Peak Forest Fruit. In winter, that might mean garlic soup with duck egg and Oregon black truffles, gnocchi flavored with cabbage, caraway, and beer, or elk with winter squash, kale, and pickled huckleberries. More than a dozen farm partners are listed on the menu, and if you're up for a surprise, try the family-style "chef's whim" menu. 228 Evans Street, McMinnville, [thistlerestaurant.com](http://thistlerestaurant.com)

### CASTAGNA

The premier fine dining restaurant in Portland for two decades now, this gem continues to beguile diners, and chef Justin Woodward's cooking keeps pushing the envelope, even in one of America's most exciting culinary cities. During summer months, many of the beautiful vegetables and herbs gracing plates come from the restaurant's garden. A parade of canapés whets an appetite for the beautifully prepared and often local seafood and meat to follow. During a recent meal, an onion custard terrarium and Salish halibut with wakame, sansho, and green tomato were highlights. 1752 Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard, Portland, [castagnarestaurant.com](http://castagnarestaurant.com)

### HEADWATERS

James Beard Award-winning chef Vitaly Paley is one of the pioneers of Portland's restaurant scene, establishing a mini-empire with his wife Kimberly over the course of 25 years. The Paleys are huge proponents of sustainable seafood (even launching a sustainable seafood festival) and Headwaters at the Heathman Hotel—built in the early 20th century and on the National Historic Register—presents the most extravagant and delicious display of fresh catch in the city. Begin with a crudo platter, smoked fish board, or seafood tower, followed by Pacific Northwest paella or the catch of the day served with farmers market vegetables. 1001 Southwest Broadway, Portland, [headwaterspdx.com](http://headwaterspdx.com) ■