

Spring ERA Show Blooms in Beautiful Portland

The 2007 Electrical Rebuilder's Association Trade Show will be held April 26–29 in Portland, Ore., the “Best Big City” in North America, according to *Money* magazine. If you haven't marked your calendar yet, do so today because you don't want to miss the unique opportunity to better your business while enjoying the sights and sounds of the spectacular Pacific Northwest.

The unmatched natural beauty—mountains, waterfalls, forests, rose gardens—combined with well-planned city conveniences, may just make this the show by which all others will be measured.

Getting There and Getting Around

Nonstop flights to Portland arrive from all the spots you'd probably expect: Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C. They also originate from a few places that might surprise you: Tokyo, Frankfurt, Guadalajara. All in all, Portland offers nonstop service to 49 cities worldwide.

Recent expansion projects have made Portland International Airport (PDX) both convenient and comfortable. Travelers enjoy free wireless Internet service, a full-service conference center (newly renovated) and great shopping (with no sales tax). PDX also boasts a light rail link—the nation's first train-to-plane connection—with a 37-minute ride to the Oregon Convention Center and downtown Portland's hotel core. Downtown is also an easy 20 minutes by car.

The MAX light rail system is part of a 44-mile network that extends both east and west from downtown Portland. Complementing MAX is Portland's streetcar system. This sleek line links downtown to both the art gallery-filled Pearl District and the Northwest/Nob Hill neighborhood, known for its restaurants and shopping.

Best of all, Portland's mass transit—buses, light rail and streetcars—is free in a 330-square-block area known as “Fareless Square.” Happily for convention attendees, this ride-for-free zone



From the majesty of the mountains to the vast beauty of the seashore, Portland has it all.



encompasses the downtown hotel core and extends to the Oregon Convention Center. (Light rail from the airport is under \$2.)

Green Appeal

Portland is a city where more than 5,000 residents commute to work each day by bicycle; where city planners ripped out a busy, freeway to create a tranquil waterfront space; where parking meters are solar powered; and where the meticulous synchronization of traffic signals results in an annual savings of 1.1 million gallons of gasoline.

Portland also boasts the most LEED-certified buildings per capita in the nation. Many of these structures are equipped with sustainable features like commercial ecoroofs, which provide natural cooling and help manage rainwater runoff.

While such eco-awareness may seem astonishing to outsiders it's second nature to Portlanders. In fact, residents and businesses even see it as a bit of a competition, going out of their way to one-up their neighbors to be the greenest. Craft breweries recycle spent grains into animal feed; restaurants participate in “Fork It Over,” a campaign that reduces waste by routing surplus food to charities; Portland's city government provides technical expertise and money to grow green businesses; even Web sites are happily powered by renewable energy sources.

Ringed by natural beauty—Mount Hood, the Oregon Coast, the Columbia River Gorge, and the Oregon wine country—Portland is obsessed with keeping that beauty unspoiled.

Portland has a whole jewelry box of parks and gardens—more than 200 at

last count. Ranging from thick woods to manicured flower beds, from sprawling to miniature, greenspaces are each so unique in size, character, and personality that there's literally a park for every passion.

Dining Out

The Oregon Trail still exerts an irresistible allure. Although, these days the draw isn't gold or beaver pelts or endless tracts of virgin land. Oregon's modern-day pioneers arrive with visions of Pinot grapes, hazelnuts, pears, Dungeness crab, berries, and, of course, salmon dancing in their heads. In short, this place is a mecca for chefs, winemakers and brewers who believe passionately that everything that ends up on your plate or in your glass should taste like Oregon.

"Each time I visit the vineyards and talk with farmers and growers, it reinforces the idea that what grows together goes together," explains Cory Schreiber, a fifth-generation Oregonian and executive chef at Portland's Wildwood Restaurant. "This simple philosophy is the cornerstone of Pacific Northwest cuisine."

Others agree. Local craft brewers—Portland has more craft breweries than any other place on the planet—are famous for experimenting with Oregon ingredients to achieve distinct flavors. Area chefs forge unshakeable alliances with farmers willing to grow and supply heritage strains of produce. Even Portland residents are on board, spending their workday lunch hours and weekends thronging the seasonal farmers' markets scattered around town.

This zeal for culinary perfection is a boon to visitors. Nearly all who journey to Portland—at least, those with working taste buds—depart as full-fledged culinary converts.

Arts and Culture

Despite encompassing three buildings, five stages and more than 7,000 seats, the sprawling Portland Center for the Performing Arts (PCPA) could never contain the full spectrum of Portland's expansive arts scene. While the PCPA provides a home for several of the city's big-name companies—the Oregon Symphony, Portland Opera/Broadway in Portland Series, Oregon Ballet Theatre—more intimate venues, including Artists

Repertory Theatre in southwest Portland and Portland Center Stage in the Pearl District, accommodate dozens more.

Portland's impact on the arts is reaching well beyond the Pacific Northwest. Oregon Ballet Theatre, Do Jump! Extremely Physical Theatre, and BodyVox contemporary dance company all triumphed during recent New York debuts. BodyVox, which has choreographed stylish music videos for Sting, U2 and other artists, also appeared in the 1998 Academy Awards show.

In addition to what's on stage, Portland offers much on view. Pockets of art galleries are scattered around the city. The permanent collection of the Portland Art Museum—a regular stop for touring blockbuster exhibitions—include European masterpieces, Asian art, modern paintings and sculpture, and a mesmerizing array of Native American masks and artifacts.

Also drawing different cultures into the spotlight for visitors are annual events like Cinco de Mayo Fiesta, the Portland Scottish Highland Games and Qing Ming (spring celebration) at the Portland Classical Chinese Garden.

Family Adventures

If someone tells you to take a hike in Portland, chances are they mean it—literally. The hills that rise just west of downtown shelter Forest Park, a 5,000-acre expanse of old-growth timber crisscrossed only by the occasional hiking or mountain biking trail. With two trailheads located no more than 10 minutes from downtown, visitors can get from the heart of the city to the glorious middle of nowhere in no time.

Urban hikers will find one of the best walking/biking routes in North America just behind the Oregon Convention Center (OCC). The 1.5-mile Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade runs along the Willamette River's eastern shore. The Esplanade features four commissioned art pieces, water-level views of Portland, and America's longest floating walkway (1,200 feet).

Just a few blocks away is PGE Park, where the Triple-A Portland Beavers play baseball. The historic stadium, which was renovated in 2001, rents its suites to groups and can provide on-site catering.

While nearby Mount Hood (50 miles from downtown Portland) invites skiers and snowboarders year-round, 30 public golf courses make it tempting for show attendees to build an extra day or two into their stays. In fact, three of Portland's public courses have been ranked among the country's top 100.

Another great activity for the whole family is the Oregon Zoo. Divided into nine basic exhibits, the 64-acre zoo represents different geographic areas of the world and includes more than 200 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates.

Courtesy Portland Oregon Visitors Association (POVA).