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PORTLAND:

bridges to the ideal

This eclectic city in Oregon, through 12 bridges, connects the most vibrant neighborhoods, where coffee is always freshly roasted, beer is crafted, and the ingredients of the most creative dishes are organic, says Cecilia Núñez.

PICTURES: CHARLY RAMOS



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I heard Portland calling way before we landed. At the distance I could imagine the artistic essence: creative, artisanal, friendly, and its enviable musical and gastronomic movement. The latter stands out as one of the most committed to organic practices.

I have dozens of travel notebooks in which I have written -since I was 12- what I live in the places I visit, what I learn at each step, the things that I like and those that drive me crazy, what I do not want to repeat or experience again and what seduces me to the degree of causing a transformation inside me. The word "Portland" is written in several of my old diaries, without ever even having set foot in the city. Through different routes around the world I have had meetings with musicians, baristas, writers, chefs, oenologists, farmers, mixologists, hippies, punks, hipsters ... And with Fran, the man who taught me to meditate on a beach in Oaxaca when I was 16 years old. Many of them, by telling me that they lived there, ignited a

curiosity that compelled me to visit this, the largest city in Oregon, located in northwestern United States. It was not until now that I am here in Portland, that I understand the reasons for its magnetism and why its inhabitants tend to go through life with a natural smile drawn on their faces. There are several things that should be known about the so-called City of Bridges: it is eclectic, sustainable, organic, independent; famous for its coffee, craft beer and food trucks specializing in dishes from every corner of the planet. There are also other reasons: all the people I meet have a band, roast their own coffee or have a microbrewery. There is more: here it rains, it rains and it rains; but no downpour manages to dull its lively, fun, creative, and delicious spirit. Ah! To confirm it as an earthly paradise, the city is an hour away from Willamette Valley, one of the wine regions where an unforgettable pinot noir is produced. Another reason? Portland can be traveled on bike from end to end, in special lanes.

Travel Information

Portland, the largest city in Oregon, sits alongside the Columbia and Willamette rivers in northwestern United States. The currency is the American dollar (\$ 19.88 MXN). Its time zone is GMT-7.

HOW TO GET THERE

Aeroméxico (aeromexico.com), since last year, the airline offers nonstop flights from Mexico City to Portland.

RESOURCES

travelportland.com For information on activities, events, accommodations, restaurants, travel tips and suggested itineraries.
visittheusa.mx The official tourism website of the United States provides inspiration to travel to Portland and various destinations in that nation.
This is Portland A charming book written by Alexander Barrett that works as a guide, travel blog and a simple way to understand the essence of the city. \$ 6 USD at amazon.com

Flavors on wheels

I surrendered myself to the charms of the city when I realized that I could explore it on two wheels. In 2015, a system of shared bicycles called Biketown was launched. It has more than 1,000 vehicles and stations located in urban corners. There are already more than 560 kilometers of special lanes, including the 18 of the Waterfront Loop, next to the Willamette River. I ride them again and again with my travel companion, who makes several stops to photograph each of the city's moments just as they are presented. Here, as in many cities of the world, the bicycle has ceased to be a fad and became a great alternative for transportation, both for locals and tourists. As we travel on our bikes, we experience a different way of getting to know a destination, mixing with people, stopping anywhere and enjoying the pleasure of moving slowly. We go from one restaurant to another on them and learn that we can go even further: If we follow the Willamette Valley scenic bikeway (spanning 201 kilometers), which ————>



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT. WINES IN COEUR DE TERRE; GRAPES IN VINEYARD OF BROOKS WINERY; LOUNGE AND AVOCADO TOAST IN CUP & BAR; DAN AND NANCY MORROW, OWNERS OF THE GALLERY AT TEN OAKS

Willamette Valley, just one hour away from Portland, is known for its pinot noir, as the climate is similar to that of Burgundy, France. You can also find other varietals such as Pinot gris, Chardonnay and Riesling



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CYCLING THROUGH THE STREETS OF PORTLAND; ENJOYING THE AFTERNOON; NEW DEAL DISTILLERY; ORGANIC CARROTS AND BUYERS AT SHEMANSKI FARM MARKET; THE NINES HOTEL



goes, southbound, into Oregon's famous viticultural region, we arrive at an enologist's paradise. Our first stop: Cup & Bar, where Trailhead Coffee Roasters and Ranger Chocolate Company joined in a synergy of flavor to create the first tasting room dedicated to chocolate and coffee in Portland. Charlie Wicker, owner, barista and drink lover, receives us with a dedicated history consecrated to the coffee universe and his love for bikes. He uses them to grind and deliver the coffee. After a lively conversation about his

travels through coffee roads in several countries, and his hard work with communities of women working in coffee plantations, he offers me a Dirty Charlie, a memorable combination of a macchiato and chocolate, with cocoa froth dripping from the cup. A temptation impossible to resist. We return to our bikes to embark on a route of flavor through Central Eastside, an industrial district that consolidated itself, some 20 years ago, as a gastronomic hive. Chefs and artisan coffee, tea, chocolate, beer, distillates, charcuteries and sea

salt makers have fallen in love with this district enough to call it "home". We started with Smith Teamaker, a tea house with an intimate and warm atmosphere whose history dates back to 1949, when Steven Smith created the now renowned Stash Tea brand. After, they created Tazo and began to noticeably improve their service, opening this lovely tearoom. We continue our tour through the most specialized gastronomic corners, such as Jacobsen Salt Co., where artisan salt is brought from the coast of Oregon and is mixed with other local ingredients. Then we made another stop to drink a cup of freshly roasted coffee in Coava Coffee Roasters, where we can witness its process and the different techniques used to serve it. We eat the most exquisite chocolates in Alma and in CloudForest Cafe. In the latter, Sebastián Cisneros pays homage to his land, Ecuador, creating handmade chocolates, wrapped in exquisite packaging with contemporary designs. We spent the rest of the afternoon crossing some of the 12 bridges that connect one vibrant neighborhood with another. We stop in different breweries and distilleries, like New Deal, that traditionally produced gin, whiskey, vodka and liqueurs in

flavors as surprising as ginger. Portland is so famous for its beer culture that it is also known as Beervana, the nirvana of beer. In Saraveza, Bailey's Taproom or the Upper Lip you can find a large variety of brands that shows off the beer-loving character of the city. The next day we witness what the chefs have told us about restaurants like Tusk, Ava Gene's and Oui! Wine bar + Restaurant, where we had unforgettable gastronomic experiences. Although the cooks have their own technique and culinary style, they agree that in this region, the movement from farm to table is as serious as it is delicious. With this in mind, we went to the Shemanski Park produce market, one of the 50 existing markets in the city. Open only on Wednesdays, from May to the end of October, it showcases 60 local producers who offer vegetables, fruits and organic ingredients. The chefs we meet on the road agree on another matter: many are clients and admirers of the small Side Yard Farm, located in the Cully neighborhood, within the urban perimeter. The farm is operated by volunteers who love and respect the land. Because of this reason they produce —————>>

Where to stay

The Nines With a single step in this hotel, an art display seizes visitors. Its corridors become a sort of gallery, thanks to the pieces of local artists who decorate every corner. Its style is conjugated with mastery between the classic and the contemporary. In its origin it was a department store; now it is a beautiful hotel with amazing views and great gastronomic experiences. Its restaurant Departure, by chef Gregory Gourdet, offers Asian fusion dishes. Theirs is one of Portland's most desirable terraces. Its location is ideal, central and very close to the main attractions in Portland. thenines.com

Willamette Valley

Just an hour away from Portland, you can experience the Oregon wine region, where fertile lands and cool weather are ideal for bringing grapes to life. The valley is known for its pinot noir, because the climate is similar to that of Burgundy, in France. You can also find other varietals such as pinot gris, chardonnay and riesling. Make a day trip to this region is the perfect plan to know any of the 300 wineries and get a taste of wine tourism. We recommend visiting the Brooks Winery and Coeur de Terre wineries, do a wine tasting at The Gallery at Ten Oaks and eat at The Barberry. traveloregon.com



ABOVE: CHEF ALTHEA GRAY'S DISHES, OF OUI! WINE BAR + RESTAURANT; CARAMEL ICE CREAM WITH ARTISAN SALT, SALT & STREW; CHEF JACOB WAY, FROM THE BARBERRY, IN THE WINE REGION OF MCMINNVILLE. BELOW: URBAN SKYLINE; AT THE FOOD COURT

only the best organic harvests with which they supply only the top restaurants.

There we meet Stacy Givens, who tells me that her mother produced her own food in Greece, and so she raised her and her brothers like that, but in an urban environment. "I have been working in the kitchen since I was 15 and I was very excited by the Farm to Table movement. I understood that I need to cultivate myself, to later cook", she says.

We take a walk around the farm where they grow seasonal vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins, lettuce, radishes... and they specialize in culinary herbs such as papalo, shiso, celery and edible flowers!

Back downtown, we contacted Brett Burmeister, creator of the Food Cart Tour, guided tours that allow intimacy with the street food scene, which in this city has a surprising role. It is composed of an army of more than 700 stands mounted as

food trucks. We meet Brett at the Food Park in South Park Blocks, where we get carried away by the span and labyrinth of flavors.

Portland bids us farewell delighting us with another of my hobbies, in addition to the cycling, wine and food: reading. Powell's Books is the largest independent brand of bookstores in the world, and its store located in the Pearl district spans a full block, where endless halls house more than four million new, used, rare and sold out editions.

I move between the aisles of shelves stacked with the same emotion I felt as I moved, a few hours ago, between the food trucks. This time I decide to buy three travel journals, to mention Portland once again in my writings, now knowing that this place meets, and exceeds, all the expectations that previously existed in my mind. □

Culinary Essentials

Cup & Bar The first chocolate and coffee tasting room in Portland. You cannot miss the macchiato Dirty Charly and the Avocado toast. 118 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. cupandbar.com

Tusk Chef Sam Smith serves delights always prepared with ingredients from local farms. We know that it is impossible to taste the whole menu, so concentrate on the humus, Marinated feta cheese and its selection of vegetables, fruits and grains. 2448 East Burnside Street. tuskpdx.com

Pépe le Moko A subterranean speakeasy located in one of the most amazing hotels in the city: The Ace Hotel. It is a gastropub in which its famous mixologist, Jeffrey Morgenthaler, creates unforgettable cocktails. 407 SW 10th Ave. pepelemokopdx.com

Oui! Wine Bar + Restaurant It is a charming urban winery run by talented chef Althea Gray. There, in addition to preparing their wines with grapes brought from the wine region of Oregon, it offers a menu that will be consolidated as one of the best dining experiences in Portland. 2425 SE 35th Place. sewinecollective.com

Ava Gene's Spectacular Italian restaurant with dishes prepared with local products. You cannot miss your rigatoni with beef and pork ragout or any of the

homemade pasta. Although it offers local wines, it also has an interesting Italian wine cellar. 3377 SE Division St. avagenes.com

Smith Teamaker Charming tea house that fuses imported strands with local herbs, plants and flowers. 110 SE Washington St. smithtea.com

Jacobsen Salt Co. Boutique of artisanal salts brought from the coasts of Oregon and mixed with other local ingredients. They also sell organic honey. There are several locations. jacobsensalt.com

Coava Coffee Roasters Public Brew Bar & Roastery Cafeteria where you can see coffee's whole process and its different techniques. 1015 SE Main St. coavacoffee.com

CloudForest Handmade chocolate boutique of created by master chocolatier Sebastián Cisneros. 1411 SE Stark St. cloudforest.shop

New Deal Distillery Craft distillery where tastings and visits take place. 900 SE Salmon Street. newdealdistillery.com

Salt & Straw Legendary craft ice cream shop with several stores. altandstraw.com

Voodoo Donut Very famous donut shop. voodoodoughnut.com

The Big Foody Must-see gastronomic tours. thebigfoody.com

Food Cart Tour Guided tours by experts in street food. Reserve at foodcartsportland@gmail.com

