

Product Reviews for Portland Walking Tours (Portland, OR)

Best of Portland Tour

Quick! Name five things that make Portland eco-friendly and a model for other cities around the country. After completing the Best of Portland tour with our guide, Michele, I could do just that. This entertaining and enlightening exploration offered by Portland Walking Tours gives a thorough introduction to not only Portland's history, but also her evolution into a vibrant, clean and "green" urban center with amazing art, culture and just enough quirky tidbits to keep you intrigued.

Portland is becoming a paragon of public transit, green buildings and businesses, and other innovations aimed at sustainability. Free light rail and streetcar service in the downtown core, solar powered compacting trash cans, recycling bins next to trash cans, living roofs and bio swale gardens for office buildings, and electric car charging stations are only a few of the steps the city has taken to reduce traffic congestion and emissions, improve water quality and keep Portland clean.

Portland is all about enjoyment as well. Thought-provoking public art, plentiful parks and public spaces, a wide variety of activities, festivals and entertainment all add to the city's allure as a place to live or to visit. Portland is all about refreshment for the body too, with reportedly more coffee shops per capita than other U.S. cities, the most craft breweries of any city in the world, food cart offerings surpassed only by New York City and a lively and innovative restaurant scene. The Best of Portland tour only whetted my appetite for more.

Chocolate Decadence Tour

When you think of places to sample the world's finest chocolate, one might think of Switzerland, Belgium or France. It's unlikely anyone would suggest Portland, Oregon. Surprisingly, you can take a "world tour" of chocolate tasting all within a ten block radius of downtown Portland. The Chocolate Decadence tour, offered by the Portland Walking Tours company, provides not only an opportunity to try a wide variety of chocolate, but also a fun venue for learning about where cacao is grown, how it is processed and then manufactured into one of the world's favorite foods.

Able led by our resident expert guide, our group wove our way through the streets from shop to shop. At Teuscher, specializing in imported Swiss confections, we sampled their signature Champagne truffle. My favorite at Belgian chocolate vendor Leonidas was the Manon Dark candy made of dark chocolate, praline and caramelized hazelnuts with a flavor reminiscent of rich café mocha. At the Cacao outlet near West Burnside and SW 13th Avenue we compared six different brands of bar chocolate from around the world.

By group consensus our favorite stop was at Moonstruck Chocolates near SW 6th and Alder, whose unique confections are made right in Portland. From the whimsical to the sublime, Moonstruck has something for everyone. Most of us took advantage of the 10% discount they offered to tour participants. There were some other surprises that I won't give away, but for anyone who loves chocolate, this tour is a "must do" when you visit Portland.

Underground Portland Tour

Imagine you are a young man visiting the bustling city of Portland for the first time. The year is 1856 and you've come to town to buy supplies and have a brief respite before returning to your job cutting timber. You check into a hotel, order some dinner and a drink. The bartender befriends you, since you are alone and don't know a soul in the city; he keeps the drinks coming. The entertainment is lively and you are having one of the greatest days of your life.

The next thing you know your head is pounding, you feel sick to your stomach and there is a strange creaking sound coming from the floor beneath you. Suddenly, to your horror you realize you're on a ship bound for who knows where, and you can't swim. You've been Shanghaied!

This actually happened to many unsuspecting men when Portland was a young, wild and nearly lawless seaport. Crime and corruption were commonplace in this largest city of the Oregon Territory. You can hear about Portland's infamous past, and see some of her quirky present-day sites, on the Underground Portland tour, one of several offerings from the Portland Walking Tour company. Our guide kept us intrigued and laughing while feeding us tasty historical tidbits as we explored the city's Old Town and Chinatown neighborhoods. Learning history was never this much fun in school.

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