

VISIT THE CASCADE LAKES OF OREGON

# northwest

TRAVEL & LIFE

## TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT

TIPS FROM A PRO

PLUS

TRENDING:  
HAND-CRAFTED VERMOUTH

19 MUST-GO FESTIVALS

Display until June 30, 2016



NWTRAVELMAG.COM



## Fiddling Around in Weiser, Idaho

by Tamara Muldoon

We slipped through a back door into Weiser High School's cafeteria, where a cacophony of sounds assaulted our ears. Used as a practice and staging area for the National Oldtime Fiddlers Contest ([fiddlecontest.org](http://fiddlecontest.org)), the room held a confusion of huddled contestants and accompanists, each completing one more run-through.

In the darkened auditorium my mother and I found our seats reserved for the week-long contest, and settled in to hear the country's top fiddlers play for prize money and bragging rights. Seven age divisions plus Grand Champion contestants perform through five elimination rounds to reach the finals.

Fiddlers play three tunes in each round; a hoedown, a waltz, and one song in another style, often a rag. Sequestered in separate room, judges score audio performances of the contestants based on Oldtime style, rhythm, tone and danceability.

You'll hear no shrill scratching here, but rather notes as pure as those crafted by concert violinists, albeit in a different style. It's especially inspiring to watch the Small Fry competitors, ages eight and under—pint-sized performers accomplished beyond their years.

The contest is not the only show in town during Fiddle Week, held the third full week of June annually. Weiser's City Park hosts daily musical entertainment along with food and merchandise vendors. At Memorial Park, visitors enjoy a variety of live entertainment, food and craft booths while kids flock to the carnival rides. On Saturday morning, catch the parade that winds through town.

Browse the Fiddlers Hall of Fame in Slocum Hall on the historic Intermountain Institute campus, a former private school that operated from 1899 to 1933. The museum honors past Oldtime Fiddlers Contest champions along with related memorabilia. While there, tour the Snake River Heritage Center in adjacent Hooker Hall.

If you're coming during Fiddle Week, book early or plan on camping. Rooms are scarce in this small town of about 5,000

residents, whose population triples during the contest. Many camp at "Fiddletown," a grassy field behind the high school. For hearty, low-cost meals, grab breakfast at Weiser Senior Center and dinner at the Elks Lodge. Both organizations feed the masses Monday through Saturday during Fiddle Week. Or, dine at a variety of local restaurants.

Weiser is located about 1.5 hours northwest of Boise on the Oregon border. Contact Weiser Chamber of Commerce for visitor information ([weiserchamber.org](http://weiserchamber.org)). 📍



Swing Fiddle Finals

**Insider tip:** bring a stadium cushion. The auditorium's wooden bleachers and metal folding chairs make you want to give standing ovations, and not just because of the talented musicians.