



The Dalles has been an important river city for thousands of years.

# Trip Planner

## Doing It Big in The Dalles

This Columbia Gorge city has really upped its cool factor

*written by Tracy Ellen Beard*

NESTLED AT THE eastern end of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, The Dalles sits in a region rich in history, affords breathtaking scenery and is the perfect place for epic outdoor adventures. Located along a profitable waterway for more than 10,000 years, and one of the oldest inhabited areas in the Western Hemisphere, The Dalles has always been a desirable destination.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition Corps of Discovery camped at Rock Fort Camp (now The Dalles) October 25-28, 1805, putting this spot on the map for future explorers. The population grew from the early 1840s, when pioneers began crossing the Oregon Trail, through 1868, the end of the Gold Rush in Wasco County. Thousands of people settled in The Dalles, but when gold fever died down in 1870, the population dropped to fewer than 3,500 in the county.

Today, agricultural businesses, wineries, breweries and restaurants drive the local economy, and the area continues to be a mecca for outdoor adventures. Cyclists and mountain bikers flock the area, hikers and rock climbers pepper the hillsides, and the Columbia River boasts every water sport imaginable.

If your journey begins south of The Dalles, consider adding a night to your trip at the Balch Hotel in Dufur. Upon opening in 1908, the hotel offered hot water, steam heat and electric lights to travelers arriving on the Great Southern Railroad and by stagecoach on the Oregon Trail.

Now, the hotel offers exceptional hospitality, cozy indoor and outdoor spaces, on-site spa treatments, delicious light fare and a dinner special. Enjoy the views of Mount Hood while sipping beer and wine, available for tasting. >>



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## Day 1

### ART • HISTORY • POTSTICKERS

Begin your trip to The Dalles at Kainos Coffee. Try the avocado toast topped with a poached egg, alongside a cappuccino. Two childhood friends started the business after roasting coffee over their fireplace with a homemade roaster.

The Dalles Dam Visitor Center focuses on the area's history and explains the reason for the dam's construction and its unfortunate effects on Celilo Falls. One exhibit educates guests on the pros and cons of the dam, one of the ten largest hydropower dams in the United States. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the dam, completing it in 1957, and continues to operate it today. The dam's construction resulted in the destruction of the horseshoe-shaped Celilo Falls, along with two nearby ancient Indian villages. Tribes that fished and traded there for thousands of years took a heavy blow to their livelihood. The dam provides the Pacific Northwest with a reliable water source for hydropower, navigation, recreation, fish passage, irrigation and flood mitigation.

Stop for lunch at Montira's Thai Cuisine and order the appetizer sampler platter. Each bite is tasty, from the crispy spring rolls to the mouthwatering potstickers. Swing by SweetHeart Bake Shop and pick up a treat. Owners Amiee and Jason Blevins make cakes, pies and cookies including interesting flavors of macarons such as caramel popcorn and mint Oreo.

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Meander around downtown and admire the murals. Artists recreate scenes from historic daily life—of early Native



LEFT A Monte Cristo from Petite Provence. AT RIGHT, FROM TOP Fort Dalles Museum has pioneer artifacts and antique wagons. Visit the National Neon Sign Museum to learn about the signs' evolution. The Dalles Dam Visitor Center explains its role in Oregon. Murals abound in the downtown.

Americans fishing and trading, settlers farming, and pioneers scouting out new territory. There are a few new murals with vibrantly colored scenes of wildlife.

City planners focus on giving historic buildings new purpose and life through other forms of commerce. The old icehouse and mint now function as popular pubs. In 1876, the Baldwin brothers, James and John, opened the Baldwin Saloon. Over the years it served as a steamboat navigation office and a coffin storage site. Today, the restaurant serves drinks and delicious food prepared from scratch.

The Celilo Inn overlooks the Dalles Dam and the scenic Columbia River Gorge. The Inn recently received a complete renovation. Many of the spacious rooms offer magnificent views of the river. Pick up a Columbia Gorge Passport that provides holders free tastings at several local wineries.





## Day 2

### NEON • WINE • R&R

Petite Provence in the Gorge has incredible breakfasts, brunches and lunches. The cream cheese crêpes with fresh berries and almandine flambé with whipped cream are excellent choices. Be sure to take a French pastry with you for the road.

In August 2018, David Benko opened the National Neon Sign Museum, where visitors discover the evolution of the electric sign. Benko describes the simplicity of the original signs, from only one color and one word through the progression of the signs that include the addition of more words per sign and various colors. The museum has one of the largest collections of neon storefront signs





**EAT**

**Kainos Coffee**  
[www.kainoscoffee.com](http://www.kainoscoffee.com)

**Montira's Thai Cuisine**  
[www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)

**Sweetheart Bake Shop**  
[www.sweetheartbakeshop.com](http://www.sweetheartbakeshop.com)

**The Baldwin Saloon**  
[www.baldwinsaloon.com](http://www.baldwinsaloon.com)

**Petite Provence in the Gorge**  
[www.provencepdx.com](http://www.provencepdx.com)

**Last Stop Saloon**  
[www.laststopsaloon.com](http://www.laststopsaloon.com)

**Rivertap Pub**  
[www.rivertap.com](http://www.rivertap.com)

**STAY**

**The Balch Hotel**  
[www.balchhotel.com](http://www.balchhotel.com)

**Celilo Inn**  
[www.celiloinn.com/hotels-the-dalles](http://www.celiloinn.com/hotels-the-dalles)

**R & R Guest House**  
[www.randrguesthouse.net](http://www.randrguesthouse.net)

**PLAY**

**Fort Dalles Museum**  
[www.fortdallesmuseum.org](http://www.fortdallesmuseum.org)

**National Neon Sign Museum**  
[www.nationalneonsignmuseum.org](http://www.nationalneonsignmuseum.org)

**OutCatching**  
[www.outcatching.com](http://www.outcatching.com)

**Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum**  
[www.gorgediscovery.org](http://www.gorgediscovery.org)



The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center explains the natural history of the region.

in the world and an enormous array of related artifacts.

Fortify yourself with the chicken sandwich at the Last Stop Saloon and then imbibe at local wineries.

Tierra de Lobos Winery rests on the riverbank where Adolfo Mollinedo and his business partner opened more than a year ago. The two grow their grapes, harvest and bottle everything themselves. The winery features several Spanish wine varietals, including a magnificent sweet red wine named Tinto Dulce, which Mollinedo said makes a great sangria.

The Sunshine Mill serves a variety of wines and is home to the Quenett and Copa Di Vino wineries. The Sunshine Biscuit Company, maker of the Cheez-It, once owned the building. James and Molly Martin now own the Sunshine Mill. James was a two-time guest on "Shark Tank" where he turned down funding both times for the Copa Di Vino single-serve wine by the glass. Through his personal marketing efforts, he has created success without the use of outside funds.

Book a stay at R & R Guesthouse, a private turn-of-the-century home owned by Julie and Kevin Ryan. This stunning home features beautiful antiques with modern amenities. The backyard has a pool, a huge jetted tub with a massage bed and

gorgeous gardens. Breakfasts are delicious and locally sourced.

Grab dinner at Clock Tower Ales, which serves casual fare and more than thirty beers, or at Rivertap Pub, which creates something new each season. Rivertap offers spectacular cocktails and music in the evening.

**Day 3****OUTDOOR DISCOVERIES**

Walk along the ADA-accessible paved 10-mile Riverfront Trail, bike the country roads, mountain bike one of the local hills or try your hand at fishing—a year-round activity with either bass, salmon or sturgeon always in season. Fish from the banks or venture out on a guided trip with Darrell Axtell at OutCatching. Axtell offers numerous trip options. Challenge yourself on one of his catch-and-release monster sturgeon trips. It is exhilarating to reel in one of these prehistoric beasts, ranging from 7 to 12 feet long.

If fishing isn't your thing, tour the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, with its interactive display showcasing the natural and cultural history of the area from the Ice Age through the Lewis and Clark expedition. Don't leave without seeing the outside exhibit featuring the local wildlife. ■