### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Tourism Is a Growth Industry</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashland: Taking Show Business to a Different Level</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants Pass: City Reconnects with the Arts</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland: The Weather’s Always Right for Jazz</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln City: Finders, Keepers on the Beach</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astoria: A City True to Its Roots</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clackamas County: Collaboration Builds Value</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willamette, Umpqua Valleys: Exploring the Back Roads</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisters: Little Town that Could</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exploring Authentic Oregon: The Importance of Cultural Tourism**

Nicholas Payton blows away the wintertime blues at the 2006 Portland Jazz Festival.
“Over the past decade, travel in heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry.”

These words, and an array of facts to back them up, come from “A Position Paper on Cultural and Heritage Tourism,” published by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities for the 2005 U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism Summit.

This trend is rooted in the very nature of travel. Tourists are by and large a curious breed with a hunger for experience and knowledge of the world and the people in it. It’s the same urge that draws people to arts events, museums, and festivals, and that drives artists to create. In a world of interchangeable communities, cookie-cutter malls, and plastic souvenirs, a growing number of travelers are searching for the new, the different, the authentic.

That last word is particularly important. As the globe shrinks and visitors grow tired of creeping homogenization, authentic experiences become a key factor in deciding where to go and what to do. Will I find a distinct sense of place, a genuine glimpse into other cultures, other times, other ways of living? Will I connect with real people? Will I learn something new? Will I create unique memories?

Fortunately for us, Oregon offers a wealth of authentic and unique experiences to attract these discerning, inquisitive tourists. This publication highlights a handful of the many ways communities, organizations, and businesses are using tourism to showcase and preserve the rich cultural heritage of our state, while adding to the diversity and vibrancy of our economy. Anyone who takes a moment to look around will find hundreds of others.
Industry research confirms that cultural and heritage growing segments of the travel industry.”

Oregon’s Cultural Riches: An Important Natural Resource

Tourism is a vital economic driver in Oregon, contributing significantly to the health of our communities through job creation and increased tax revenue. Visitors continue to discover and connect with the diverse natural treasures of our unique state.

– Governor Ted Kulongoski

Tourism is Oregon’s largest traded-sector industry. It employs 90,000 Oregonians and contributes $7 billion to the state’s economy each year. Travel Oregon, the state’s tourism arm, doesn’t break out figures explicitly for cultural tourism, but national statistics show that fully 81% of the 146.4 million U.S. adults who took a trip of 50 miles or more away from home in the past year were cultural and heritage tourists.

Nationally, historic/cultural travel volume grew 13% between 1996 and 2002, from 192.4 million person-trips to 216.8 million person-trips. Across America, 35.3 million adults say that a specific arts, cultural or heritage event or activity influenced their choice of destination. Significantly, those visitors help drive the economy wherever they visit.

Oregon is justly famous for its coastline, mountains, forests, rivers, and canyons – a landscape of natural splendor that creates a sense of place like no other. An authentic Oregon experience can’t be replicated on a backlot or forged on a movie set.

Cultural Tourism Facts

Research shows that cultural and heritage tourists:

• Spend more than other travelers ($623 vs. $457)
• Are more likely to spend $1,000 (19% vs. 12%)
• Are more likely to stay in a hotel, motel, or B&B (62% vs. 55%)
• Take longer trips (5.2 nights vs. 3.4 nights)


Dance Kaleidoscope and the Terra Nova Consort enliven the free Green Show at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland.

photo: Jennifer Reiley
from plastic. Our cultural and historic riches are as much a part of that distinct Oregon experience as Mount Hood, Hell’s Canyon and Crater Lake. Artists – indeed, all people, artists or not – are formed and informed by place, and nowhere is this more evident than in Oregon.

• Our history – natural, pioneer, Native American – is rich with stories people want to hear.
• Our natural splendor inspires an impressive collection of Northwest painters, writers, sculptors, potters, glass artisans, beadmakers, basketweavers, and other artists.
• World-class music and theater festivals thrive at our beaches and in the shadow of our mountains.
• Our farmland, blessed by geography and climate, gives us a growing reputation for food and the attractions that draw visitors: restaurants, wineries, microbreweries, farmers markets, culinary festivals and classes.
• Interesting, unique small towns dot the countryside all over the state. Native American tribes host festivals and build museums, as well as casinos. Urban centers pulse with performing arts, museums, galleries, clubs, restaurants, parks, and universities. All of them showing a distinct Oregon sensibility.

During the 1995 White House Conference on Travel and Tourism, a coalition representing America’s arts, historic preservation, humanities organizations, and federal cultural agencies presented the following definition for cultural and heritage tourism:

Travel directed toward experiencing the arts, heritage, and special character of a place. America’s rich heritage and culture, rooted in our history, our creativity and our diverse population, provides visitors to our communities with a wide variety of cultural opportunities, including museums, historic sites, dance, music, theater, book and other festivals, historic buildings, arts and crafts fairs, neighborhoods, and landscapes.

These are the events and attractions that celebrate the diversity and uniqueness of place: The natural, cultural, historic aspects that give our communities life. Every compass point in Oregon has them. Every city, town, village, rural area, Native American reservation has unique, authentic cultural riches that can attract tourists and help fuel the economy.

Editor’s Note: In some of your reading, you will come across references to cultural and heritage tourism. For our purposes here, we include history and heritage as part of the overall cultural tourism experience, along with the humanities and the arts of all descriptions. We trust readers will accept that any use of the term “cultural tourism” in this publication refers to its broadest, most inclusive sense.

Notes
1. From “Cultural Tourism in the United States,” a white paper developed by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum Services, and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.
Any discussion of cultural tourism in Oregon must take note of Ashland. That picturesque town in the Siskiyous at the southern limit of Oregon – five freeway hours from the largest metropolitan area. From February through October, nearly a hundred thousand people of all ages head to Ashland for the express purpose of… going to the theater.

Taking “Show Business” to a Whole Different Level

You think people like to leave their brains at home when they go on vacation? Tell that to the thousands who fill nearly every theater seat in Ashland. For much of what they see is challenging stuff, seriously done: Chekhov, Shaw, Ibsen, Albee, Mamet, August Wilson, playwrights new and familiar. And Shakespeare, of course; Shakespeare most of all. For Ashland is the home of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

Those visitors buy theater tickets (373,000 of them in 2005), stay in hotels and B&Bs, and dine out, to the tune of $25 million in direct expenditures in a typical 9-month season. Take into account all the tourist activity that surrounds the festival, and that economic impact on the community climbs to more than $129 million.1

The festival itself employs upwards of 300 people – many, but not all, in skilled or artistic positions – making it one of Ashland’s largest employers. But the play is far from the only thing in this town that exemplifies Oregon’s magical “wildlife-urban interface.” On the urban side are its galleries, bookstores, shops, brewpubs, parks, a number of other theater and performing arts groups, a college campus, and a concentration of restaurants that, as Sunset magazine noted, “pique the interest of food critics nationwide.” The Wolftrap-like Britt Festivals of classical music and performing arts are just over the way in historic Jacksonville – a pair of popular and rewarding attractions in their own right. On the wildlife side is an amazing variety of outdoors activities, ranging from hiking and biking to river-rafting to salmon fishing to wine touring. Crater Lake National Park is just one of many day-trip options, though arguably the most dramatic.

There is a widespread opinion among the Ashland business community that more than half of the local businesses and one-third of the jobs are dependent on the tourist crowd generated by the OSF every year. It is no longer about the business community supporting the arts in a one-way fashion. Ashland today seems to be a striking example of the synergistic, symbiotic co-existence of both.

—Oregon Labor Trends
Oregon Employment Department
March 2004

Oregon Shakespeare Festival is justly famous nationwide for the quality of its productions and its financial success. Ashland is famous in Oregon as a prime example of the power cultural tourism wields as an economic engine. But it’s hardly the only example. Communities throughout the state are using the arts, local history, folkways, and imagination as tools to help build economic growth and diversity, while also preserving the cultural heritage of their communities. A handful of those stories follow. Let them serve as springboards for a thousand other examples, each reflecting its own heritage, its own sense of this wonderful, multifaceted, creative, special place called “Oregon.”

1. These figures come from an Oregon Shakespeare Festival economic impact report for 2005, and from Oregon Labor Trends, Oregon Employment Department, March 2004
Just a few miles up I-5 from Ashland, another Oregon community is using the arts to help create a distinct sense place, build civic pride, and attract visitors. In Grants Pass, the stage for economic growth through the arts is being set not by the Bard, but by a bank.

A River Wild; A City Reconnected; a Bank Committed to Making a Difference

“I’m not in the banking business. I’m in the tourism business.”

- Brady Adams, president
   Evergreen Federal Bank

The gold that drew the first settlers to the Rogue Valley is long gone. The timber industries that sustained later residents are in decline. But one natural resource remains strong, and grows ever more important as other assets wane: the mighty Rogue. It has long inspired white-water enthusiasts, writers such as Zane Grey (that famous Western novelist and avid fly-fisherman), filmmakers, and hundreds of weekend painters.

It has also inspired a civic-minded bank to help reconnect Grants Pass with its celebrated river, and in the process, to create “the best river town in America.” And the mechanism Evergreen Federal Bank has chosen for this effort? Public art.

Bank president Brady Adams sees this as a case of enlightened self-interest. As Oregon Business magazine put it in a December 2005 profile, “In order for the bank to be successful...the community has to be successful. A healthy community can build a tourism industry that attracts affluent retirees who then consider settling in the Grants Pass area.” And the way to build community, Adams decided, was with art. “Art has the ability to connect people, young or old, rich or poor,” he said, “It’s a way for people to have a shared experience in a positive manner.”

Eagles and Artists and Bears – Oh My!

The strategic use of public art to draw visitors to the Rogue Valley is inscribed in Evergreen’s business plan. Even more significant is the way that commitment is interwoven into the fabric of the community.

In 2003, the bank bought a score of fiberglass bears and adopted them out to local artists, who embellished them to the full extent of their imaginations. The artbears were displayed throughout town, to the delight of residents and visitors, then auctioned off to support local nonprofit agencies serving community needs. In its first two years, BearFest raised more than $400,000. In 2005, five of the 62 bears were sold; the rest were donated to the city for its permanent public art collection. Until BearFest, most local artists scarcely knew each other. Now, they connect regularly in a warehouse Evergreen built for the express purpose of giving artists a place to create and commune, and to showcase the public art commissioned by the bank.

In 2006, bears gave way to bald eagles – 23 of them, “flying” overhead from steel trees or perched on sidewalk boulders to glare at passersby. The birds signify the latest Evergreen art collaboration, An Old Fashioned Celebration of America, created to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Designed to “capture the spirit of a turn-of-the-century town decked out for a patriotic celebration,” the summer-long art-and-history festival featured 23 plaques, hand-painted by local artists to capture a significant event in each decade since 1776. The celebration was scheduled to dovetail with the Art Along the Rogue street art and music festival.
an annual event sponsored by the city and local businesses that takes place early in October.

**A River Runs Through It**

Bears and eagles are beloved denizens of the Rogue Valley. But the focal point that gives the area its sense of place - its authenticity, if you will - is the river itself. Enter the River District Project, an ambitious plan intended to capture, extend, and celebrate the position of Grants Pass as the Gateway to the Rogue. Based on a study commissioned by Evergreen, the project envisions a sweeping enhancement of both banks of the river, including Evergreen's own land and parcels owned by the city and private entities. Features include a resort built from the bones of an old hotel, expanded public art displays, paths and pedestrian bridges, and a free transportation loop between Riverside Park and downtown.

Evergreen Bank is hardly the only arts supporter in Grants Pass, but it is an apt symbol of what one committed business can do for the livability and "visitability" of a place. And, of course, for the local economy - not the least of which are the artists and artisans who live and work (and pay taxes) here. In addition to the town's 35 or so artists, local suppliers like EB Effects, a fabricator whose clients include Disney, contribute to the artistic and economic impact of the project.

When the works are on display, Evergreen contracts out installers, security officers, nonprofits, and cleanup crews. There is a ripple effect at work here that any rafter on the Rogue itself would understand and respect.

Those ripples, as ripples tend to do, form a circle. As Oregon Business reported, "Evergreen Federal's assets have increased by 50% since 2000, with much of that growth in the last two years." Its 2004 profits hit a record, and 2005 was on track to exceed that. Brady Adams believes he knows why. Based on cost of deposits, he estimates that two-thirds of the bank's income can be attributed to the good will he and his bank have built through its bears and eagles and other community activities.

**A City Discovers its Artistic Soul – and an Economic Engine**

Evergreen Federal Bank is but one example of how Grants Pass embraces the arts as an economic force. A decade before the first BearFest, a group of organizers brought together artists, musicians, businesses, and nonprofits to create a monthly celebration of community, food, music, and the arts in downtown Grants Pass. Before long, First Friday Art Night was attracting over a thousand people.

Today, historic buildings are being spruced up throughout a city well populated with galleries showcasing the work of local, regional and national artists. Historic sites, festivals, arts events - Amazing May, Art Along the Rogue, among others - and performances of music and theater create a rich year-round cultural calendar.

In 2003, Rogue Community College established the Art Works Community Initiative with the mission "to develop the arts and arts-related activities as a vital component of regional economic development, and of the quality of life in our community."

In 2005, the college was awarded an Arts Build Communities grant to continue its planning efforts. There followed an intensive and focused community process involving dozens of focus groups, community meetings, and interviews. Businesses, artists, youth, educators, arts groups, seniors, community leaders, people of all ages, backgrounds and perspectives participated.

The result is a cohesive, visionary ten-year community strategic plan for incorporating the arts into the fabric of Grants Pass life. Charlie Mitchell, the city's economic development coordinator and a key player in the Art Works Initiative, put it like this:

“The arts can change the way a community looks at itself and can change the way outsiders view the community.”
It’s not much of a trick to get visitors to Portland when the air is warm, and the skies are blue, and the mountain is out. But the wet heart of February is a different kettle of steelhead altogether. In 2004, a group of smart tourism, arts and business people decided that the Rose City needed a way to fill hotel rooms and generate tourist income during the lowest occupancy month of the year. And what could be a more appealing break from the cold, rainy, bluesy Portland winter than some hot music?

The Weather’s Always Right for Jazz

...Even when it drizzles - which, as everyone knows, it does a lot in Portland in February. Our soggy winter reputation does not deter thousands of music lovers from packing umbrellas, anoraks, and tourist dollars, and heading to Portland to sit inside and listen to a whole lot of world-class jazz. As that old saying goes, “If you syncopate it, they will come.” And come they have, every winter since Portland Jazz Festival started in 2004.

The festival exists to “promote jazz in the Pacific Northwest while generating new forms of economic and social impact within the Portland area.” It serves here as a near-perfect example of what cultural tourism can be and do, as these overall goals suggest:

1. Through a partnership with Portland Oregon Visitors Association (POVA) and participating downtown hotels, develop a regional cultural tourism event that will bring enhanced economic impact for hotels, restaurants and other tourism-related businesses.

2. Increase the awareness of Portland as a center for jazz music by presenting internationally recognized artists in ticketed concerts supplemented by up to 50 free performances showcasing regional talent.

3. Simultaneously, produce a citywide event during February celebrating Black History Month that provides a series of education outreach programs in collaboration with area cultural organizations.

A Cultural Tourism Event with a Strong Economic Impact

By taking place in February, the festival provides a welcome financial boost for Portland hotels and other tourism businesses during what is traditionally the lowest annual occupancy month of the year. The timing coincides with Black History Month, reflecting the roots of jazz within the African-American experience. While high profile performances take place in downtown hotel ballrooms and free performances happen all over the city, black history and jazz education programs take place in a variety Portland neighborhoods and communities.

The economic formula is simple: sixteen participating hotels provide free use of ballrooms and other public spaces for performances, plus a number of rooms for artists and staff. In return, the hotels retain food and beverage receipts and can promote their individual “Jazz Lovers” packages within festival promotional materials and advertising coordinated by POVA.

People don’t just show up for the jazz, of course. They have to be informed, attracted, sold. Aggressive, imaginative marketing is a critical element for a successful cultural tourism event. And here, as in other aspects, it helps to have the support of strong partners.

All partners are important to the success of the festival, perhaps none more so than POVA, which was one of the motivating forces behind its creation in the first place. “It continually amazes me that people don’t take advantage of local visitors associations,” said managing director Sarah Smith. “They’re public entities that are available to help, but remain an untapped resource in many communities.”

Staging a Jazz Comeback in Portland

Once upon a time, the air along Portland’s Williams Avenue sang with jazz night and day. This was the late 1940s, a time when clubs lined the street and the jam sessions here were among the best in the Northwest. Portland in those days was a hangout for many jazz legends who traveled between Seattle and L.A., two of the biggest scenes in the country.

The Williams Avenue of old is just a memory, but Portland is working on a comeback as an important stop for musicians and a destination for jazz lovers. During each of its seasons, Portland Jazz Festival has
given thousands of residents, out-of-towners, and musicians a 10-day immersion in an artform that Wynton Marsalis has called “the highest rendition of individual emotion in the history of Western music.”

That immersion covers the full range of jazz experience: Concerts, rehearsals, late-night jam sessions, master classes, workshops and lectures. A mixture of ticketed and no-charge events enables casual fans to sit in on a free performance or two before deciding to spring for tickets to hear a jazz legend explore his art.

The legends include many of the foremost names in jazz. Wayne Shorter, McCoy Tyner, Dianne Reeves and Charlie Haden signed up for showcase events at downtown halls and hotel ballrooms. Free gigs and jam sessions spotlight regional artists such as Tom Grant, Greta Matassa, Dave Peck and Nancy King.

Connecting through Black History and Music Education

One of the most important mandates we put upon arts and heritage organizations is that of helping to preserve our cultural legacy. This obligation takes the form of outreach and education programs designed to reach out to the greater community – and to upcoming generations.

Each season, Portland Jazz Festival connects up to 12,000 patrons, students and festival musicians through a varied mix of middle school assemblies, public workshops, lectures, and master classes. Primary goals focus on enhancing general music appreciation and fostering artistic excellence within student musicians. All programs are presented free of charge, and, except for middle school performances, are open to the public.

A central education program is “The Incredible Journey of Jazz,” a 75-minute music/theater program for middle school audiences that tells the story of jazz from its roots in African music and culture, through its development in the United States, to its current role as one of America’s most treasured contributions to world culture. Programs scheduled for 2007 include Jazz StoryTimes, jazz in words and music for children and families held both weekends at Multnomah County Library branches; and Under 21 Jam Sessions, which invite talented high school and college players to hone their skills in a live club session with local jazz man Mel Brown.

The result of all this activity, if Portland Jazz Festival has its way, will make February jazz month in Portland: a celebration of jazz in all its forms, music, film, writing, photography, art, literature - and rain be damned.
The Oregon Coast attracts attention for much more than its celebrated natural splendor. Every community along its 360 miles seems to be discovering creative ways of using the arts to take the beach experience beyond sand, surf and scenery. Each town has a gallery or twelve; music festivals abound; culinary arts – cooking classes and restaurants and wine tastings – are popping up like, um, champagne corks; festivals, fairs and celebrations occupy every month of the calendar.

In Lincoln City, It’s Finders Keepers, and Losers ...Well, there are no losers

In days gone by, visitors combing Oregon’s beaches often found treasures from the east, blown glass floats, in deep shades of green and blue. Used by Japanese fishing crews to float their nets, the globes ranged from two inches to two feet in diameter. They were hoarded, polished and adored – the ultimate find for a dedicated beachcomber.

Now that fishing vessels around the world use buoy-ant plastic, a blown glass float is a rare find – except on the 7-1/2 mile stretch of public beach that lines Lincoln City. Each winter since 1999, an army of volunteers hides more than 2,000 floats above the high tide line and below the beach embankment for people to find and keep.

The modern versions come not from fishing boats, but from the studios of local glass artists. Each year, Lincoln City commissions 8 to 12 artists to handcraft signed and numbered glass floats even more colorful than the ones of old. Finders take their discoveries to the Lincoln City Visitor and Convention Bureau, where they’re given a certificate of authenticity and a biographical sketch of the artist. A drawing is held monthly for those who are physically unable to comb the beach for their own chance at finding a float. (In the interest of beach safety, the floats are not placed in areas of danger or in areas that require any climbing onto the cliffs.)

Certain floats carry numbers that are also good for a night’s lodging, “dinner and a show,” or a complete weekend package, with lodging, meals, golf, shopping gift certificate, and an opportunity to blow a unique float at a local glass studio.

“The best souvenir I’ve ever taken home from vacation”

The Finders Keepers project got its start as the brainstorm of a local artist seeking an intriguing project to...
Search for a Beautiful Glass Float, Pick Up an Ugly Glass Bottle

Lincoln City has even incorporated its beach trash collection effort into Finders Keepers. Beachcombers can pick up litterbags at area lodging facilities and through the visitors center. Each litterbag can then be exchanged at the Visitor and Convention Bureau for a chance to win a float in a monthly drawing.

Lincoln City Visitors and Convention Bureau www.oregoncoast.org

Visitors can even learn to blow their own floats at local glass studios.

launch the new millennium. According to Sandy Pfaff, head of the Visitors and Convention Bureau, Lincoln City saw it as a mechanism to expand glass arts in the area as an economic development act. “In fact,” she added, “tourism is the purest form of economic development.”

Lincoln City signed on as sponsor, hosting the inaugural season in 1999-2000. Partners now include a long list of local and regional businesses both directly and indirectly involved in the tourism industry, including the Lincoln City Lodging Association, the Tanger Outlet Center, Chinook Winds Casino, and a number of hotels and resorts.

Finders Keepers kicks off each October with the annual Glass Float Ball and the Glass Galore Art Fair. Each June, the Glass Weekend Gallery Hop marks the fiery finale. In between, Lincoln City’s many galleries present featured artists and receptions. Glass floats are available for purchase in most gift shops and galleries, and glass blowing demonstrations and classes are available throughout the year at the Jennifer L. Sears Glass Art Studio.

For the city, artists and businesses, Finders Keepers is proving to be a perfect combination of art and the outdoors. But it wouldn’t succeed if it didn’t offer visitors an enjoyable, unique experience that underscores the reasons people come to Lincoln City in the first place.

What appeals to tourists, said Pfaff, is both the connection to the past and the fun of finding a lovely art object while beachcombing. “People come here solely for that opportunity and many return again and again to participate in the joy of the search.”

And those who come in search of a float often find their way to area galleries, where un-numbered floats are available for sale along with a dizzying array of fine art glass from around the world. When they return home, they have a wonderful souvenir – perhaps, as at least one visitor has said, the best one ever – and a memory of a special time and place on that very wonderful Oregon Coast.
An old bumper sticker concisely captures the identity that makes Oregon’s oldest city increasingly popular with tourists: “Astoria ain’t quaint.” Nor, if its residents have anything to say about it, will it ever be. For that would not be the authentic Astoria, a community determined to celebrate its proud working-town roots and layer upon layer of history.

Be True to Your Roots: Building a Renaissance on History and a Sense of Place

Just five years after Lewis and Clark left their cramped log fort near the western “ocean,” a New York financier sent fur traders to the Northwest to establish a trading post. They named it after their benefactor, and Fort Astoria was set in history as the oldest U.S. settlement west of the Rockies. The fortunes of the small town at the mouth of the Columbia have been on a roller coaster ride of boom and bust ever since. The fur trade never made the city rich, but wealth did come with salmon. For a glorious few decades in the late 1800s, a new class of wealthy fishermen and river pilots covered the hills with Victorian houses to rival those of San Francisco, and fishermen, canners, and those who served them made Astoria the second largest city in Oregon.

The wealth didn’t last, but the history, the Victorians, and hard-working legacy did. The fact is, Astoria has more historic interest than any single town should probably be allowed. That interest is inspiring a resurgence, both in the town and in the number of visitors discovering this scenic corner of Oregon. The number of visitors increased 35% between 2002 and 2003, and in 2004, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named Astoria one of its “Dozen Distinctive Destinations.”

No conspicuous single entity drove this renaissance, nor did it burst into full flower overnight. Rather, it’s been building to a state of critical mass for many years – through a combination of civic, business, and private forces, working both together and independently.

There has, however, been a unifying mission that seemed to sprout organically from a community with a heritage of fighting the forces of climate, sea, and river to earn its living. City Manager Paul Benoit puts that mission into four simple words: Do it for Astoria. “You have to keep your community real, true to your roots,” he said. The last thing community leaders wanted was to let a popularity with tourists drive away residents. And so, in today’s Astoria, galleries and museums coexist with gas stations and hardware stores; bistros and coffee shops abound; and the working waterfront boasts an interpretive history walk, a tourist trolley, and a celebrated maritime museum. It is that authenticity, a balance of holiday and everyday, that turns a city into a living, breathing organism – something to be both lived in and enjoyed.

“Americans...are hungry for the real thing,” said Steve Forrester, editor of The Daily Astorian newspaper. “They are bored with anonymity. They are bored with uniformity. They are awaking.” In Astoria’s rich history, natural beauty, and real people, he believes, they discover a place unlike any other in the country. “Sense of place is the appeal of cultural tourism. People have been to enough anonymous chain hotels, they want uniqueness.”

This Time, It Didn’t Begin with Lewis and Clark

Dozens of travel writers followed the Corps of Discovery route west to cover events surrounding the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. When they got here,
what they discovered – and wrote about – was a town a little bit gritty, a whole lot scenic, thoroughly historic, and totally unique. The second coming of L&C didn’t start the action, but it did focus valuable attention on what had already begun to take place. The catalyst, some say, was a theater.

On a highly visible corner in downtown Astoria stands one of the Pacific Northwest’s best examples of 1920s-era vaudeville-motion picture palaces. When the heyday of such places passed, it fell into little more than a shadow of former elegance. Then, in the early 1990s, a group of community leaders joined forces to restore the Liberty Theater as a performing arts center for the city. With support from urban renewal funds, the restorers bought the entire theater block, using income from ground-floor retail to help fund the renovation.

The theater was a tipping point, and the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial added another shove, prodding donations and involvement in the Astoria renaissance. Across from the theater, a former fleabag was transformed into the Hotel Elliot, a boutique hotel with small town charm and big city amenities, an underground wine bar (this is Oregon, after all), and rooftop garden with million-dollar views over river and city.

As Astoria became more of an attraction, the arts community – always strong, but used to hiding away in cheap downtown lofts – moved downstairs and became more visible. The popular Sunday Market gave artists a venue to sell their work. Many, said Benoit, graduated to storefronts after discovering they could actually make a living at their art.

"Astoria is fertile ground for the cross-cultural traveler - relaxed enough that its fanciest restaurant shares a corner with the Pontiac dealership; engaged enough to have a community radio station, a food co-op, and a legitimate arts scene. An abstract painter who’d just arrived was washing dishes in order to rent a room (a loft, you could say) in the deserted Oddfellows Building. "Astoria," he told me, "has a cool poetic funk to it."

—Conde Nast Travel Magazine

All this activity gave Astorians a sense of pride and confidence. Visitors and residents were spending more time downtown, encouraging local entrepreneurs to open restaurants and shops between the galleries on Commerce Street. The restaurants themselves were embracing the art vibe by decorating their spaces in a creative manner.

"The city is blossoming, with the arts contributing to the health of downtown," said Benoit. "But the old funky stores are also still there, interspersed between the newer galleries and restaurants." Keeping that balance, that "realness," is the challenge: Astoria’s true identity - and it ain’t quaintness - is what makes it such a special place.
Talk to anyone who’s participated in a successful cultural tourism project, and sooner or later, the subject comes around to the value of partnerships. Here’s how the National Trust for Historic Preservation puts it in its five basic principles for success: “Building partnerships is essential, not just because they help develop local support, but also because tourism demands resources that no single organization can supply.... Cooperating in a regional arrangement lets you develop regional themes, pool resources, save money and expand your marketing potential.” What follows is the story of just such a partnership.

**Sitting Down Together in Clackamas County:**
**Building Value Through Collaboration**

In 2002, after years of planning, Oregon civic, business, and cultural leaders created the Oregon Cultural Trust, a groundbreaking initiative designed to preserve and strengthen every aspect of the state’s arts, heritage and humanities. Each county and tribe was required to develop a plan that establishes action steps for using the arts and culture to drive economic development and enhance quality of life, while also fairly representing the activities and needs of the district’s cultural stakeholders.

In Clackamas County, those stakeholders serve a landscape rich in scenic beauty, imagination, history, culture, and geographic diversity. “Sense of place” and the attitudes that go with it can shift within a few miles from mountain to river valley, from farmland to forest, from city to suburb to town.

Between 2002 and 2004, the county’s cultural stakeholders - many of whom had never sat at the same table before - took on the tricky job of reconciling and integrating a crazy-quilt tapestry of cultural riches into a comprehensive, workable plan of action. Hundreds of citizens participated in an 18-month planning process overseen by the Cultural Coalition Planning Committee.

Clackamas County had an important pioneer history and a presence as the end of the Oregon Trail, noted Linda Bell, Executive Director of the county’s Tourism Development Council (TDC) and a member of the planning committee. But overall “polish” in the cultural tourism product was somewhat lacking. “We needed to share resources and learn from each other,” she said, referring to arts and heritage. “By coming together, there are economic benefits for us all.”

**Seeking a Broad Definition of Culture**

One of the first, and most important, issues they faced was the age-old question: What is culture? The definition, they agreed, had to be broad enough to include the varied character of the county and the diverse needs of the partners. “We wanted to break down barriers of what art is, to break the perception that it’s ‘Art’ with a capital A,” said Cheryl Snow, executive director of Arts Action Alliance and a member of the planning committee. “When you widen the concept beyond your own niche of arts, tourism or heritage, it creates a wider appeal to audiences.”

An early project was designed to tackle those barriers head-on. Art in Unexpected Places presented a map to hidden “treasures” of public art throughout Clackamas County - some tucked into out-of-the-way places, some in full view on major thoroughfares. And some - such as the giant metal elephant beside Highway 26 that travelers whiz by on their way to Mt. Hood - stretched the stereotypical boundaries that define “art” in many minds. Funded by the Tourism Development Council and Portland Oregon Visitors Association (POVA), the map proved extremely popular.

“It really opened eyes to things that were here,” Cheryl Snow said, “and led us to think of other products the partnership could produce.” Which led in turn to a series of audio driving tours on CD as a measure to help develop audiences. Issued under the Tourism Development Council’s Mt. Hood Territory brand, the CDs are produced to a high standard of quality (very important!), using local writers, artists, musicians, and voice talent. Cost is an affordable $10 – or visitors can check them out, with a deposit, from local visitor centers and other sites (though many decide to keep the CDs once they’ve heard them).

“This is when the good stuff happens” – Cheryl Snow

The CDs continued the work of breaking down boundaries, stimulating exploration beyond the usual niches. Partnership, and the sharing of ideas and
successes that it encourages, opened new possibilities. In farm-rich Clackamas County, for instance, culture also means agriculture. “After all,” explained Linda Bell, “recipes handed down from your grandmother, the rhubarb or the berries grown in the fields for the recipe, are all deeply rooted in culture.” Hence, the Feast for the Senses Driving Tour, an appetizing two-CD food tour through Mt Hood Territory’s fertile landscape.

The spirit of collaboration continued to grow. Like most others in Oregon, Clackamas County has many small fairs and festivals that celebrate individual communities. With the support of grants and professional development workshops from TDC, Bell believed they could grow the events beyond their borders, turning them into regional tourism draws. Thanks to the workshops, groups who were putting on similar events but had never talked to each other were discovering economies of scale and the value of shared wisdom and resources. In one example, Estacada mentioned owning a portable stage that stood unused much of the year; while other participants were seeking a grant to buy their own stage.

Partnerships + Planning = Possibilities

“It’s amazing,” Snow said, “how easy it is to grow these initiatives when you have a plan to refer to.” Partnerships have been a key part of the plan from the beginning - were necessary to it, in fact. They’ve helped open avenues to new possibilities after even a relatively short time. “Ten years ago,” said Bell, “it wouldn’t have crossed people’s minds” to use arts and culture for tourism. Now, people embrace them as an economic lever. Hotels and B&Bs are recognizing their historical assets and using them as a marketing tool. Artists have become part of the economic mainstream. Once, they built studios at the edge of Mt. Hood where the rent was cheap; now they have children, serve on school boards, buy supplies from local businesses, and sell worldwide on the internet. In many respects, it is the artists who lead the vision.

A favorable funding structure helps, too. In Clackamas County, unlike anywhere else in Oregon, 100% of the lodging tax goes directly to the tourism council. While most tourism commissions can provide funding only for marketing, here it can also be earmarked for tourism development, a valuable advantage in the development of products.

Challenges lie ahead, of course. Bell and Snow agreed that the biggest ones involve keeping up the education, keeping minds open to connections, and keeping people working together in a productive way. To Linda Bell, it all comes down to helping people understand that “if you make the pie bigger, then each piece will be bigger.”

A Drive Through Mt. Hood Territory

Here is a description of a driving tour, just to whet your appetite. It comes from the Mt. Hood Territory website (www.mthoodterritory.com).

The Barlow Road Driving Tour is a 73-minute narrated guide to an amazing 100-mile loop from Portland or Oregon City to Barlow Pass and back. You’ll also hear interviews with residents and interpretive history specialists, all interwoven with music by The Pine Tree String Band with its guitar, mandolin, fiddle and claw hammer banjo. The trip can be done in as little as three hours with minimal stops or over several days when including stops to explore more thoroughly 20 highlighted sites along the Barlow Road.
In a beautiful state like Oregon, artists seem to crop up everywhere – including small towns and along scenic back roads far from the beaten tourist track. In a wide swath of rural Oregon from the Southern Willamette and Umpqua River valleys to the Coast, a new economic development project called Oregon Crafted seeks to connect travelers with the charms of an overlooked landscape, and with the artists who live, work, and find inspiration here.

**Exploring Back Roads; Discovering a Unique Experience**

Art is many things to many people, as philosophers and other deep thinkers never tire of pointing out. But a unifying theme exists all the same, and that theme is connection. Artists hope to connect with the world around them; their work is an attempt to communicate that connection to others. Those of us who enjoy art seek connections in the community of an audience: enjoying a unique experience together, in real time and space. At a gallery or museum, we are moved to tears by works that seem to forge a direct connection with the artist, who may be continents or centuries removed.

Or that artist may be in the same room with us, sharing our air, describing the medium and materials, showing how to get this effect or that, oftentimes creating before our eyes. This is the magic of Oregon Crafted, a business development program whose most important feature may be its capacity to foster personal relationships between artist and art lover/buyer.

Oregon Crafted was launched in Linn, Lane, Benton, and Lincoln Counties in 2003 as a pilot program designed to “promote stability and prosperity among Oregon’s artists, handcrafters, and related businesses by providing educational opportunities and relevant resources.” In 2006, the Umpqua Valley Arts Association introduced a version to serve artists, businesses, and tourists in Douglas County.

Key to its tourist appeal is a visually striking full-color field guide to local galleries and art studios that are open to the public. “Visitors have the opportunity to see where artists work and create,” said Joan Shea, executive director of Oregon Crafted. “They can actually watch and ask about the creative process, giving them a new sense of the time and energy that goes into creating a piece of art.”

“There are many opportunities to see art and meet the artist at galleries or markets,” agreed Meg Trendler, Visitor Services Manager at the Convention & Visitors Association of Lane County Oregon (CVALCO), “but Oregon Crafted allows you to experience the realm of the artist, see where they create their work and the surroundings that inspire them.”

That’s just the sort of unique “insider” experience many tourists are looking for these days. The guide is organized to let them tailor their own self-guided tour, staying in a particular geographic area while seeing many different types of art and other local points of interest. Or they can visit studios of a specific medium - glass, fiber, pottery, wherever their interests lie. Oregon Crafted can also provide tours led by one of the artists, an activity that’s proving to be especially popular.
“It educates people about the region as well as art,” noted Shawn Ramsey, executive director of the Umpqua Valley Arts Association. “There’s a glossary in the back of the book that explains the different artistic techniques and terms.”

Opening Eyes and Building a New Economy

“The book is done so beautifully that I think it’s going to bring people to Oakridge and other small towns,” Oakridge artist and gallery owner Evonne Lowery told The Eugene Register Guard. And that, she believes, “will open tourists’ eyes to the quality of work being created” by artists and craftspeople in Oregon’s rural regions.

Already, said Joan Shea, the program is helping to bring artists together in new ways. “They’re becoming a community, learning to assist each other through their own cooperative marketing projects.” For instance, the Oregon Crafted artists in Corvallis now meet on a monthly basis to discuss marketing opportunities. “They’ve done store windows promoting Oregon Crafted and their own art and helped with promotion at local festivals.”

Beyond the increased visibility of the artists and the area, two gallery exhibits featuring Oregon Crafted artists were scheduled for 2006. Several artists have also been invited to conduct workshops at art institutes and university continuing education programs. The majority have made improvements to their studios to make them more appealing to visitors.

Oregon Crafted is, among things, an economic development program for communities, as well as artists. The guidebooks include local points of interest, and the staff works closely with local tourism bureaus and other organizations to promote the area. The guidebooks are available at the participating galleries and studios, and from local visitor centers. “When travelers come in to our Visitor Center, we are excited to point them towards the Oregon Crafted book to give them a real taste of the talent and creative energy in our local and rural communities,” said Trendler of CVALCO.

Certainly, an extra jolt of attention can be a welcome tonic for many of Oregon’s remote and relatively underserved areas. “There is so much natural beauty in Douglas County, however there is also lots of poverty,” Shawn Ramsey said, noting the decline in natural resource industries that used to fuel the region’s economy. “The book provides partnerships throughout the region of different groups with economic development in the back of their minds. For example, the Bureau of Land Management has an interest in the project because of the hikers that might come to the region after completing an art tour. The wineries are also interested in the partnership.”

Perhaps even more significant for the long term is the way Oregon Crafted has changed perceptions about the economic value of arts and artists to a community. “We have always had a good relationship with the city of Roseburg,” Ramsey added, “but now the city really sees the [Arts Association’s] Art Center for its economic value. The reality is sometimes you have to go beyond art for arts sake, and show economic returns and tangible benefits to the community. This project has shown those benefits to the city.”

The people behind Oregon Crafted hope similar benefits can be extended to other Oregon artists and communities. Developing the project is a major priority and challenge, said Joan Shea, noting that Oregon Crafted is convening meetings in the fall to develop partnerships in other parts of the state. “It will provide Oregon Crafted with a framework to continue the growth in partnership with other organizations.

“What is wonderful about the project,” added Shawn Ramsey, “is that it can be tailored to any community across Oregon. All the information included is unique to your region, yet it has a statewide brand.” But the final word about Oregon Crafted should go to one of the artists participating in the program:

I still feel strongly that it will not only help struggling artists by letting the people visit where art lives, but now artists are helping Oregon.
A land of Ponderosa giants, wide meadows, and a signature trio of mountains, Sisters enjoys a classic western setting, with a main street to match. But behind those famous 1890-style false fronts and wooden sidewalks is a genuine community where the Old West and the arts converge. This story originally appeared in the May/June 2006 issue of *Bend Living* magazine. A slightly edited version is used here with permission.

**Sisters: The Little Town that Could**

By Mark R. Johnson

Things have a way of converging in Sisters.

The town of 1,700-plus is located where the High Desert joins the high country of the Cascades, where the junipers meet the tall pines. It’s also where local highways from Bend (22 miles to the southeast) and Redmond (18 miles due east) link, funneling east-west-bound travelers straight through the heart of town.

And there’s a convergence at work in the very culture of this quaint but fast-growing town, which is home to both serenity-seeking retirees and start-up companies in search of an opportunity. It’s a place where ranchers and painters look for wide-open spaces – for entirely different reasons. And it’s a town where the Old West stands shoulder to shoulder with the New West, a meeting of the minds that few towns have achieved. With its mountain scenery, artsy culture, and neighborly quality, Sisters seems to excel.

Cultural Tourism Takes Center Stage

If the soul of Sisters resonates with a Western vibe, its heart beats to the rhythm of the arts. The town’s modern economy is set deep in cultural tourism. There are art galleries galore, plus a lineup of events that puts most larger communities to shame.

“The biggest-attended event is the quilt show,” says Jeanne Nolander of the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce. The largest of its kind in the world, now in its 31st year, the early-July Sisters Outdoor Quilt Show draws an international audience and gives the town a Technicolor makeover.

Then there are the Sisters Folk Festival and Sisters Jazz Festival, in September, and the Harvest Faire, in October. And, of course, there’s the rodeo: Every June, an estimated 20,000 fans pack into town to catch the action at the nationally renowned Sisters Rodeo, where they’ve been opening the chutes since 1940.

And that’s just a sketch of the town’s happenings. So what makes Sisters such a hot ticket? “It’s very conducive to these events,” says Nolander. Galleries, shops, and countless outdoor-recreation opportunities all add to the allure, she says. “What’s kept it going,” she adds, “is that these are all high-quality events.”

The likes of Lyle Lovett and Vince Gill would surely agree. Both artists have played in the Starry Nights Concert Series, a local benefit for which the talent signs up to play for free. The series has that kind of reputation.

“We’ve done everything from a solo guy standing out there – like John Hiatt last year, with a guitar and a keyboard – to the full band setup, with Kenny Loggins and Kathy Mattea,” says cofounder Jeri Fouts.

Fouts and Susan Arends, mother of Sisters schoolchildren, launched the series in 1997 with the goal of creating a benefit for educational programs and activities. Both have backgrounds in event management. Coupling their contacts in the music industry with community sponsorships and a team of volunteers, they’ve netted more than half a million dollars to date. Word of mouth among performers has helped the event’s reputation to grow. “For someone like Lyle Lovett to donate his time for a small school district in Central Oregon, it still amazes me,” says Fouts.

Those who call Sisters home include painters, photographers, bronze artists, and wood carvers. The town has long been a haven for artsy types, but the art scene today is unfolding to unprecedented levels.

A Catalyst for Artists

“Since I’ve been here, a lot more has gone on, especially just in the last five years,” says Paul Alan Bennett, a painter who moved to Sisters 16 years ago. While attending local art shows, he finds himself awed by the volume of talent. “Many of these people I’ve never heard of,” he says, “but it just makes me think, ‘Gosh, is everybody in Sisters an artist?’”
Bennett is one of a number of artists who maintain a studio at Sisters Art Works. In addition to studios, this distinctive project – unveiled in 2005 – offers workshops and musical performances, and serves as headquarters for the folk and jazz festivals. Erin Deggendorfer of Fast Creek Productions has helped to promote the project, which was conceived several years ago by her mother, Kathy Deggendorfer, a painter.

“It was a long-term visioning process for her,” says Erin “as far as creating a space that could be catalyst for artists, arts promoters, and other arts-related organization to have a chance to collaborate. It’s really become a community arts center.”

For while the fine arts are a driving force of the economy, they are also an integral part of the community – and particularly of the schools. It’s not just Starry Nights that has forged that connection. So has the Americana Project, a joint effort of the Sisters Folk Festival and the school district that enables students to learn American roots music in a hands-on study. As part of this project, about 125 artists donate pieces for auction to a town fund-raiser called My Own Two Hands, a community celebration held each April.

“That’s really become a booster club to keep arts going in the schools,” says Erin.

Even the spacious new Sisters Public Library, which opened in January, is as impressive for the local art on display in its foyer – and the colorful quilts that hang like banners from the rafters -as for the beauty of the facility itself. The library is one more example of Sisters’ community convergence: the little town and the rich culture it supports.

While Sisters is taking big strides these days, its indomitable spirit keeps the town grounded. Yes, it’s a small town butting up against some big-town issues,
Five Principles for Successful and Sustainable Cultural Heritage Tourism

The Heritage Tourism Program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed five principles that are based on successful cultural tourism programs. (Find complete details on the principles at www.culturalheritagetourism.org.)

1. Collaborate.
   Cultural tourism simply can’t be done without partnerships,” said Barbara Steinfield of Portland Area Visitors Association. “The expression itself is about two entities coming together.” Collaboration goes beyond building local support. It’s also about sharing resources and knowledge.

2. Find the Fit.
   Finders Keepers works for Lincoln City largely because it’s an appropriate, involving, and unique extension of the beach experience that benefits residents and visitors.

   On average, visitors will remember: 10% of what they hear, 30% of what they read, 50% of what they see, 90% of what they do. Today’s travelers want to participate and to create special memories. They’ll drive to Ashland because they know the full theater/recreation experience there will be something to remember and talk about for years.

4. Focus on Quality and Authenticity
   Oregon Crafted works because the guidebooks are beautifully done, the contents are helpful, and the insider experiences it promises are uniquely and authentically Oregon.

5. Preserve and Protect
   Astoria didn’t lose sight of what made it special. It entered a renaissance by preserving and protecting its strengths as a tourist attraction: a unique cityscape and a fascinating history. When you protect the buildings, special places, and qualities that attract visitors, you safeguard the future.