



48 HOURS IN

Bend

HIGH DESERT · HIGH COUNTRY

WELCOME

Welcome to Bend.

Bend sits at the edge of the Cascades in Central Oregon's high desert, built on the banks of the Deschutes River atop a landscape of extinct volcanoes and hardened lava flows. The combination is what makes the city work: 300-plus days of sunshine a year, a genuine mountain range at the back door, and a downtown small enough to walk end to end, all without the rain that defines the rest of the state.

What most first-time visitors miss: Bend isn't only a ski town or a brewery town, though it does both extremely well. Smith Rock State Park, one of the birthplaces of American sport climbing, sits 25 minutes north. Lava Butte and the Lava River Cave put a walkable volcano and a mile-long lava tube within the same afternoon. And Pilot Butte — an extinct cinder cone rising directly out of downtown — is a 20-minute round-trip hike that ends with a full view of the Cascade skyline.

Bend is well suited to solo travel — its brewery taprooms run on communal picnic tables, the Deschutes River Trail makes solo running or walking easy and safe, and the outdoor culture here means showing up alone to hike, climb, or paddle draws no particular notice.

Day One · Downtown · Old Mill District · Deschutes River Trail

8:00 AM Breakfast: Sparrow Bakery

50 SE Scott Street, in the Old Ironworks Art District: home of the 'ocean roll,' a laminated pastry with cardamom and hazelnuts that regulars build a morning around. \$8–14.

Insider Tip: Get there before 9am — the ocean rolls sell out most days, and there's minimal seating inside.

9:30 AM Pilot Butte

US-20 at NE Greenwood Avenue: an extinct cinder cone volcano rising directly within city limits, with a trail or a paved road to a 360-degree summit view of downtown and the full Cascade skyline. Free.

Insider Tip: Hike it rather than drive if you're able — the trail is under a mile each way and the sense of the volcano beneath your feet is part of the point.

11:00 AM Downtown Bend Walking

Bond and Wall Streets: a compact grid of independent shops, galleries, and outdoor outfitters, with Drake Park and the Deschutes River a few blocks west. Free.

Insider Tip: Drake Park's Mirror Pond is the classic photo spot — quietest in the mid-morning before it fills up.

1:00 PM Lunch: Spork

1024 NW Bond Street: globally inflected street food — Thai, Southern, Mexican influences — in a colorful, easygoing counter-service spot. \$12–18.

Insider Tip: The Baja fish taco and the massaman curry are the two dishes regulars order on repeat.

2:30 PM

Old Mill District

A former lumber mill site along the Deschutes River, now shops, restaurants, and a paved riverfront path with the iconic three smokestacks still standing as a landmark. Free to wander.

Insider Tip: Rent a paddleboard or inner tube here for the Deschutes River — the current through this stretch is gentle enough for a relaxed solo float.

4:00 PM

Deschutes River Trail

A riverside trail network linking the Old Mill District to Farewell Bend Park and beyond, with views of basalt cliffs and, often, otters. Free.

Insider Tip: The stretch south toward Farewell Bend Park is quieter than the Old Mill segment and a good solo wildlife-watching walk.

7:00 PM

Dinner: Zydeco Kitchen & Cocktails

919 NW Bond Street: Louisiana-inflected Pacific Northwest cooking — gumbo, shrimp and grits — with a serious cocktail program. \$28–45, bar seating available.

Insider Tip: Sit at the bar for the full menu and a faster table than the dining room on a busy night.

Day Two · Smith Rock · Lava Lands · Cascade Views

8:00 AM

Smith Rock State Park

9241 NE Crooked River Drive, Terrebonne, 25 minutes north: dramatic volcanic tuff and basalt cliffs above the Crooked River, one of the birthplaces of American sport climbing and a premier hiking destination in its own right. Entry \$5 per vehicle.

Insider Tip: The Misery Ridge Loop is the classic 3.5-mile route with the best canyon views; go early to beat both the heat and the crowds in warmer months.

12:00 PM

Lunch: Terrebonne or Redmond

A handful of casual cafes and taco spots sit along the highway between Smith Rock and Bend — a practical, unfussy lunch stop on the way back. \$10–18.

Insider Tip: Grab something quick here rather than driving hungry all the way back to Bend.

2:00 PM

Lava Lands Visitor Center & Lava Butte

58201 US-97, about 10 minutes south of Bend: a visitor center at the base of a 500-foot-tall cinder cone, with a seasonal shuttle to the summit for a full Cascade panorama. Free; shuttle small fee.

Insider Tip: Check shuttle hours before you go — outside the summer season you may need to hike or drive the summit road yourself.

3:30 PM

Lava River Cave

Off US-97, a few minutes from Lava Lands: Oregon's longest continuous lava tube, over a mile of walkable underground passage at a constant, cool temperature year-round. Small entry fee.

Insider Tip: Bring your own flashlight or lantern — rentals are limited, and the cave is genuinely pitch dark once you're inside.

5:30 PM

Cascade Lakes Highway Overlook

The scenic byway west of town toward Mt. Bachelor: seasonal access (typically late spring through fall) to a string of alpine lakes and Cascade viewpoints. Free.

Insider Tip: Check seasonal road status before planning around this drive — snow closes sections of the highway for much of the year.

7:30 PM

Dinner: Crux Fermentation Project

50 SW Division Street: a large brewery and beer garden with sweeping Cascade views from its outdoor deck, plus a full food menu. \$16–28.

Insider Tip: Grab a seat on the outdoor deck at golden hour — the mountain view from here is one of the best in town.

9:00 PM

Bend Ale Trail Nightcap

Downtown and the Old Mill District host a concentrated cluster of Bend's 20-plus breweries. Deschutes Brewery's original downtown public house is the historic anchor. \$6–10 per pour.

Insider Tip: Deschutes Brewery's public house on Bond Street is where the modern craft beer identity of the whole city started in 1988 — worth a stop even on a short night.

WHERE TO EAT

Bend's Table

DOWNTOWN

Sparrow Bakery

DOWNTOWN · \$

Home of the ocean roll — arrive early, they sell out most days.

Zydeco Kitchen & Cocktails

DOWNTOWN · \$\$\$

Louisiana-inflected Pacific Northwest cooking with a serious bar.

Spork

DOWNTOWN · \$

Globally inflected street food in a colorful counter-service spot.

Barrio

DOWNTOWN · \$\$

Latin-inspired small plates and cocktails in a lively downtown room.

OLD MILL & RIVERFRONT

The Row

OLD MILL DISTRICT · \$\$

A riverfront dining and drink hall with several vendors under one roof.

McKay Cottage

OLD MILL DISTRICT · \$\$

A beloved breakfast and brunch spot in a converted 1916 farmhouse.

10 Below

DOWNTOWN (OXFORD HOTEL) · \$\$\$

An underground cocktail lounge with a serious craft bar program.

BREWERIES

Deschutes Brewery

DOWNTOWN · \$\$

The original public house that helped launch Bend's brewery identity in 1988.

Crux Fermentation Project

DOWNTOWN · \$\$

A large beer garden with sweeping Cascade mountain views.

GoodLife Brewing

EAST BEND · \$\$

A relaxed neighborhood brewery with a large, dog-friendly outdoor lawn.

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Bend

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	Downtown and the Old Mill District are both compact and walkable.
Bend Bike Path	Free	The Deschutes River Trail connects downtown to the Old Mill and beyond.
Cascades East Transit	Free	Bend's local bus system is fare-free and covers most of the city.
Uber / Lyft	Varies	Best for Smith Rock, Lava Lands, and other out-of-town stops.
Rental car	\$50–75/day	Needed for Smith Rock, the Cascade Lakes Highway, and Mt. Bachelor.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Redmond Municipal Airport (RDM) is about 20 minutes north of Bend — Uber runs \$25–35, or rent a car at the airport.
Best Time	June through September brings warm days, full trail access, and the Cascade Lakes Highway open; winter turns the same terrain into a ski destination centered on Mt. Bachelor.
Elevation & Sun	Bend sits at roughly 3,600 feet with over 300 sunny days a year — sun exposure and dehydration are real even on a mild-feeling day.
Solo Dining	Brewery picnic tables and bar counters are the norm — solo dining and drinking here draw no particular notice.
Wildfire Season	Late summer can bring regional wildfire smoke that affects air quality — check conditions if visiting July through September.
Useful Apps	AllTrails for Smith Rock and Deschutes trails, and a wildfire/air-quality app in late summer.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check Cascade Lakes Highway seasonal road status before planning a drive
- ☐ Bring your own light source for the Lava River Cave
- ☐ Pack sun protection even on a mild-feeling day at elevation
- ☐ Check air quality if visiting during late-summer wildfire season
- ☐ Start Smith Rock early to beat heat and crowds
- ☐ Bring layers — desert evenings cool off fast even in summer
- ☐ Download offline trail maps — cell signal is patchy at Smith Rock and Lava Lands

GoingSolo.Life

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.



goingsolo.life/maps/bend

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.

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