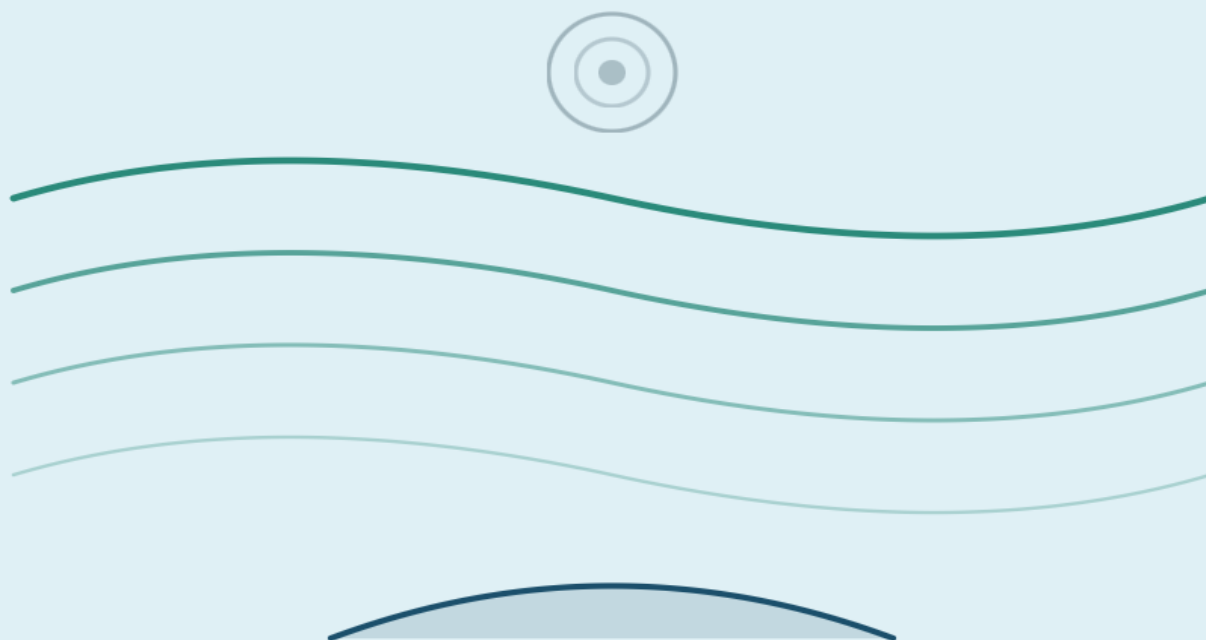




48 HOURS IN

Portland

COASTAL · MISTY · FREE

WELCOME

Welcome to Portland.

Portland runs on an idea most American cities gave up on decades ago: that a city can be built at the scale of its neighborhoods rather than its downtown. Every part of Portland worth visiting — Alberta, Hawthorne, Mississippi, Division, NW 23rd — is a self-contained walkable strip of restaurants, bars, and independent shops with its own personality, connected to the others by a genuinely good transit system rather than a car.

What most first-time visitors miss: Portland's food-cart culture is not a novelty, it's infrastructure. Entire pods of a dozen or more carts, many of them serious kitchens in miniature, anchor blocks across the city and make solo eating effortless — order, sit, eat, move on, no reservation or table-for-one anxiety required. And the city's access to nature is immediate: Forest Park, one of the largest urban forests in the country, starts a few blocks from downtown.

Portland is genuinely well suited to solo travel. Its culture of doing your own thing without comment, its flat, walkable, transit-connected layout, and its food-cart-and-counter dining scene all make solo time feel like the default rather than the exception.

Day One · Powell's · Pearl District · Forest Park · Division Street

8:00 AM

Powell's City of Books

1005 W Burnside Street, Pearl District: the world's largest independent bookstore, an entire city block of color-coded rooms and more than a million titles. A genuinely good place to spend an hour with no agenda.

Insider Tip: The Rare Book Room on the third floor is worth seeking out even if you're not buying — a quiet, unhurried corner most visitors miss entirely.

10:00 AM

Pearl District Walk

North and west of Powell's: Portland's most polished neighborhood, with art galleries, boutiques, and Jamison Square's interactive fountain as an easy landmark. A relaxed, low-effort morning walk.

Insider Tip: Weekday mornings here are close to empty — the best time for unhurried browsing before the lunch crowd arrives.

12:30 PM

Lunch: Food Cart Pod

Cartopia (SE 12th & Hawthorne) or any downtown pod: dozens of independent food carts clustered together, from banh mi to Thai BBQ to dumplings. \$8–12 per dish — the single easiest, most natural solo meal format in the city.

Insider Tip: Nong's Khao Man Gai, a Portland institution serving Thai-style poached chicken and rice, is worth seeking out specifically if it's on your route.

2:00 PM

Forest Park — Lower Macleay Trail

Trailhead at the end of NW Upshur Street: a 2.5-mile round-trip walk from city sidewalks into deep, mossy old-growth forest, ending at the atmospheric stone ruins of the 1930s “Witch's Castle.” One of the fastest urban-to-wilderness transitions in the country.

Insider Tip: The trail is well-marked and busy enough to feel entirely comfortable solo — no need to build in extra caution beyond normal trail awareness.

4:30 PM

NW 23rd Avenue

Also called the Alphabet District: a walkable strip of boutiques, restaurants, and cafes a short walk from Forest Park's northern trailheads — an easy, relaxed way to transition from hiking back into the city.

Insider Tip: Stop for coffee at one of the independent cafes along 23rd rather than a chain — nearly all of them are locally owned and worth the two extra minutes.

7:00 PM

Dinner & Evening: Division Street

SE Division between roughly 20th and 37th: one of Portland's best concentrated restaurant strips. Nong's Khao Man Gai and Grassa are both well-regarded and walkable from each other; the Cartopia food cart pod anchors the eastern end for a lower-key option.

Insider Tip: Horse Brass Pub, a true British-style local with a deep beer list, is the right choice if you want a quiet solo pint where nobody bothers you but conversation happens naturally if you want it.

Day Two · Japanese Garden · Pittock Mansion · Hawthorne · Alberta

8:00 AM

Portland Japanese Garden

611 SW Kingston Avenue, Washington Park: widely regarded as one of the most authentic Japanese gardens outside Japan. Winding contemplative paths and, on clear days, views toward Mount Hood from the upper garden. Admission \$21.

Insider Tip: Go right at opening — the garden is designed for quiet reflection, and it's genuinely a different experience before the first tour groups arrive.

10:30 AM

Pittock Mansion

3229 NW Pittock Drive, West Hills: an early-1900s mansion with the best panoramic view of downtown Portland and, on clear days, Mount Hood, from its hillside grounds. Admission \$14.50 for the interior; the grounds and view are free.

Insider Tip: You don't need to pay for the house tour to get the view — the grounds alone are worth the trip up, especially at golden hour, though that means an evening return.

1:00 PM

Lunch: Hawthorne District

SE Hawthorne Boulevard: vintage shops, bookstores, and coffee shops line a walkable strip with a genuinely local feel. Grab a counter seat at any of the neighborhood's casual restaurants for an easy solo lunch, \$12–20.

Insider Tip: Pair lunch with a browse through the neighborhood's vintage and used bookstores — Hawthorne has one of the best concentrations in the city.

3:00 PM

Alberta Arts District

NE Alberta Street: Portland's most visibly art-driven neighborhood, with murals, independent galleries, and an eclectic food scene. Less polished than the Pearl, with genuine creative energy.

Insider Tip: If your visit lands on Last Thursday (the monthly art walk), the street closes to cars and galleries stay open late — worth timing around if the schedule allows.

5:30 PM

Tom McCall Waterfront Park

Along the Willamette River, downtown: a 1.5-mile riverside path connecting several of the city's bridges, popular with joggers, cyclists, and anyone looking to sit with a book. A relaxed, safe, well-used public space through early evening.

Insider Tip: If it's a Saturday, the Portland Saturday Market runs beneath the Burnside Bridge — good for local crafts and snacks before dinner.

7:30 PM

Dinner: Magna Kusina

4816 SE Division Street: elevated Filipino cooking from Chef Carlo LaMagna, named Portland's Restaurant of the Year by The Oregonian. Bar seating available with a clear view into the open kitchen. \$35–55.

Insider Tip: Ask for a bar seat specifically — it's the best solo-dining vantage point in the restaurant and puts you right in the middle of the kitchen's energy.

WHERE TO EAT

Portland's Table

FOOD CARTS

Nong's Khao Man Gai

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS • \$

A Portland institution — Thai-style poached chicken and rice, simple and excellent.

Cartopia

SE HAWTHORNE • \$

A dense pod of a dozen-plus carts, open into the evening — the easiest solo dinner format in the city.

Potato Champion

CARTOPIA • \$

Belgian-style fries and poutine, a Portland cart-culture favorite.

SIT-DOWN

Magna Kusina

SE DIVISION • \$\$\$

Elevated Filipino cooking, Portland's Restaurant of the Year — ask for a bar seat.

Grassa

SE DIVISION · \$\$

Fresh housemade pasta in a casual, fast-turning room — easy solo dining.

Eem

N INTERSTATE · \$\$

Trendy Thai BBQ with welcoming bar seating and communal tables.

BARS & BREWERIES

Horse Brass Pub

SE BELMONT · \$\$

A true British-style local with a deep beer list — solo drinkers left in peace, conversation happens naturally.

Great Notion Brewing

NE ALBERTA · \$\$

Hazy IPAs and creative sours from one of Portland's most acclaimed breweries.

Driftwood Room

HOTEL DELUXE, DOWNTOWN · \$\$

A swanky retro cocktail lounge — low-key enough to nurse a drink solo without feeling rushed.

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Portland

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	Most inner neighborhoods are compact and entirely walkable in sequence.
TriMet Bus / MAX	\$2.80/ride, \$5.60 day pass	Covers most of the city; connects downtown, the airport, and inner neighborhoods.
Streetcar	\$2 / 2.5 hrs	Three lines, ideal for hopping between the Pearl District and nearby neighborhoods.
BIKETOWN	\$1 + \$0.35/min	Bike share with stations citywide; extensive protected bike lanes.
Uber / Lyft	Varies	Best after 10pm, and for Forest Park trailheads or day trips outside the city.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Portland International Airport (PDX) connects directly to downtown via the MAX Red Line — no rideshare needed, about 40 minutes.
Best Time	June–September: warm, dry, and the best weather of the year. October–May brings regular rain — pack a packable rain layer regardless of season.
Solo Dining	Food carts and counter seating make Portland one of the easiest US cities for solo eating — no reservation or table-for-one anxiety required.
Getting Around Without a Car	Portland is one of the most car-free-friendly cities in the country — walking, transit, and BIKETOWN cover nearly everything on this itinerary.
Evening Awareness	Stick to well-trafficked neighborhoods (Pearl, Hawthorne, Alberta, Mississippi, Division, NW 23rd) after dark; use rideshare rather than transit after 10pm in Old Town/Chinatown.
Useful Apps	TriMet Tracker, BIKETOWN app, Uber, Google Maps offline.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- Pack a packable rain layer — needed 10 months of the year even in a dry stretch
- Book Portland Japanese Garden tickets online to skip the entry line
- Bring cash for smaller food cart vendors — not all take cards
- Reserve Magna Kusina ahead if visiting on a weekend
- Check the Last Thursday Alberta Arts Walk schedule (monthly) before planning an evening
- Download the TriMet Tracker app for real-time bus and MAX arrivals
- Use rideshare rather than transit after 10pm around Old Town/Chinatown

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/portland

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.

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