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Things to Do in Vancouver, WA

Enjoy historic charm and an updated waterfront in Portland's neighbor across the river.

By [Jennifer Burns Bright](#) | January 2019



Photo: David H. Collier

The cabled Grant Street Pier juts out 90 feet over the Columbia.

Venerable Vancouver got its start in 1824 and, thanks to its advantageous location on the Columbia River, soon became a center of the Pacific Northwest's fur trade. Nearly 200 years later, its industrial riverfront has been given a welcome makeover and reopened to the public, providing one more reason to visit the city just north of [Portland](#).

Sights and Events

A quick stroll from Main Street, the seven-acre **Waterfront Park**—part of a \$1.5 billion, 32-acre renewal project—allows public access to the Columbia from Vancouver for the

first time since the 1850s. Held aloft by soaring cables, the V-shaped Grant Street Pier offers spectacular views of the water, the occasional passing stern-wheeler, and the century-old steel-truss Interstate Bridge nearby.

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, where the first explorers from the Hudson's Bay Company settled in the 1820s, is a lovely place to walk on a brisk sunny day (and offers handy shelters when it rains). Tour former military residences along tree-lined Officers Row, explore a fullscale replica fort, and visit re-creations of the rustic living quarters used by trappers and traders. Make reservations online for an evening lantern tour with living history demos. 1501 E. Evergreen Blvd.

Read More: [A Weekend in Mount Hood, OR](#)



Photo: David H. Collier

At WildFin, salmon is paired with vegetables and piquant salsa verde.

Eats

Called "Portland's best beer 'burb" by *Willamette Week*, Vancouver is serious about its suds. At **Brothers Cascadia**, one of the newest pubs in town, sample cold-fermented specialties such as Mateo Helles Lager and the flagship People's Pilsner. Sit and sip among the oak barrels in the warehouse. 9811 NE 15th Ave.

With the former chef of renowned Ken's Artisan Pizza at its helm, **Rally Pizza** dishes up pies that include the Little Gina, topped with hand-pulled mozzarella and spicy fennel-chile-garlic oil. Save room for a Bourbon Bramble, a boozy milk shake with homemade frozen custard and blackberry syrup. Insider tip: On Super Bowl Sunday, stop by for calzone. 8070 E. Mill Plain Blvd.

An airy, modern space on the waterfront, the latest branch of upscale seafood chain **WildFin American Grill** offers Columbia River steelhead grilled with lemon-garlic-vermouth butter or seared on a block of Himalayan salt and coated with a honey-lime glaze. 777 Waterfront Way, Ste. 101.

Read More: [8 Best Brewery Tours in the West](#)



Photo: Debi Ayres / Shutterstock
Fort Vancouver's blacksmith shop hosts live demonstrations.

Outdoors

The **Discovery Historic Trail Loop** connects downtown's Esther Short Park with Fort Vancouver, crossing busy Highway 14 on the curvaceous Vancouver Land Bridge. Interpretive signs along the bridge's wide paved path provide information about regional history and native plants. Don't miss the beloved Old Apple Tree—dating from when Vancouver was founded—in its own little park on the trail's south end.

Take a walk along the **Waterfront Renaissance Trail**, which follows the river east from the new redevelopment project, for views of the river. The Columbia bustles with its signature mix of boats buzzing by, PDX-bound planes flying overhead, and cars whizzing along on both banks.



Photo: David H. Collier

Choose from over 50 meats, many house-made, at Sweet Touch.

Shops

Vancouver's charming downtown is studded with galleries and shops; many stay open late once a month, often on First Fridays. Among them, **Night Market Vancouver** gathers artisans in a sprawling set of adjoining spaces to hawk perfect gifts: safflower soap, hammered copper jewelry, and screen-printed fabric bags. Warehouse 23, Terminal 1, 100 Columbia St.

A bustling market owned by Ukrainian Americans, **Sweet Touch (Svitoch) European Market and Bakery** features a bakery and café, plus a complement of charcuterie in deli cases. Locals come for the Russian pickles and imported tea. For Valentine's Day, treat your sweetie to a dozen heart-shaped raspberry macaroons. 4804 NE Thurston Way, Ste. D.

Up Next: **Perfect Weekend Trip to Portland, OR**

If you're planning on traveling to the Pacific Northwest, [talk to AAA Vacation Experts for free.](#)

This article was first published in Winter 2019. Some facts may have aged gracefully. Please call ahead to verify information.

