

NW TRAVELER

OUTDOORS > EARLY BLOOMS, GUSHING FALLS > 3 ESCAPES > POMPEII > 4



Museum-goers walk past a 1949 Vespa scooter that's flanked by mannequins clad in a Pucci bikini and playsuit at the Portland Art Museum's exhibit "Italian Style: Fashion Since 1945."

Ciao, Portland

Italian fashion on show



Second from left is a suit designed by Angelo Litrico and worn by President John F. Kennedy. Many world leaders wore Litrico suits, before and after the Cold War.

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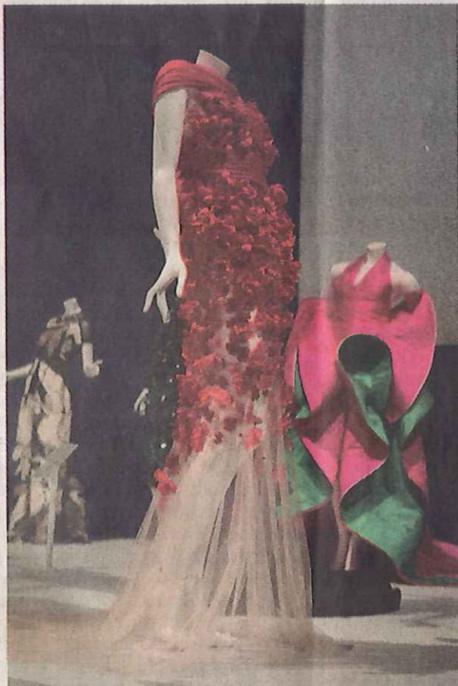
Ideally, one would travel to Portland Art Museum's new exhibit "Italian Style: Fashion Since 1945" on the back of a Vespa motor scooter piloted by Gregory Peck. But Amtrak works just fine, too.

The exhibit, featuring dozens of elegant garments from the likes of Valentino, Prada, Armani and Pucci (who, it turns out, has a Portland connection; stay tuned), is at PAM through May 3. It makes a perfect excuse to pop down south for a couple of days of museum-hopping and tax-free shopping. Call it a "Roman Holiday" — a movie you'll want to rent after seeing this exhibit. (Yes, there's a bit of Audrey Hepburn ... and even a Vespa, too.)

Wanting a trip with maximum relaxation, reading time and window-shopping, I traveled round-trip by train from Seattle. You could, of course, drive to Portland for about the same price — if you factor in gas and downtown parking — but do you really want to sit in I-5 traffic outside Tacoma? No, you don't. (One fact, for those wavering: On the train, there's beer.)

I stayed at the Sentinel, a newly reopened historic hotel (formerly the Governor) nicely situated right on the cusp of downtown and the Pearl District. (614 S.W. 11th Ave., 503-224-3400 or sentinelhotel.com.) Rooms are small but stylish, the lobby and public rooms are an ornate treat, and within a couple of blocks are Powell's City of

See > PORTLAND, 12



Contemporary Italian runway fashion is shown at the entrance to "Italian Style."

Five favorite places in Portland

By KRISTIN JACKSON
Seattle Times NWTraveler editor

Portland has all the right ingredients for a weekend getaway. It's easy to get there; the downtown is compact and walkable; and there are enough sights to keep visitors happy but not overwhelmed.

Here are five popular places.

OREGON MUSEUM OF SCIENCE & INDUSTRY

Sort of like Seattle's Pacific Science Center, but with a submarine moored in the river out front. Have fun and use your brain at OMSI's science- and logic-themed exhibits. Then clamber through the former Navy submarine USS Blueback or go for the stars at the planetarium. OMSI is a sure hit if you're traveling with kids. Adults \$13 (extra for planetarium, submarine); discounts for children, seniors. omsi.edu

LAN SU CHINESE GARDEN

For a complete change of pace, amble through this peaceful, classical-style Chinese walled garden. Lattice-windowed pavilions, plants and decorative rocks are set around a pond. Wander the pathways; have tea in the peaceful, pagoda-roofed Tower of Cosmic Reflections. Adult admission, \$9.50, discounts for children, seniors. lansugarden.org

PORTLAND SATURDAY MARKET

An outdoor market of arts, crafts and food stalls stretched along a downtown riverfront plaza. Shop, eat, people-watch. The market re-opens for the year on Feb. 28 after a winter break. Despite the name, it's open Saturdays (10 a.m.-5 p.m.) and Sundays (11 a.m.-4 p.m.). portlandsaturdaymarket.com

POWELL'S CITY OF BOOKS

So many books, so little time. Powell's is packed with more than 1 million books, new and used, in this flagship downtown store. Wander the aisles, sit and read. Get a coffee, people-watch, read some more. powells.com

WASHINGTON PARK

Four hundred acres of woodland, 15 miles of trails and all sorts of attractions in this park just minutes from downtown. See the creatures at the Oregon Zoo, smell the flowers in the International Rose Test Garden, slow down in the tranquil Japanese garden. Learn about trees at the World Forestry Center, see and learn about live trees at Hoyt Arboretum. Got kids and it's raining? Let them frolic at the Portland Children's Museum in the park. washingtonparkpdx.org
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< Portland

FROM 11

Books, at least two cupcake merchants, numerous restaurants, an art-house cinema/bar, a Target across the street (in case you've forgotten something). Do you need anything else? I didn't.

It's an easy stroll from the Sentinel over to PAM, the oldest art museum in the Pacific Northwest (founded in 1892). "Italian Style" was curated by the elegantly named Sonnet Stanfill of London's Victoria and Albert Museum; about 60 percent of the show is from the V & A, with the rest borrowed from various museums and private collections.

And while there's much to see elsewhere at PAM — particularly a nice Impressionist collection, in the museum's Bellusci Building (next door to the main building, access via underground walkway) — "Italian Style" is worth the trip all by itself.

Journey through fashion

The exhibit begins with the present, and then takes us to the past: A T-shaped runway entices with a selection of contemporary Italian runway fashion: Tom Ford for Gucci, Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, Armani. The stairway to the second floor features a "Pucci window," a cheerful tribute to Emilio Pucci's trademark brightly colored kaleidoscope prints. Pucci, it turns out, graduated from Portland's Reed College in 1937; while there, he formed the college's first ski team and, of course, designed their uniforms.

Upstairs, we see garments from Italy's first fashion shows in the early '50s, their colors as vivid as a grove of butterflies: a beautifully fitted crimson gown that looks like it just got home from a ball; a strapless, feathery ecru number with a voluminous skirt; a frothy lavender cocktail dress whose multiple layers seem to be bubbling up from some heavenly brew.

These gowns, from designers whose names ring no bells, were from the earliest days of Italian couture; when a country crippled



The exhibit includes a pink palazzo pajama set by Irene Galitzine.

by World War II took its first step toward becoming a fashion destination. On the wall is the typed list of guests to an early fashion show; some of the American names on it — Macy, Marshall Field, I. Magnin, B. Altman — hint at the beginnings of an international fashion revolution.

The playful "Hollywood on the Tiber" section opens with a sparkling Bulgari brooch — and, as all brooches require, a good story to go with it. (Eddie Fisher bought it for then-wife Elizabeth Taylor, not realizing that she had already fallen in love, and more, with Richard Burton; a disgruntled Fisher, understandably, presented Taylor with the bill, which she paid.)

Pretty much everything in this part of the exhibit looks like it should have been worn by Audrey Hepburn, and one of the garments, indeed, was: an empire-waist satin gown, from the movie "War and Peace," now in the process of a dignified fading to a creamy gray.

Playful 1960s fashions abound here: A whimsical Pucci bikini; a pink palazzo pajamas set that could



This Mila Schön coat and dress was worn by socialite Lee Radziwill to Truman Capote's famous Black and White Ball in New York in 1966.

have wandered over from a "Mad Men" shoot; a sinuously sequined white-and-silver Mila Schön coat and dress worn by socialite Lee Radziwill to Truman Capote's Black and White Ball — and looking like it had a fine time, too.

Meandering downstairs again, we make our way through recent decades, as "Made in Italy" became an established mark of style. A fancifully pieced mink trench coat — in startling nonmink colors of pink, yellow and blue — stands cheerfully next to its corresponding paper pattern, the different colors and shapes meticulously marked.

Some iconic accessories get the spotlight, too: a pair of elaborately beaded Dolce & Gabbana boots; a Fendi baguette bag (so named because it's meant to be tucked under the arm, as the French would carry a loaf of bread); a saucy pair of Prada shoes, in bronze velvet with jade-green bows, their heels shaped like a meandering flower's stem. Alas, none of these are available in the gift shop.

By the end, "Italian Style" achieves what every art exhibit should: It takes you, briefly, to another place. These garments, works of art in themselves, create a world of elegance and grace.

I stared for a long time at a simple fitted black dress with matching short jacket; its seams, so perfect and artful, were mesmerizing. And, along the way, I learned a new word: *sprezzatura*, defined in the exhibit as "the uniquely Italian quality of stylish nonchalance." Indeed.

"Sprezzatura" in Portland

Trying to achieve my own degree of sprezzatura, I spent the rest of my two days in Portland happily strolling the sidewalks, exploring the neighborhood around the Sentinel. (Except for cabs to and from the train station, this was an entirely walkable trip — even in heels.) Powell's City of Books (1005 W. Burnside St., powells.com), an old friend, had its own stylish makeover: Its front room on Burnside



A pair of "glitter boots" from Miu Miu (background) and a pair of Prada shoes in bronze velvet with jade-green bows (foreground).

Street, once cramped and crowded, now feels airy and bright. Just try to leave without buying a book; I couldn't.

A short, pleasant walk through the Pearl District takes you to the Museum of Contemporary Craft (724 N.W. Davis St., museumof-contemporarycraft.org), founded in 1937. Its main gallery was closed during my visit, with a new exhibit being installed that promised even more Italian style: "Living with Glass," a collection of glassworks from the Italian island of Murano, famed for its glassmakers. It's on show now through May 16; in the meantime, I enjoyed an upstairs exhibit of student work and the highly browsable gift shop.

There's even a wee bit of fashion at the Oregon Historical Society (1200 S.W. Park Ave., ohs.org), just across the street from PAM. "Oregon My Oregon," a permanent exhibit on the third floor, includes an evocative case filled with hats and shoes, some from Native Americans and early settlers.

You gaze at them — a dust-colored moccasin, a lace bonnet, a glittering tiara — wondering what the person who wore them was like. Elsewhere in the exhibit, the story of Oregon is effectively told through stories, pictures and treasured objects; the things people carried, when coming to a new home.

And, should you need a break from museum-hopping, there's plenty of stylish shopping in the neighborhood — and not just the ever-reliable Nordstrom. The delightfully named boutique The English Department (1128 S.W. Alder St., theenglishdept.com) made me wish I needed a wedding dress. Alder & Co. (616 S.W. 12th Ave., alderandcoshop.com) is a fragrant boutique/flower shop, filled with enticing gifts. And the cutely retro bakery Petunia's Pies and Pastries (610 S.W. 12th Ave., petuniapiesandpastries.com) served up a cookie so delicious I couldn't believe it was vegan and gluten-free. A fitting final note for a sweet — and chic — journey.

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If you go

"Italian Style: Fashion Since 1945," through May 3 at Portland Art Museum, 1219 S.W. Park Ave., Portland. Tickets for the exhibit (which also includes admission to the museum's other exhibits and permanent collections) are \$20 adults/\$17 for seniors/college students; free for those aged 17 and younger. Group tours are available with reservation (503-226-2811 or portlandartmuseum.org).

HOW TO TRAVEL BETWEEN SEATTLE AND PORTLAND

By KRISTIN JACKSON
Seattle Times NWTraveler editor

Going to Portland? Here's how to get there.

BY CAR

It's a straight shot south on Interstate 5 for 173 miles from Seattle to Portland. Three hours if you don't hit traffic.

The good: You're the master of your timing and can take side trips

The bad: Going on a weekend? Traffic snarls between Seattle and Olympia, particularly on Friday afternoons/early evenings, can easily turn it into a four-hour drive. And hotel parking can be pricey at downtown hotels (\$35 a night at the Hilton and Marriott).

Info: Check I-5 traffic at wsdot.wa.gov or phone 511.

TRAIN

Amtrak runs five trains a day between Seattle and Portland, including the long-distance Coast Starlight.

The good: Far more relaxing than driving. Enjoy the scenery, have a snack, a glass of wine. From Portland's train station it's a short taxi ride or walk to some downtown hotels. The city is compact, with good transit, so you don't need a car. And you even could take your bike on the train.

The bad: A round-trip for an adult is often over \$50, but watch for deals. Avoid taking the Coast Starlight train, which originates in L.A., from Portland back to Seattle as it's sometimes hours

late. Choose one of the other Amtrak Cascades trains back.

Info: The website for the regional Amtrak Cascades service (amtrakcascades.com) is more user-friendly than the general amtrak.com

Note that two trains daily are canceled (passengers are bused instead) between Seattle and Portland through March 9, 2015, because of track work.

BUS

Greyhound has gotten a bad down-market rap, but the more stylish and smartly marketed Bolt Bus has got travelers, especially the young, back on the bus between Seattle and Portland (and other West Coast and Northeast cities). Bolt has online ticketing, street pickup/drop-off, and Wi-Fi. (And guess what: Greyhound owns Bolt.)

The good: Someone else does the driving. And the Bolt Bus is cheap. Really cheap. Sometimes as low as \$1 one way (if you book far enough ahead and for weekday travel). More typical fares are around \$30 to \$40 round-trip.

Greyhound Web-only fares are similar (but don't have the enticing, although rare, \$1 Bolt fares) and its buses often make more stops than Bolt. But do comparison-shop.

The bad: Buses can get stuck in I-5 traffic. They're more cramped than trains, less flexible than cars.

Info: boltbus.com and greyhound.com

FLY

It's a 45-minute flight from Seattle to Portland. Alaska Airlines/Horizon has more than two dozen flights daily. Delta also has some flights.

The good: Fast, with flights all through the day.

The bad: Usually costs around \$150 round-trip and up on weekends (although fares can vary). And you have to get to the outlying airports and do the whole security thing. It could end up taking the same amount of time as train, bus or car.