

# OUT IN PORTLAND

The **LGBT INSIDER'S GUIDE** to making the most of a visit to Portland, Oregon





Red Dress Party

► WELCOME

## Everyone's Invited

*In Portland, you'll find natural beauty, distinctive neighborhoods, culture galore and a friendly, inclusive atmosphere.*

Portland has long had a reputation for being individualistic, quirky and... dare we say it, queer. Never keen to conform to mainstream standards, Portland has a laid-back style and a reverence for all things local — an irresistible combination for chefs, environmentalists, filmmakers, musicians, writers, techies and just about anyone else who enjoys coloring outside the lines.

Sprinkled among Portland's population are several artsy LGBT notables, including filmmakers Gus Van Sant and Todd Haynes, musicians Thomas Lauderdale (Pink Martini) and Beth Ditto



Beth Ditto

(The Gossip), and *Fight Club* novelist Chuck Palahniuk.

Any of these luminaries might be seen at Portland's annual Red Dress Party. This spring event — which benefits local LGBT charities — inspires guys and gals alike to don red party wear and celebrate into the wee hours. The diverse crowd (Chelsea Clinton attended in 2008) is representative of Portland's spirit of inclusion. Here, it's never a surprise to find a mix of gays, straights and everyone in between mingling in shops, restaurants, hotels and bars all over town, such as the Aalto Lounge on Southeast Belmont Street or Zaytoon in the Alberta Arts District.

Portland's star continues to rise. The city has been ranked among the best places to live in America by such wide-ranging authorities as *Girlfriends* magazine, *Men's Journal* and *Money Magazine*. Read on to meet a few Portland personalities and get a feel for why this city of nearly 600,000 has become such a draw for gay visitors. Then, come check it out for yourself!



Southeast Belmont

► ORIENTATION

# THE LAY OF THE LAND

*Where do gays and lesbians hang out in Portland? It's hard to choose one area — there are popular LGBT spots all around the city, from the urbane Pearl District to free-spirited Hawthorne. Here's an overview of some of Portland's most gay-welcoming neighborhoods.*

## 1 DOWNTOWN

In the city's urban core, the Cultural District is where you'll find many local arts institutions, from the museums along the tree-shaded South Park Blocks to the opulent Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall. The "West End" (adjacent to the Pearl District) has a handful of gay bars and cafés. The verdant campus of Portland State University hosts a farmers' market on Saturdays, and RiverPlace encompasses a marina, hotels and waterfront shops and eateries.

## 2 NORTHWEST/NOB HILL

Here, you can shop and dine along the dapper commercial

strips of Northwest 21st and 23rd avenues, or hike into the leafy heights of Forest Park. This neighborhood is known for its elegant early 1900s apartment buildings and for its fine Victorian and Craftsman homes.

## 3 PEARL DISTRICT

Once an industrial district, the Pearl has sprung to life in recent years, its sturdy warehouses converted into sleek restaurants, boutiques, art galleries and lounges. Stylish residential towers rise alongside the neighborhood's older structures, which include Powell's City of Books, the largest independent bookstore in the world.

## 4 OLD TOWN/CHINATOWN

Snug between the Willamette River and the Pearl, this historic district contains numerous galleries and gay nightlife favorites and is home to the Portland Saturday Market (see p. 10). You can also stroll through the tranquil Portland Classical Chinese Garden or go underground with Portland Walking Tours to explore the city's "Shanghai Tunnels."

## 5 MISSISSIPPI AVENUE

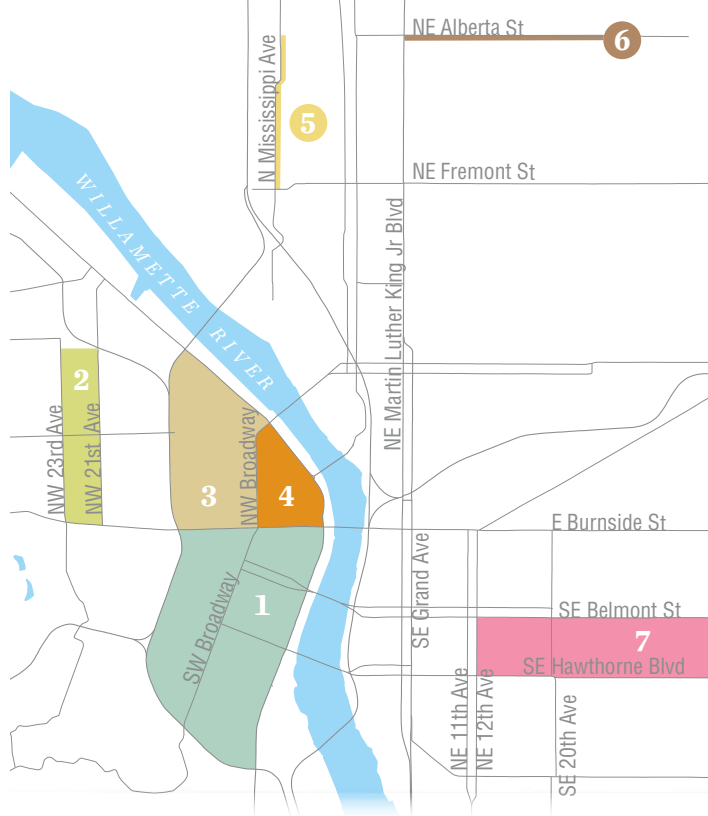
Ethnically diverse, Mississippi Avenue is one of several eastside neighborhoods where independent businesses and creative spirits thrive. In this DIY neighborhood, you'll find down-home taquerías, one of Portland's best comic book stores (Bridge City Comics), a huge emporium of reclaimed building materials (the ReBuilding Center) and the LGBTQ community center (Q Center; see p. 11).

## 6 ALBERTA ARTS DISTRICT

Fun and progressive, Alberta is another haven for arts-driven individualism — check out the monthly Last Thursday block parties to partake of the spirited vibe. Reasonably priced restaurants, boutiques and galleries make this neighborhood a must.

## 7 HAWTHORNE & BELMONT

These two southeast outposts of hippie and hipster culture have long been popular with lesbians and gays. Diverting, affordable and funky coffeehouses, bars, secondhand clothiers and boutiques line Hawthorne Boulevard and Belmont Street.



The Pearl District

# Tim Healea

*As master baker and owner of Little T American Baker in the Division/Clinton neighborhood, Tim Healea knows his way around a kitchen. He's also an active part of the gay community. As a member of the Q Center's board, he works to make Portland welcoming for LGBT residents and visitors.*

**How did you come to open Little T on Division Street?** After being an intern and then head baker at Pearl Bakery [still thriving in the Pearl District], I decided to open my own place. I looked mostly on the eastside, which has several close-knit neighborhoods. I wanted my bakery to be a neighborhood meeting place.

**What's been the key to Little T's success?** We serve breakfast and lunch, as well as beer and wine. We make salad dressings, roast our own meatloaf in our hearth oven and use produce from local farmers. Nearby spots like Broder Café, a Scandinavian restaurant that's gay-owned, and Pok Pok, an excellent Thai restaurant, also carry our products.

**What are some other bakeries in town you recommend?** Definitely Ken's in the Pearl District, and Grand Central Baking Company, which has a few locations. My favorite cupcakes come from Bakery Bar. Two Tarts, on Northwest Kearney Street, is also great.

**What other places do you recommend to visitors?** Bluehour, clarklewis, Saucebox and 23Hoyt are super restaurants — especially Saucebox, for its fun happy hour. Silk Restaurant [Vietnamese cuisine] in the Pearl District is a fixture on the city's queer Asian scene. Crush is another cool, stylish bar. And there's a great little "diners' row" just off Killingsworth Street along Northeast 30th Avenue [with Beast, Yakuza and D.O.C. restaurants].

Edgefield resort [in Troutdale, east of Portland] is really fun, and I always encourage people to check out Mount Hood — even on a hot day in Portland, you can still find snow up there. At the coast, Cannon Beach is a cool little town that's just over an hour away. The Willamette Valley wine country is also really close. In addition to all the vineyards, there are some nice places to eat in the towns of Dundee and Carlton.

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*Little T American Baker, 2600 S.E. Division St., 503.238.3458, [www.littletbaker.com](http://www.littletbaker.com)*



Tim Healea with fresh-baked bread at Little T American Baker



► THE MIXOLOGIST

## Lucy Brennan

*British-born Lucy Brennan, who owns Mint/820 restaurant and cocktail bar, is often cited as one of the nation's leading mixologists. Her low-key but high-concept neighborhood hangout on the fringes of the Mississippi Avenue district is a favorite of foodies and cocktail lovers.*

Lucy Brennan behind the bar at Mint/820

**How did you end up in Portland?** I fell in love with Portland the day I arrived in 1994, and I've not looked back since. It's the quality of life, the trees, the food. And I can't get over how scenic and pretty it is. You have Mount Hood in the distance, Forest Park right on the edge of downtown.

**Why are you so passionate about cocktails?** It's the chance to experiment and be creative. I dream about making cocktails. It helps that Portlanders are open to new things. The East Coast might be less receptive to something like my avocado daiquiri. I also like to work with Oregon liquors like Trillium Absinthe, produced here in Portland by Integrity Spirits; Clear Creek's wonderful eaux de vie; and brandies and sakés from SakéOne out in Forest Grove [about 30 miles west of Portland] — a fun place to take a tour and do a tasting.

**When you're not behind the bar, where do you like to eat?** I live in northeast Portland and really like this part of town. Mississippi Avenue is fun, as is Alberta Street — both areas have lots of good restaurants. Across the river, I like 21st and 23rd avenues in Northwest Portland. On 21st, I recommend Caffe Mingo — sort of Northwest-inspired, family-style Italian food. Ken's Artisan Pizza is another great place to eat, and so is Meriwether's for brunch. And downtown's Voodoo Doughnut is a must!

**What are your favorite things to do around Portland?** I love driving through the Columbia River Gorge — there's a great hike called the Larch Mountain Trail, with views of five mountains. Kite-surfing on the Columbia River is a lot of fun, and Multnomah Falls is definitely worth seeing.

*Mint/820, 816-820 N. Russell St.,  
503.284.5518, [www.mintand820.com](http://www.mintand820.com)*



Gina Nash in her booth at the Portland Saturday Market

▲ THE ARTIST

## Gina Nash

*Artist Gina Nash turns what some might consider trash into beautiful creations. For more than 10 years, she has sold her Experienced Materials recycled metal artwork at the Portland Saturday Market, a mainstay of the city's dynamic arts scene. Gina and her family live in southeast Portland.*

**How did you get started with your art?** When I moved here, I was working at McMenamins restaurants and bars (which are very gay-welcoming) and noticed all these cans going into the trash. I had a welding torch, so I just started cutting cans and making art with them. I began selling at First Thursdays [a popular monthly event in the Pearl District and Old Town] and then I joined the Portland Saturday Market.

**The market has been going strong since 1974 — what's the key to its success?** What makes the Portland Saturday Market different is that the salespeople are also the craftspeople. Artists who've worked the most prestigious shows in the country are based here because they know they can make a living selling two days a week at the market [it runs on both Saturday and Sunday].

**How would you sum up Portland's art scene?** What I like is that it's really vibrant but not pretentious, even though there are some amazingly accomplished artists. You can go to a gallery opening in flip-flops, and no one will look down on you.

**As a lesbian and a parent, how do you like Portland?** The people are amazing and very progressive. Nobody has ever batted an eye about us being a same-sex couple raising a child.

**Any recommendations for visitors with kids?** The Portland Children's Museum and Oregon Zoo in Washington Park are excellent. The Portland Saturday Market is geared to families, too — there are lots of affordable toys and crafts, and fun fountains nearby. Oregon Children's Theatre is terrific.

**And for adults?** Holocene in southeast Portland is a dance club and restaurant with women's nights that really rock. The Tin Shed Garden Café on Northeast Alberta Street is gay-owned, and Dingo's Taco Bar [on Hawthorne Boulevard] has a great lesbian scene on Thursdays. I also love getting friends together for a river cruise on the *Willamette Star*.

**Portland Saturday Market**, Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park (Southwest Naito Parkway near the Burnside Bridge), [www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com](http://www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com)

**Experienced Materials**, [www.experiencedmaterials.com](http://www.experiencedmaterials.com)

▼ THE ACTIVIST

## Kendall Clawson

*New to Portland in 2007, Kendall Clawson already has her finger on the pulse of the local LGBT scene as executive director of the Q Center, the community's definitive resource and meeting space. Kendall has big plans for the Q Center and its new home in the Mississippi Avenue neighborhood.*

**How did you become director of the Q Center?** We came to Portland on vacation and decided immediately that we loved it — we're the classic tourists who move after just one visit. Michele [Kendall's wife] was asked out for a job interview. Just before we left, I saw the Q Center ad and thought, "This job sounds really fun!" And here I am.

*continued on page 12*



Kendall Clawson hosting a Q Center event

*Kendall Clawson, continued*

**What role does the Q Center play in Portland?** It's the gateway to the gay community. The center is here for anybody who is LGBT or Q, plus straight allies. We get lots of calls from people who are visiting. We recommend community groups and have a library and regular events. We're like an incubator and a cheerleader for Portland's gay community.

**Where else can newcomers meet gay Portlanders?**

Any of the New Seasons [gourmet grocery stores] — they're hot spots for the queer community. QDoc [Portland Queer Documentary Film Festival] is a wonderful event. It's at the end of May, right before Pride — a great time to visit.

**What advice would you offer visitors?** Check out our resource wall at the Q Center to see what's happening, and grab dinner or do a little shopping — all in the neighborhood. When you visit, get out and walk a lot, because you will eat... and eat. It's crazy how good the food is in Portland. And I love all our rose gardens, but I especially love the one in Peninsula Park. When it's in full bloom, it's just amazing.

**Any favorite neighborhood spots?** In North Portland, Roux has fantastic Cajun food and the best happy hour ever — it's very gay, sort of a hidden secret. I love shopping along Hawthorne Boulevard and in Division/Clinton. On Mississippi Avenue there are a number of gay-owned businesses, including Casa Naranja, which has awesome tapas.

Q Center, 4115 N. Mississippi Ave., 503.234.7837,  
[www.pdxqcenter.org](http://www.pdxqcenter.org)



Fez Vartan  
in his shop,  
Fez Studio

## ► THE STYLIST

# Fez Vartan

*Fez Vartan lives and runs a business in one of Portland's hippest neighborhoods — the Pearl District. A certified cosmetologist and owner of Fez Studio, Fez was born in Thailand and grew up in the Portland area. As an adult, he spent several years in Thailand before returning to Portland.*

**What led you to open a boutique here in town?** While working behind the scenes in television in Thailand, I became interested in makeup and cosmetics. When I returned to Oregon, I started working at a salon and got training doing facials. Then I decided I wanted to do my own thing. I chose to locate in the Pearl because it's very sophisticated — many of the boutiques carry wonderful, hard-to-find products.

**Who shops at Fez Studio?** We draw mostly women, including quite a few lesbians, but we have lots of things for men. We get people from Beverly Hills, New York, Vancouver, B.C. — and many visitors become regular clients.

**Do you ever think about living in a bigger or more international city?** It's hard for me to imagine living anywhere but Portland — I love the outdoors, and I like being in a city that's not too fast-paced, but still has a ton of stuff going on. Also, Portland is very open-minded. I want to live where I can be comfortable as I am, and I feel completely at home here.

**What are your favorite things about the Pearl?** It's close to downtown, yet it has its own personality. This is a great neighborhood to explore — lots of excellent restaurants, from Peruvian to Italian to sushi. Oba and Bluehour have a couple of my favorite happy hours. Among the unusual shops, Nolita is good for denim wear. Physical Element has very fashionable, high-end clothes, mostly for women. For kids, Little Urbanites is a happening boutique.

Fez Studio, 1125 N.W. Ninth Ave., 503.227.2226, [www.fezstudio.net](http://www.fezstudio.net)



► THE OUTDOORSMAN

# Kyle Sheeley

Kyle Sheeley leading kayakers on the Willamette River

*On a nice day, you'll likely find Kyle Sheeley paddling along a downtown stretch of the Willamette River. Kyle runs OutKayaking, Portland's club for gay and lesbian kayaking enthusiasts, and he's a big fan of Portland's sports and recreational offerings.*

**How long have you been a Portlander?** I've been in Portland for 15 years. I grew up on a dairy farm in Minnesota in a town of 400 people. After college, I traveled around the country and found that Portland was a perfect balance: a large-enough city with a small-town feel. Portland has the art, the urbanity, along with an outdoorsy appeal.

**Why is Portland an ideal city for kayaking?** We have such great access — there are five major waterways within a 10-minute drive of the city: the Willamette and Columbia rivers, Vancouver Lake, Sturgeon Lake and Columbia Slough.

**How did you get involved with OutKayaking?** A few years ago, I had just ended a relationship and was looking to meet new people. I remembered the OutKayaking website, but found that it had disappeared. I did a little research and

decided to run the group myself. Since then, we've grown from about 20 to well over 300 members. About two-thirds are lesbian, and 10 percent of our members are straight. It's an active group, and everyone gets along really well.

**How can visitors get involved?** We usually have two or three events scheduled at any given time, and there's also an informal weekly gathering. Participants provide their own gear or pay for their own rentals, and several local outfitters give our group discounts. Anybody can join, and you don't have to live here. If you see an event on the website [see below], just show up. We also do joint events with the city's gay and lesbian outdoor club, the Adventure Group.

**What are some other ways for visitors to get out and experience Portland?** You can easily get to Forest Park from downtown — the Macleay Trail is especially beautiful. For the visitor who wants to quickly get his or her shoes dirty, it's very close. Along the waterfront, there's an excellent trail for jogging and biking. That's one of the things that makes Portland so special — if you want to kayak or hike, you can do it right downtown. Or you can easily sneak away to a real wilderness.

**OutKayaking**, [www.outkayaking.org](http://www.outkayaking.org)

## SELECTED FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

### **APRIL/MAY Red Dress Party**

[www.reddresspdx.com](http://www.reddresspdx.com)

This annual event raises funds for local LGBT charities, with thousands of partygoers donning red dresses for the cause.

### **MAY QDoc – Portland Queer Documentary Film Festival**

[www.queerdocfest.org](http://www.queerdocfest.org)

Held at the Clinton Street Theater in southeast Portland, QDoc is the nation's only festival dedicated to LGBT documentaries.

### **JUNE Portland Pride Festival**

[www.pridenw.org](http://www.pridenw.org)

Portland Pride showcases the diversity and talents of the LGBT community during a weekend festival that culminates with a parade on Sunday morning.

### **SEPTEMBER The Portland Lesbian & Gay Film Festival**

[www.plgff.org](http://www.plgff.org)

This annual festival screens some 100 films and attracts thousands of filmgoers during its nine-day run.

For information on additional festivals, events, concerts and more, visit [www.travelportland.com/lgbt](http://www.travelportland.com/lgbt).

## RESOURCES FOR LGBT VISITORS

### **Travel Portland Information Center**

Pioneer Courthouse Square  
(Southwest Sixth Avenue between Morrison and Yamhill streets)  
877.678.5263 or 503.275.8355

Located downtown, on the MAX light-rail line, the information center provides maps, brochures and expert tips.



### **The Q Center**

[www.pdxqcenter.org](http://www.pdxqcenter.org)

See p. 11 for details.

### **Just Out**

[www.justout.com](http://www.justout.com)

Portland's biweekly LGBT newspaper; online calendar.

### **The Portland Mercury**

[www.portlandmercury.com](http://www.portlandmercury.com)

Alternative newsweekly; produces an annual pullout "Pride Guide."

### **Willamette Week**

[www.wweek.com](http://www.wweek.com)

Progressive alternative newsweekly with regular stories on the LGBT scene.

### **Portland's Gay & Lesbian Community Yellow Pages**

[www.pdxgayyellowpages.com](http://www.pdxgayyellowpages.com)

A guide to Portland businesses welcoming to the LGBT community.

### **Portland Area Business Association**

[www.paba.com](http://www.paba.com)

LGBT chamber of commerce.

### **Basic Rights Oregon**

[www.basicrights.org](http://www.basicrights.org)

The state's foremost organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Written by Andrew Collins  
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