

LESSON 13



Cities of the West

What attracts people to the cities of the West?

Introduction

“Go west, young man, and grow up with the country!” An American author named Horace Greeley wrote these words. He hoped that they would inspire people to leave the big cities of the East and move westward. By the 1850s, these words were heard all over the United States.

Americans have been following this advice ever since. Americans have long viewed the West as a place to start new lives. In the 1800s, the West’s wide-open spaces attracted farmers, miners, and ranchers. These pioneers loaded up their belongings in covered wagons and made the long trek west. A pioneer is someone who is among the first people to settle a region. Pioneers also went west by ship and, later, on the new transcontinental railroads. The pioneers of the West settled in the mountain ranges, near the ocean’s shore, in fertile valleys, and in the vast desert. Today, the West still has mines, ranches, and lots of land. It also has lively cities that draw people from around the world.

In this lesson, you will learn about seven of these western cities. In the past, these cities were destinations or stopovers for people moving west. This caused the cities to grow and change. Today, they continue to grow. For each one, you will read about its geography, history, population, economy, and how its residents have fun. As you read, ask yourself, “What is attracting people to the West today?”

Social Studies Vocabulary

mint

Mormon

oasis

◀ Seattle, Washington, is just one of many cities attracting people to the West.



Economics



Geography



History



Denver is one of the nation's fastest-growing cities. This capital city began as a mining town.

mint a factory where the government makes coins

1. Denver, Colorado

Denver, the capital city of Colorado, is home to a U.S. mint. A **mint** is a factory where the government makes coins such as pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Back in the 1860s, miners brought their gold here. Their nuggets were melted and turned into valuable gold bars. The Mint began producing gold and silver coins in 1906. Today, the mint in Denver makes about 50 million coins every day!

Geography

Denver sits where the Great Plains meet the Rocky Mountains. It is known as the “Mile-High City.” If you stand on the 13th step of the state capitol building, you’ll be exactly 5,280 feet, or one mile, above sea level.

Denver has a dry, sunny climate. The city gets snow in the winter. To see how Denver’s climate compares with those of other cities in the West, look at the table at the end of the lesson.

History

Denver was founded in 1858 after people discovered gold in the area. During World War II, many U.S. government offices moved to Denver. When the war ended, many of these workers decided to stay.

Population

In 2013, almost 650,000 people lived in Denver. To see how Denver's population compares with those of some other cities in the West, look at the table at the end of the lesson.

The city's population is becoming more diverse. About one-half of Denver's residents are white. More than one-third are Latino. About one-tenth of the population is African American.

Economy

Many people in Denver work for the U.S. government. Many large companies are also located in Denver.

Ways to Have Fun

Denver offers lots of opportunities to have fun. The city has more than 200 parks with trails for cycling, running, and walking. Denver even has a park where a herd of bison lives.

Denver is the center of professional sports in the Rocky Mountain region. The city's major league teams include the Denver Broncos (football), the Colorado Rockies (baseball), the Denver Nuggets (basketball), and the Colorado Avalanche (ice hockey). Every January, Denver hosts a national cattle show and rodeo.



Rodeo fans watch cowboys and cowgirls compete in events. These include bronco riding, calf roping, and steer wrestling.



Denver lies in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado.



The Wasatch Mountains tower over Salt Lake City. Mormon settlers used irrigation to bring water to this desert-like area.

Mormon a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

2. Salt Lake City, Utah

If you stand in the center of downtown Salt Lake City, Utah, you will be in Temple Square. In front of you will be a huge white building, the Mormon Temple. Temple Square has always been the heart of Salt Lake City. The city was started by a group of people called **Mormons**. Mormons are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Mormons built the city around their temple. The temple itself took 40 years to build.

Geography

Salt Lake City is in the north-central part of Utah. It is located in a high valley between the Wasatch Mountains and the Great Salt Lake Desert.

The climate in Salt Lake City is dry. The city has warm summers and some snow in the winter. (See the table at the end of the lesson.)

History

Mormons founded Salt Lake City in 1847. They wanted a place where they could freely practice their religion. When they first arrived at the site of the city, it was a desert-like area. The Mormons used irrigation to bring water to the dry valley. They turned the desert into farmland.

In the 1880s, Salt Lake City's population more than doubled because of nearby mining. The city grew again during World War II. The government needed metal for ships and planes. So more people came to work in the mines. After the war ended, many wartime workers stayed in the Salt Lake City area.

Population

In 2013, more than 190,000 people lived in Salt Lake City. (See the table at the end of the lesson.) If you include the nearby towns, more than 1 million people live in the area.

Salt Lake City's population was once almost entirely white. But it has become more diverse. Whites make up almost seven-tenths of the city's population. Latinos are the second largest group, at more than two-tenths of the population. African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders make up the rest of the population.

Economy

Mining is one of Salt Lake City's most important industries. Copper, silver, lead, zinc, coal, and iron ore are all mined nearby.

Ways to Have Fun

The Wasatch Mountains tower over Salt Lake City. They are a wonderful place for hiking and skiing. Because of this, Salt Lake City was chosen as the site of the 2002 Winter Olympics. The city also has many parks.

Salt Lake City has two major league sports teams, the Utah Jazz (basketball) and Real Salt Lake (soccer).



Salt Lake City is the capital of Utah.

People of all ages enjoy skiing in the Wasatch Mountains. Hiking in these mountains is popular during the summer months.





Boise was founded as a mining town. Today the electronic industry brings people to this Idaho city.

3. Boise, Idaho

The summer is a fun time to visit Boise, Idaho. The weather is usually warm then. Some people start their day with an early-morning hot-air balloon ride. Then they might go fishing, hiking, or rafting down a nearby river.

People also walk or bike along the river that runs right through Boise. You can even float down the river in an inner tube or raft. And many families gather downtown once a week. There, people listen to live music, have picnics, and relax.

Geography

Boise is located on the Boise River in southwestern Idaho. It has a dry, sunny climate, with some snow in the winter. (See the table at the end of the lesson.)

History

Boise was founded in 1863, following the discovery of gold in the region. The U.S. government built a fort near the Boise River. The city arose next to the fort.

Boise grew rapidly as miners rushed to the goldfields. Many of the miners were immigrants from China. In 1925, the Union Pacific Railroad ran its main line through Boise. This brought even more people to the city. Boise continued to grow in the 1980s, when new electronics factories created more jobs.

Population

Between 1990 and 2013, Boise's population grew even more, from about 125,000 people to more than 214,000. (See the table at the end of the lesson.) If you include nearby towns, more than 600,000 people live in the Boise area.

Almost nine-tenths of Boise's people are white. The next largest group is Latinos. They make up close to one-tenth of the population. The rest of Boise's population includes Asian Americans, African Americans, and American Indians.

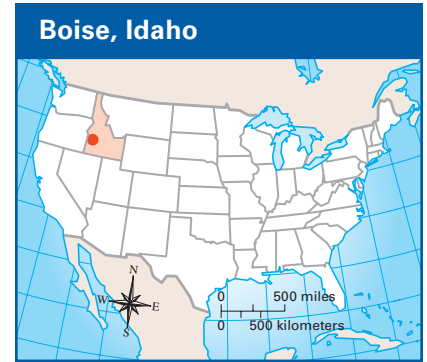
Economy

Boise provides banking, shopping, and health services for many people. Companies that make computer chips and wood and paper products are also important in Boise.

Ways to Have Fun

Many people in Boise enjoy the outdoors. There are lots of paths for walking, bicycling, skating, and jogging. In a set of parks called the Greenbelt, people picnic, play sports, watch birds, and listen to concerts. Places for skiing and whitewater rafting are within an easy drive of the city.

Sports fans in Boise can root for the city's minor league baseball and ice hockey teams.



Boise is Idaho's state capital.

Visitors and residents enjoy many recreational activities in Boise. Fly-fishing is a popular sport.





Seattle is a bay city. Homes, tourist attractions, businesses, and the shipping industry compete for waterfront land.

4. Seattle, Washington

The best place to see Seattle, Washington, is from the top of the city's most famous landmark, the Space Needle. An elevator lifts you 52 stories above the ground. From there, you can look out at Seattle's skyscrapers and the ferryboats crossing Elliott Bay.

The Space Needle was built for the 1962 World's Fair. Even today, it looks like something out of the future.

Geography

Seattle is in the northwestern corner of the United States, about 100 miles south of the border with Canada. The city lies next to a large bay of the Pacific Ocean. Mountains surround it.

Seattle has a mild, rainy climate. The city is often cloudy or foggy. (See the table at the end of the lesson.)

History

Seattle was founded in 1851 by a small group of settlers. The city grew rapidly in the late 1800s with the growth of the timber industry. The discovery of gold in the Yukon Territory of Canada in 1896 transformed the city. Miners poured into Seattle on their way to the goldfields. When the gold rush ended, many of them settled in the city.

Population

In 2013, more than 650,000 people lived in Seattle. (See the table at the end of the lesson.) More than 3.5 million people live in the surrounding area. This is one of the fastest-growing areas in the United States.

Whites make up just over two-thirds of Seattle's population. The next largest groups are Asian Americans (more than one-tenth of the population), African Americans (about one-tenth), and Latinos (less than one-tenth).

Economy

Seattle is an important U.S. shipping port. From the city's ports, many goods are traded with Japan and the rest of Asia. Fishing and the lumber industry are also important to the economy of Seattle.

For many years, most jobs in Seattle were at a company that made airplanes. Today, many people work in the computer industry.

Ways to Have Fun

Seattle has more than 5,000 acres of public land. People enjoy miles of trails on which they can cycle, skate, jog, and walk. The nearby mountains offer excellent skiing, climbing, and hiking. Mount Rainier is a favorite hiking destination. And the area's many lakes make boating and fishing popular pastimes.

Seattle has three major league sports teams. They are the Mariners (baseball), the Seahawks (football), and the Sounders (soccer).



Seattle is Washington's largest city.



Miles of paved trails make Seattle a great city for outdoor activities. On clear days, Mount Rainier is a spectacular sight.



The Willamette River winds through Portland. Goods going to California during the Gold Rush traveled via ships on the river.

5. Portland, Oregon

In spring, roses bloom in gardens all over the city of Portland, Oregon. In fact, one of Portland’s biggest attractions is the International Rose Test Garden. Here you can see 10,000 rosebushes and more than 500 varieties of roses in all colors. Some people call Portland the “City of Roses.”

Geography

Portland sits on the banks of the Willamette River, in northwestern Oregon. The city lies in a fertile valley between the Coast and Cascade mountain ranges.

Portland has a mild climate, with heavy rains in the late fall and winter. (See the table at the end of the lesson.)

History

Portland got its start in 1845. Settlers arrived by the thousands over the Oregon Trail. During the California gold rush, Portland grew rapidly. Settlers sold lumber and grain to miners and their families in California.

Portland continued to grow at a steady pace. In 1905, a world's fair brought 3 million visitors to the city. Many of them decided to stay. In the 1930s, dams on the Columbia and Willamette rivers provided cheap electricity. This brought a number of industries to Portland. During World War II, thousands of workers arrived in the city to build ships for the United States Navy.

Population

In 2013, Portland's population was more than 600,000 people. (See the table at the end of the lesson.) More than 2 million people live in the city and its surrounding areas.

About three-fourths of Portland's residents are white. Most of the rest of the population is divided equally among Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans.

Economy

People in Portland work for many different kinds of companies. Some companies make paper. Others make clothing and shoes. Portland also has new businesses, such as computer software companies. The city's busy harbor has been home to shipping companies for many years.

Ways to Have Fun

Portland has many parks and open spaces. Forest Park covers nearly 5,000 acres. It is one of the largest natural areas inside a U.S. city. Mount Hood, located less than 50 miles away from Portland, is a great place for skiing and other winter sports. Portland has two major league sports teams, the Portland Trail Blazers (basketball) and Timbers (soccer).



Portland lies on the border separating Oregon and Washington.



People of all ages enjoy walking and hiking in Portland's many parks. From Mount Tabor Park, you can see the downtown center.



San Jose is the largest city in Northern California. It has more than 2,000 miles of streets.

6. San Jose, California

People often call San Jose, California, the “Capital of Silicon Valley.” Silicon Valley is a nickname for the area between the cities of San Jose and San Francisco. Silicon is a material used to make computers. The first computer companies began in Silicon Valley in the 1970s.

Geography

San Jose lies near the southern tip of San Francisco Bay. The city has a mild to warm climate. (See the table at the end of the lesson.)

History

Spanish settlers founded San Jose in 1777. For many years, the area was home to vineyards and orchards. World War II brought new businesses and people to the city. By 1980, the city had grown to almost ten times the size it was in 1950.

Population

San Jose’s population was almost 1 million by the year 2013. (See the table at the end of the lesson.)

The population is very diverse. About one-third of the people are white, one-third are Latinos, and one-third are Asian Americans. African Americans and American Indians also live in San Jose.

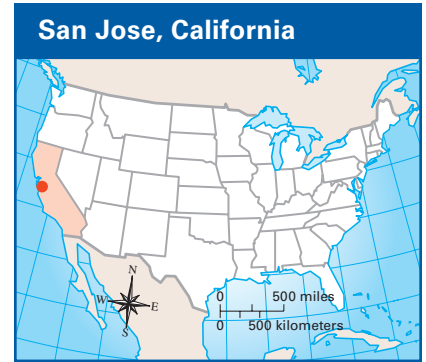
Economy

The San Jose region is famous for its technology companies. Silicon Valley is home to some of the most successful technology companies in the world. Thousands of computer and engineering students attend San Jose State University and other area schools. Many of them work in San Jose's technology companies after graduation.

Ways to Have Fun

San Jose has about 75 parks and playgrounds. The largest park is Alum Rock Park. It has miles of trails for hiking and horseback riding. Fans of thrill rides can go to amusement parks in nearby Santa Clara and Santa Cruz.

San Jose has two major league sports teams, the Sharks (ice hockey) and the Earthquakes (soccer).



San Jose is a center of technology in California.



Many people in San Jose work in the technology field. San Jose is part of California's Silicon Valley.



Las Vegas is the largest city in Nevada. Its hotels rise above the desert landscape.

7. Las Vegas, Nevada

If you drive into Las Vegas, Nevada, you will see a sign that reads, “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada.” And fabulous is certainly the word for this city of bright lights and hotels. All around, colorful signs advertise music, comedy, and magic shows. It’s no wonder many people call Las Vegas the “Entertainment Capital of the World.”

Geography

Las Vegas is near the southern tip of Nevada. It sits in a desert valley surrounded by mountains.

Las Vegas has a dry climate. Winters are warm, and summers are hot. (See table at the end of the lesson.)

History

Las Vegas lies in one of the few places in a desert that has water and trees. Such a place is called an **oasis**. American Indian tribes roamed the area thousands of years ago. In the late 1820s, Spanish explorers came upon the oasis. Settlers soon followed.

oasis a place in the desert that has water and trees

Las Vegas remained a small town until the 1930s. Then construction began on the nearby Hoover Dam. The dam project created thousands of new jobs. Many of the workers stayed to settle in Las Vegas.

After World War II, Las Vegas grew rapidly as many hotels were built. Today, almost 40 million visitors come to Las Vegas every year.

Population

In 2013, more than 600,000 people lived in Las Vegas. (See the table at the end of the lesson.) Half of the city's people are white. The next largest group is Latinos, who make up one-third of the population. African Americans are more than one-tenth of the population, and Asian Americans are less than one-tenth.

Economy

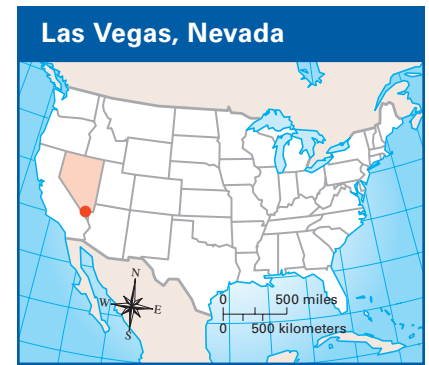
Tourism is a big business in Las Vegas. The city's restaurants, hotels, and shops provide thousands of jobs. There is also great demand for home building and landscaping.

Ways to Have Fun

Las Vegas is famous for its shows. Many popular singers, dancers, and comics perform there. Championship boxing matches are often held in the city.

People in Las Vegas also enjoy outdoor activities. They can hike and camp. They can fish and boat on nearby lakes. And the Grand Canyon is only a five-hour drive from the city.

The entertainment industry draws tourists and residents alike to Las Vegas. The building of new hotels and other structures creates many construction jobs.



Las Vegas sits on the southern tip of Nevada.



8. Research for More Information

Did you notice as you read this lesson that the information about each city was organized the same way? You read about the geography, history, population, economy, and different ways to have fun in each city. This organization makes it easy for you to find information, and then compare and contrast the cities. For example, in the geography subsections, you read about each city's climate. Five of the cities have dry climates and two have wet ones. But what if you want to know more? How would you find specific temperatures for each city? You can research!

Perhaps you want to visit a city in the spring, but you don't like the cold. Think of a question that you can answer with research, such as: What city is warmest in April? Once you know your question, you can pick the best reference material for finding the answer. To get weather information, you can use almanacs, weather databases, city Web sites, and some atlases.

When you find the information, take notes from the resource in your own words. It helps to organize the information using a graphic organizer: table, outline, concept map, or timeline. Besides noting what you learn, write or copy the name of the source and page number or URL so you can find it again. Web sites change. So it is also good to save the Web page or take a picture of it for later use. Last, create a source list or bibliography.

Denver has warm summers and cold winters. You can research to find specific temperatures for the city.



City Temperatures and Populations

City	Average January Temperature	Average July Temperature	Population*
Boise	37.8°F	91.2°F	214,237
Denver	44.0°F	89.4°F	649,495
Las Vegas	58.0°F	104.2°F	603,488
Portland	47.0°F	80.6°F	609,456
Salt Lake City	37.4°F	92.6°F	191,180
San Jose	59.8°F	83.4°F	998,537
Seattle	47.2°F	75.7°F	652,405

*U.S. Census 2013 population estimates

Suppose you looked up information about the temperatures of the seven western cities. You might organize the information in a table like the one shown. The table makes it easy to compare similar information. You will not need to flip pages back and forth looking for information. Look at the table: City Temperatures and Populations. What does the data tell you? Which city has the warmest weather during the winter?

A table organizes information in a visual way. This table makes it easy to compare the temperatures and populations of the western cities.

Lesson Summary

For more than 200 years, Americans have been moving west to start new lives. Today, the West still attracts people from all around the world. Of course, they don't arrive in covered wagons. And few will start a farm or a ranch. Instead, many are settling down in the West's thriving cities.

Have you discovered what attracts newcomers to the West today? Here are some attractions:

- scenery
- climate
- diverse populations
- new businesses and industries
- recreational opportunities

To find out more about each city, you can research using a geographer's tools and sources. What do you think you might like in the cities of the West?

Outdoor Fun in Your State

You just read about fun things to do in some cities in the West. Now it's time for you to investigate fun activities in your state. Specifically, focus on this question: What are the best places for outdoor fun in your state?

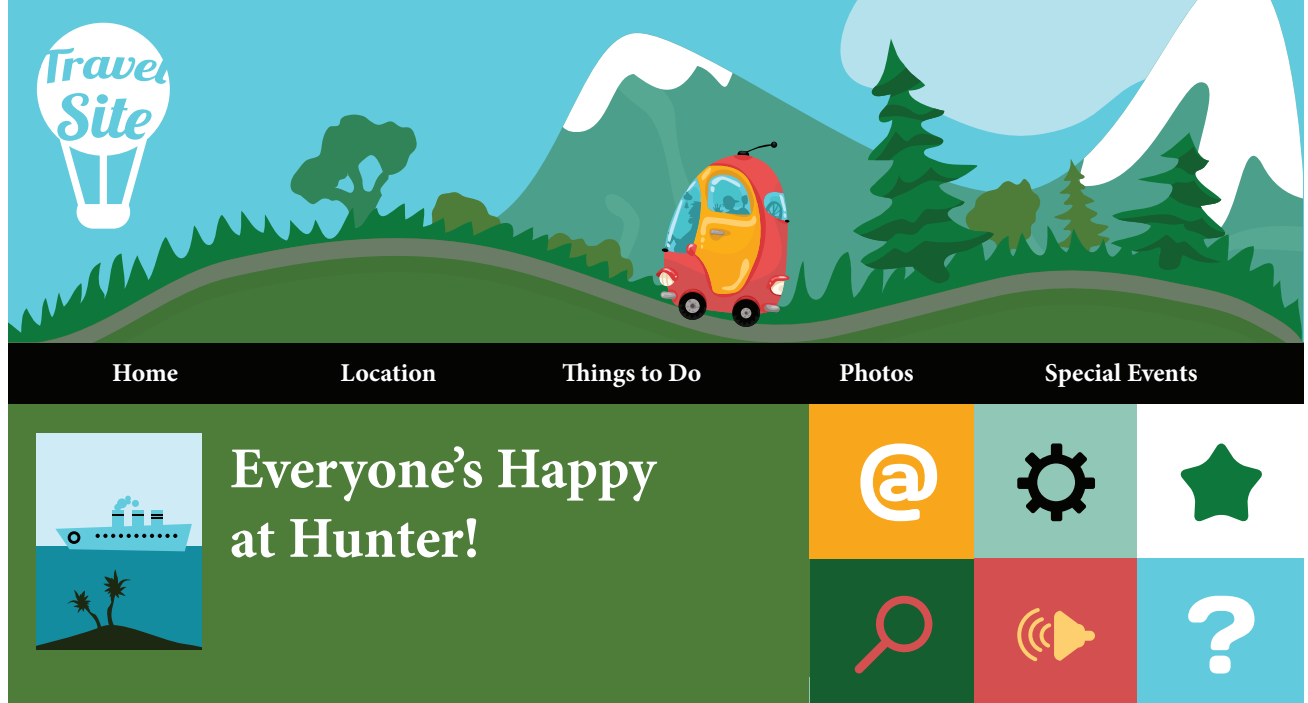
Do your research in books about your state or on the Internet, and make a list of places for outdoor fun. Your list might include mountains, lakes, amusement parks, and outdoor sports games. For example, if you lived in the state of New York, you might list the Statue of Liberty, Yankee Stadium, Hunter Mountain, and Niagara Falls.

As you find places, record notes about where each place is located and fun activities to do there. You may also wish to write down interesting facts about the place you choose. Your notes might look similar to those shown here.

Pick your favorite place so that you can tell others about it and encourage them to visit it. There are many ways for you to present this information. You could give a speech, create an ad for social media, or design a photo brochure. For this lesson, you will go through the steps to prepare a Web site.

Here are one student's notes about fun places in New York.

Place	Statue of Liberty	Yankee Stadium	Hunter Mountain	Niagara Falls
Location	New York Harbor	Bronx, NY	Hunter, NY	NY/Canada border
Fun Activities	Climb 377 steps to the crown, take photos of New York City	Watch a major league baseball game	Ski, hike, zipline	Take a boat ride by the falls, see a light show at night



Spread the Word!

Are you ready to plan a Web site for your favorite outdoor place? First, lay out your site by writing text and pasting photos on separate document pages. Later, you can ask for help in posting the text and photos on a real Web site.

Think of features that you like to see on a Web site. Start with the “Home Page.” Find an exciting photo of the place, and write a catchy slogan. For example, a Home Page for Hunter Mountain in New York could have a photo of a skier. The slogan above the photo might be “Everyone’s Happy at Hunter!”

Next, decide on the other pages to include on your site. You can show tabs to these pages at the top of your home page. You might include: “Location,” “Things to Do,” and “Interesting Facts.” What other pages do you want to include?

Now write the information you want to include on each page. Keep your sentences simple and easy for your readers to understand. Everything you write should be in an excited tone to convince others to visit the place. Add photos to each page. If you could add music, what would it sound like?

Show your Web site plan to your teacher and classmates. Watch your classmates’ presentations and talk about why your outdoor place is the best in the state. Support your opinion with strong reasons. Listen to your classmates’ opinions, and see if they persuade you to change your mind.

Here’s one student’s Web site. What words and pictures will you use on your Web site?

Tourists at Niagara Falls love the excitement of a boat ride beside the falls.





Portland, Oregon: Green and Clean

Portland, Oregon, has always been a beautiful place. That was true when the first white settlers chose the spot in the 1840s. As the city has grown, it has found ways to add more beauty—and to help keep Earth clean. What features help make Portland a city known for being green and clean?

It is not hard to imagine why people were first drawn to the area that is now Portland. In the distance rises magnificent Mount Hood. Covered with snow year round, the great peak stands like a guard over the surrounding land. It is truly an impressive sight.

Then there are the rivers. Portland sits where the Columbia and Willamette rivers come together. These rivers add to Portland's beauty. They provided resources such as water and fish. They were a transportation route for steamers to carry supplies into, and goods out of, the city. The rivers helped make Portland an inviting place to settle.

And people did settle in Portland. After its founding, thousands of people moved in and established lives in the new town. Many came to make their living by fishing. Others came to harvest trees from the rich forests. Some came to grow crops in the surrounding area. Still others came as part of the many gold rushes in the West. For a time it was the largest settlement in the Northwest.

Portland's Washington Park offers breathtaking views of the city and Mount Hood. The area's natural resources brought early settlers to the city.





The people of Portland live in a place of natural beauty, and they work to keep it that way. Portland's many roses are a colorful example of this. These flowers earned Portland the nickname "City of Roses."

Roses have probably grown on the West Coast since before Portland was founded. Settlers brought bushes from the East. The people of Portland found that their climate and soil were perfect for growing roses.

Georgiana Pittock was a rose grower in Portland. In 1888, she started the Portland Rose Society. Its purpose was to get more people to grow and display roses. The society was the first group of its kind in the country.

The Rose Society was a success as more and more residents grew roses. By 1905, thousands of roses were planted in Portland, and there were over 200 miles of road lined with flowers. Then, in 1907, Portland held a Rose Festival that included a spectacular rose parade. Thousands of people celebrated the city's love for roses.

Portland still holds its Rose Festival every June. Over one million people come to the city to take part!

While in town, many visitors stop at the International Rose Test Garden. Since 1917, growers have been sending roses there to be observed for characteristics such as color, fragrance, and disease resistance. This magnificent garden helps the city live up to its nickname.

The International Rose Test Garden is a beautiful place in Portland for a walk or picnic. But the garden is a serious "laboratory" for growing new roses.

Portland has many parks for its residents and visitors to enjoy. Waterfront Park along the Willamette River was once a wide highway.

The people of Portland do not stop at filling their city with flowers. They have a long tradition of keeping their city green.

From its earliest days, Portland has set aside land for parks. The settlers built a bustling city, but they wanted to make sure they had natural places, too.

Including natural places in a city can be a hard task. After all, a modern city needs highways for people and businesses to use. It needs buildings and parking lots. In Portland, people have put firm limits on this.

For example, in the 1970s, a wide highway ran along Portland's riverfront, separating the city from the river. The city decided to dig it up. In its place, they put a park where people can enjoy the outdoors and the beauty of the river.

Portland has many other parks, too. In fact, more than one out of every ten acres in the city is part of a park. There are also miles and miles of trails for people to wander. Portland is proud of the many outdoor recreation opportunities it offers.

One special Portland site is a huge wilderness area called Forest Park. A million people visit this park each year, hiking on nearly 70 miles of trails. They view interesting and unusual plants and birds. The park helps people escape from the busy city life for a time.



People in Portland want to keep their city clean as well as green. They are known worldwide for their work to protect the environment.

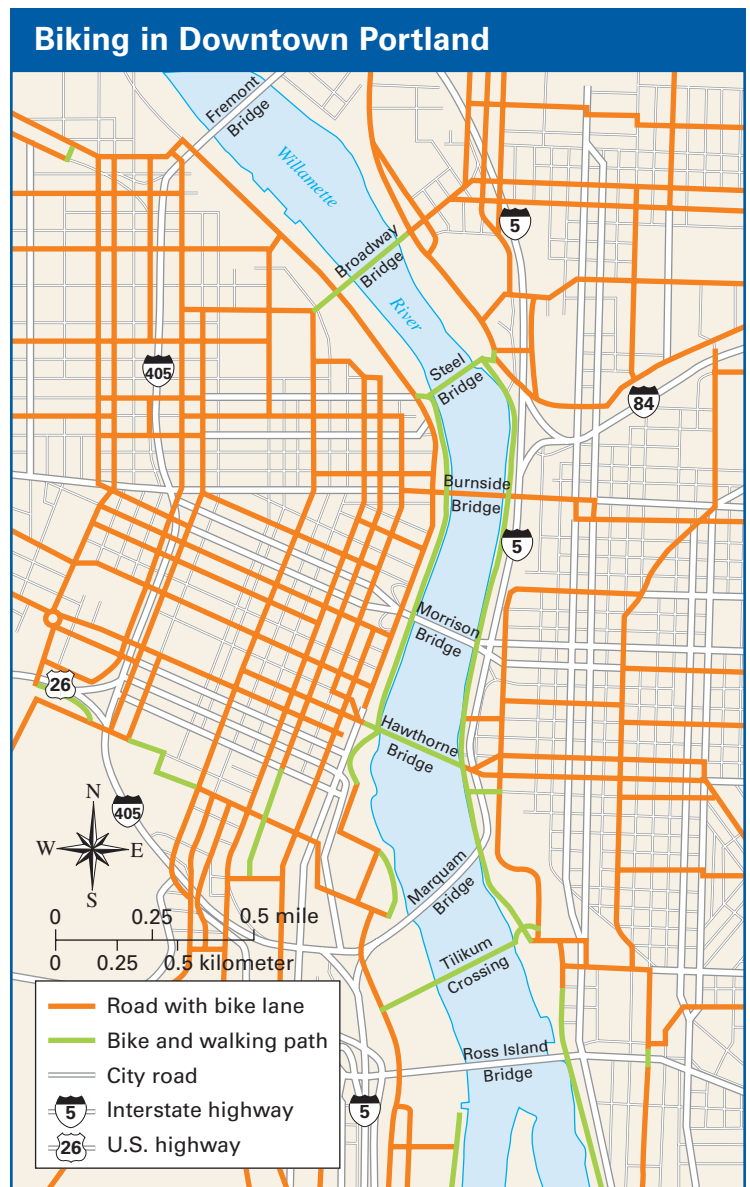
Look at the city's miles of bike paths, for example. These paths make it easy for people to bike through all parts of the city. Portlanders ride their bikes to work, to shop, and to play, in sunshine and in rain. Since cars cause air pollution, riding bikes instead of driving helps keep the air clean. In 2012, more than 18,000 riders cycled through the city each day.

Portland is also a leader in recycling. The city, along with the rest of Oregon, was the first place to require people to pay a small fee for each beverage bottle they buy. Buyers get the money back when they return the empty bottle for recycling. Many other states now use this program.

Portland composts yard debris and most food scraps from businesses, restaurants, and homes. Compost carts are picked up once a week while garbage is only picked up every other week. This reduces the waste that goes to landfills.

Portland was the first city to take action against greenhouse gases. Many scientists think these gases may harm the environment. In 1993, Portland made a plan to cut greenhouse gases. The plan worked, and Portland now produces less greenhouse gas than it used to.

Portland is a city that believes in being green and clean. This is a big draw for people looking to visit—or live—in the Northwest. ♦



Portland is a bike friendly city. It has miles of bike paths that make it easy for residents to get around.