

2/28/2011

## **It's all good in the Hood**

Wow. It's one of the most common exclamations you will hear all over Oregon – and believe me there are plenty of opportunities to join in with the chorus.

From rugged coastline to European-style cities, from towering pine forests, to the cavernous canyons, Oregon really has it all.

And Bristolians can now fly to Portland, Oregon, via KLM's Cityhopper service to Amsterdam and connect with the direct flight to west coast America to enjoy all there is on offer in the US Pacific North West.

For many skiers looking for guaranteed snow in the Rockies of Colorado or Utah, the long transatlantic flights have been rather off-putting with 11 and 12-hour flights the norm.

But the Amsterdam-Portland service is only nine hours long – just a couple of hours longer than an east coast flight – and that makes the journey so much more appealing, and the Cascade Mountains in the Pacific North West offer some of the best skiing in the whole of the US too.

And once there Oregon really is a hidden gem of a destination. Portland is as far from a typical American city as you can get. For one it has a great history to it, courtesy of the American pioneers who fought their way over the Cascade Mountains or down the mighty Columbia River to find more fertile farming land.

It is also very easy to get around – Portland city centre is divided into quarters and a tram service runs across the city and is free for anywhere in the central quarter.

This means that traffic is less than in many other US cities which is exactly what city leaders are encouraging. The big thing in Portland is sustainability and recycling and is one of the leaders in the country on both scores.

Portland is one of the last frontier cities on the west coast and prides itself on its European feel with its many cafes, squares and tram system.

The European influence can be found in its cuisine with many fine restaurants offering not only high-class French fare with an Oregonian twist, such as that to be found at Fenouille on 11th Avenue, but also great oriental restaurants because of the Chinese and Japanese influence which has been brought to bear in the past.

The city also has some fine boutique style hotels such as Hotel Lucia that has among its other features a "pillow menu" from which guests can choose the perfect pillow.

But it is in winter, when the temperature drops and the snow comes that the Oregonians come out to play, and what a winter wonderland they have to play in.

From Portland city centre the impressive Mount Hood – at 11,240ft the highest peak in Oregon – can be seen clearly dominating the skyline to the south-east.

And at less than an hour's drive from downtown Portland, Mount Hood is a popular skiing resort for many in the city. At weekends and holidays the three most popular skiing areas, Timberline, Mount Hood Ski Bowl and Mount Hood Ski Meadows attract many visitors.