



Portland — Fish Tacos, Voodoo Donuts and Punk Rock Fashion

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The conservative girls shop 23rd Avenue in flashy, shiny spandex pants, mostly black, paired with some sexy stiletto heels. Their buns, for good or bad, are on full display. It's as if some fabric initially meant for world-class sprinters accidentally leaked from the Nike R&D department, and mysteriously found its way to those designers who sell their wares to the high-end shops in Portland's Pearl District.

Blocks away, yuppie mom's that might typically wear Versace in a city like New York or Los Angeles, escort their young fledglings around downtown Portland looking like sexy versions of Pippy Longstocking: bright orange and/or aqua colored hair; dark eye shadow, some red lipstick; a tank top that exposes a tattoo or two; short and black leather skirt; some horizontally stripped leggings to match the hair; and of course, some combat boots.

In Portland, this look is haute couture. In fact, to be dressed like any other way seems abnormal, or pedestrian. If my wife and I lived in Portland, she might find herself wanting a pair of shiny, spandex maternity pants and stiletto heels, while I might desire to be seen in a black CBGB t-shirt and a pair of jeans, skateboard under my arm, and an eyebrow piercing.

Portland's sense of fashion is deceiving to the point that it forces one to drop their judgment of appearances as that punk-rocker sitting next to you on the trolley might own a nicer house than you, drive a nicer car and possess a better education. In doing some online research prior to heading for Portland, I stumbled on an interview from 2006 in the *Portland Mercury* featuring chef/author Anthony Bourdain, of which he had this to say.

“I was struck by the preponderance of heavily tattooed, outwardly slacker-looking chefs and cooks here who I found to be unusually motivated, knowledgeable, ambitious, and very focused on specific areas of cuisine,”

Bourdain elaborated . “It's not simply a case in Portland of, ‘I want to cook, man, sounds cool.’ These people all have very specific areas in mind, either types of food or an even tighter focus, such as wanting to make the best pizza in town, or the best croissant, or doughnut.”

Based on a series of wonderful life events following this occurrence, I have no doubt that divine forces were at work that night, which brings me to [the Hotel Lucia](#).

The Hotel Lucia sits in the midst of the action on Broadway, right in the heart of downtown Portland. A block one way takes you shopping, while a block the other way takes you to the all-nude review. In-between it all the Lucia sits like an oasis in a desert storm of action, an artsy boutique hotel that possesses a sweet, serene energy inside its walls.



The foyer of the Hotel Lucia -- quaint, simple and serene.

Upon entering the foyer guests are greeted by local artist [David Hume Kennerly's](#) amazing black and white photography, a theme that exists on every floor of the Hotel Lucia. In all there are over 680 of Kennerly's photos displayed in the Lucia's public spaces, and guest-rooms. The black and white medium, combined with the photos subjects, which are typically old-school politicians, almost takes you back in time, when the pace of life was slow and connections more intimate.

Outside of our stately room, the wind howled, the rain slapped against the windows, fire trucks roared by, and people partied on the streets below. Inside, my wife and I snuggled in a huge, fluffy bed – happy, content, and eager to unknowingly take a bit of Portland home with us.

The Hotel Lucia is currently offering a few cool specials, the coolest of which is the [Weekend Parking Package](#). There's no sense driving around Portland. The city is totally walk-able, and there are trolley cars and cabs for those with sore feet. Simply drive up to the Lucia's front door, have them park your car, and leave it there for the weekend. And then go for a walk.

Don't forget to check out the out-of-print *Portland's Little Red Book of Stairs* at the [Multnomah County Central Library](#). Within its pages lay the keys to adventurous hikes, on the old, steep and intricate staircases that wind through some of Portland's nicest neighborhoods. If forced to pick just one set of stairs to tackle, go for the sublime view of Mt. Hood on the stairs that cut through the terraced gardens at SW Champlain Drive, located in Arlington Heights.

Portland is a eclectic, punk rock town full of hidden pockets of haute culture. It serves as a great example of the Wild West spirit, or what's left of it. People in Portland are still exploring, with their food, their fashion, their art, their music, and with their architecture.

Those who are lucky enough visit Portland, provided they seek out and explore some of the city's hidden gems, are typically better for it.

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