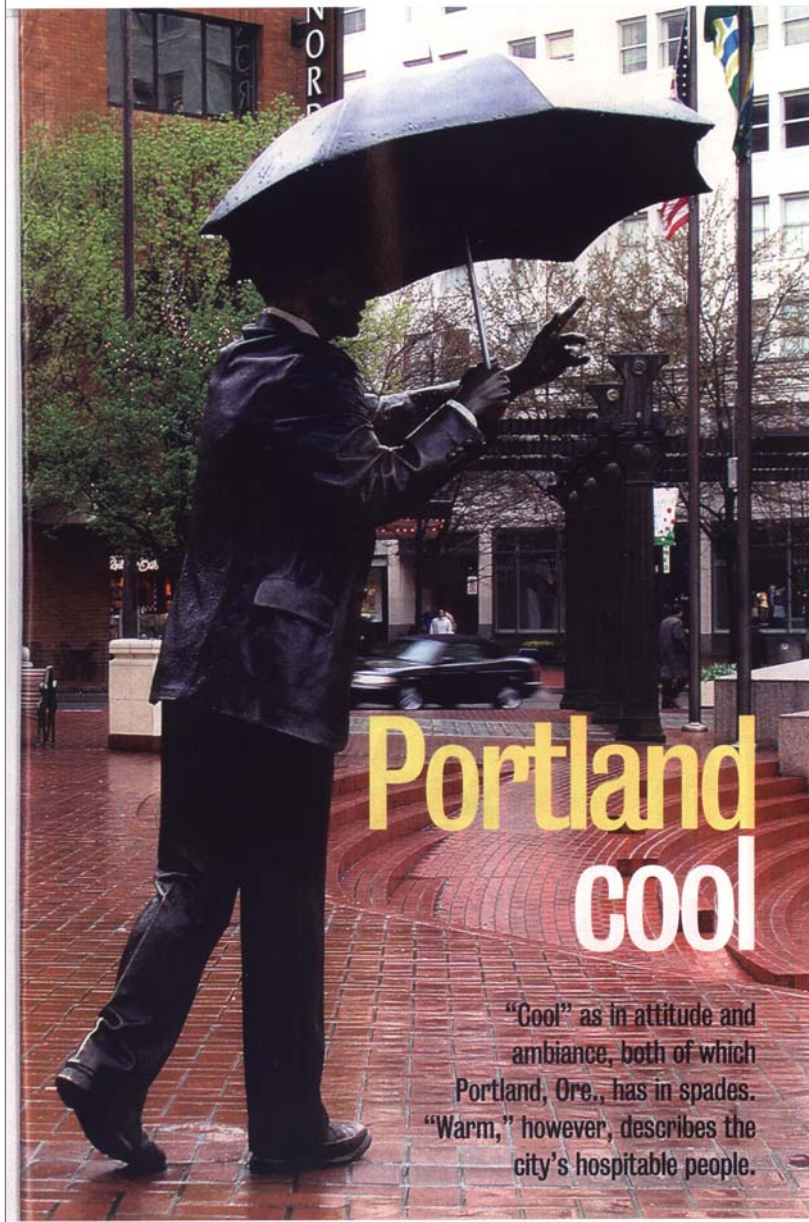


STYLE MAGAZINE,
JULY 2005



**“Cool” as in attitude and
ambiance, both of which
Portland, Ore., has in spades.
“Warm,” however, describes the
city’s hospitable people.**

[travel]

BY KATHERINE WALKER /
PHOTOS BY JOEL VAN GITTERS

We have discovered the country's coolest and warmest city.

A friendly smile and relaxed attitude come in handy when your city's slogan is "It's not easy being green" and your signature piece of public art is a statue depicting a rain-soaked businessman hoisting an umbrella and hailing a taxi. (Portlanders suggest that the statue actually is offering to share his umbrella with visitors.)

With a modest average rainfall of about 40 inches a year, it's the steady "Portland mist" that gives the city its rainy rep. Portlanders deal with it with their typical sense of humor: They tuck in their chins, clutch cups of steaming coffee and keep on walking.

For a big city, Portland's downtown is compact and filled with diverse, interesting buildings and pocket parks, giving it a European flavor. Short blocks, level terrain and a moderate climate (a typical low of 34 degrees in January and a high of 80 degrees in July) make Portland a great city for hoofing it. We chalk up miles, admiring historic residential neighborhoods, downtown art and thriving business districts where modern, tall buildings reside comfortably beside obviously cherished 19th-century landmarks.

A stroll through a waterfront park between downtown and the Willamette River gives us close-up looks at unique and picturesque bridges, some built before World War I. Portland claims the world's only telescoping double-deck vertical lift bridge and America's longest tied-arch bridge. We use a walkway for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross the Hawthorne Bridge, a lift bridge built in 1910.

The walk-and-bike paths are woven throughout and around Portland, helping the city to earn the "green" tag for its eco-friendly approach to preserva-

"Allow Me," by nationally known artist J. Seward Johnson of Princeton, N.J., has become Portland's signature public art.

tion and city planning as much as for its natural beauty. The bike paths give visitors another way to tour the city and make it safe and easy for the 5,000-plus downtown workers who commute by bicycle. Bicycling magazine named Portland the best cycling city in North America in 2001.

When our arches and calves give out, we have fun and easy choices for taking a load off. Portland's express transportation system includes the MAX light rail system, an art bus, new streetcars, vintage trolleys and the zoo train. The interconnecting system is clean, low cost, embraced by residents and visitors, and in the 330-block known as Fareless Square, it's free.

Portland attracts individualists who can be passionate about all manner of causes. A case in point: On the third day of our visit, a 20-year-old college student protesting forest cutting

paralyzes downtown traffic during the noon lunch rush by using stilts to form a human tripod in the middle of a busy intersection.

The scene quickly becomes an event. Television cameras capture Portland's finest circling the student, obviously puzzled over how to get the kid down without hurting him. A crowd of onlookers and supporters forms and earnest conversations ensue about lumber practices.

After an hour, the cops safely lower and handcuff the protestor and march him off to a squad car. The student, having made his point, is quite pleased with himself. The police, having resolved a student's prank without inflicting harm, are proud of their work. Portlanders go back to their lives, saying to one another, "Isn't it nice that it all worked out?"

Throughout our visit, Joel and I observe that while Portlanders have

strong opinions on issues, they don't seem to get uptight. We walk downtown during rush hour and note the orderly traffic flow, absence of blaring horns and the many courtesies that drivers extend to pedestrians and fellow drivers.

Our amazement turns to incredulity when we pull up at a service station and an attendant comes out to pump gas. It's a law that Oregonians vote to keep it in place, explains the smiling attendant as he washes our windshield.

At our downtown base, every member of the superb staff at Hotel Lucia goes out of his or her way to make sure Joel and I have correct directions, know where to find the best restaurants, are having a good time and always have an umbrella from the door-



The art-filled lobby of Hotel Lucia, Portland's finest boutique hotel, named by *Travel+Leisure* magazine to "The World's Best 500 Hotels."

Where to find it:

Hotel Lucia. 400 S.W. Broadway, Portland, Ore., 97205. (877) 225-1717. www.hotellucia.com.

Rex Hill Vineyards. Newberg, Ore. (800) 739-4455. www.rex-hill.com.

Portland Oregon Visitors Association. (800) 962-3700. www.portlandcvb.com.

man's stash.

Portland has lovely inns in historic houses, but we crave staying in the heart of a vibrant city. The small, stylish Hotel Lucia is perfectly located and filled with original art and Feng Shui comforts. Luxury hotel amenities include a menu of pillow options and whimsical touches such as the "Get it Now!" button on the bedside phone and a "dream card" left on my pillow at turndown.

The accommodating front desk staff points us to its connected, award-winning Typhoon! restaurant. It is, quite simply, the best Thai cuisine ever. Portland is home to a large Asian community, and Chinese, Japanese and Thai influences are seen throughout the city from restaurants to art museums and gardens.