

Intern with the Oregon Legislature

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Crystal McConnel Emerald

A stroll along the fern-laden trails of Spencer's Butte in South Eugene is popular among locals and visitors alike.



Crystal McConnel Emerald

This basket weaving and mask exhibit at the Hult Center in downtown Eugene is one of many venues in town where local artistry is proudly displayed.

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Tourism

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"There is a large segment of people who want to get into the wilderness," Inouye said.

Lane County offers a diverse landscape, including destinations for water sports, such as the McKenzie River — a flyfishing and rafting destination. Also, people come to see the Sea Lion Caves, the Oregon Sand Dunes National Recreation Area and Willamette Pass, which is open to skiers and snowboarders. Within Eugene, many tourists enjoy the various bicycle trails, which take cyclists through covered bridges, the Oak Ridge Forests and throughout the vast wine country in Lorane Valley.

Randy Dreiling of Oregon Adventures, a local company offering bike tours and information about rafting and skydiving, said most of his customers come from outside the county.

"Only about one-fourth of the mountain bikers we get are local," Dreiling said. "We get a lot of people from Seattle, and almost 80 percent of the mountain bikers come from Portland."

The Eugene Saturday Market, which has been providing arts and crafts from local vendors for 32 years, is a unique attraction that draws tourists to the city.

"People love to shop for unusual things," market spokeswoman Kim Still said. "The crowd — the whole scene — is colorful and local."

All things sold at the market are handcrafted and made in Eugene. Still said that seeing people act uninhibited is a great attraction in itself.

"A lot of tourists are brought by relatives," Still said. "People bring family members and then tell me, 'Aunt Martha is still talking about the girl with her belly painted.'"

Each year, the county gives tourism grants to organizations and businesses in Eugene that work to attract tourists and keep them in the county for several days.

The grant is funded by the "room tax," which is a tax on hotel and motel rooms in the county. This year, the program received 44 applications and was able to fully fund 14 of them and partially fund

“More and more people in the world look alike. But when you come to Eugene...people are unique again.”

Natalie Inouye
Convention and Visitors Association

eight.

"In the last three years, the number of groups asking for money has really increased," said Loralyn Osborne, Lane County marketing and volunteer coordinator. "We usually fund special events and conventions because they will draw large numbers of people and require that they eat and sleep in the city for the length of the event."

These include annual events such as the Oregon Bach Festival.

"We get people outdoors and then draw them into the restaurants, hotels and shopping," Inouye said.

The culture of the city — including the Eugene Ballet, the monthly art walk, the 5th Street Market, various restaurants and the University — create the appeal that brings people in, Inouye said.

"More and more people in the world look alike," Inouye said. "But when you come to Eugene and experience the festivals or the Saturday Market, people are unique again."