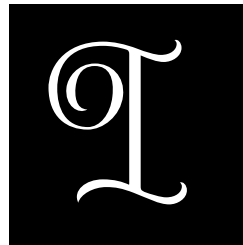


NOTES OF A FAIR VIRGIN

A writer who's never been to Fair wonders what the big deal could be



really do not understand Oregon Country Fair.

I've read the FAQ page, spoken with a handful of Fair-goers and have gotten the scoop on staying overnight. It's been several years since I've moved to Eugene and yet the mystery of Fair remains: What's the big deal?

A few times I've made the mistake of actually uttering such a question to a diehard Fair lover. I was then quickly confronted with a sense of blasphemy and deep sadness regarding my naiveté. After the initial shock, the person I've clearly offended

usually responds with, "You *have* to go — you just have to."

It sounds a bit cult-like to an outsider (think about it), but there's probably a reason for people to get so pumped about sunburns, funnel cakes and over-priced everything.

From bits of information I've gathered regarding the hoopla, Fair sounds like a low-key 'shroom trip mixed with a kid-friendly folk music festival. One can almost smell the *odeur de marijuana* lingering in the air. Yep, I can see it now: folks in costumes, face paint and a shit-ton of body odor — and some people probably are, indeed, tripping the fuck out despite the Fair's drug- and alcohol-free policy on that FAQ.

But maybe there's something magical about the essence of Oregon Country Fair — what it stands for and what it brings to the community. It does seem cool that the masses of Eugene and surrounding areas gather in some field near Veneta, simply to get weird with one another. Some people have been going since they were kids and are now sharing the experience with their own little ones (whose faces are probably caked in paint within the first hour).

Fair does seem to have a community-bonding vibe about it. If you're into human interaction, there are probably plenty of new people to meet and activities to be had. There might even be a craft circle.

And just think of the local crafts scene. Gadgets, gizmos and abstract pieces you have to stare at strictly with your head cocked to the side while saying, "Ohhhhh." I also hear the whole shebang is full of astonishing creations from gigantic to minuscule, with art in every form imaginable.

Okay, so Fair doesn't sound *that* intimidating. It sounds rad, actually. Whatever the hell is going on in that field, it seems to have grown into an integral part of good ol' Eugene culture. A tradition that, however strange, may just be a really wonderful, once-in-a-lifetime experience. — *Kelsey Anne Rankin*

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