

RIVER ROAD: Begin at McClure Lane off the riverbank bike path

By now, you've likely spent a lot of time on Eugene's scenic Ruth Bascom Riverbank System, a wonderful trip through Eugene-Springfield that offers sparkling views of the Willamette River. It's also a way to access many of the area's different neighborhoods, and if you take the McClure Lane exit, you'll end up on River Road, which has several places to eat and drink.

If you're in the neighborhood around breakfast or early lunch time, **Reality Kitchen** is worth a visit. Reality may be known to locals for its pretzels, but it also makes some of the best biscuits and gravy in town. Reality Kitchen's menu gives it enough merit, but it is worth noting that the restaurant is a nonprofit organization that runs a job skills training program that helps young adults who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities. So eating at Reality is a noble cause, and you deserve dessert for supporting the restaurant.

Can't have enough vegetarian food? **Govinda's Vegetarian Buffet** will keep the plant-based party going as long as you can fill a plate. But don't expect it to be a never-ending menu of salads. Govinda's usually has options of curries, soups and more.

With a ton of ciders on tap to choose from **Ciderlicious**, you can easily find yourself spending all day and night drinking here. And the two food trucks at the cider garden makes the drinking marathon even easier to pull off. **Easley Does It** sells fusion tacos and burgers, though its ice cream sandwiches are perfect for these July summer days, and **Braised Restaurant** has sandwiches featuring slow cooked pork or beef. Just as a reminder, if you've had too much cider, make sure you find someone to drive you back to your hotel or Airbnb — whether it's a taxi or ride share app.

Reality Kitchen, 645 River Road; RealityKitchen.org. Govinda's Vegetarian Buffet, 1030 River Road; GovindasBuffet.com. Ciderlicious and food carts, 675 River Road; find on Facebook.

Red Meat, the Other (Track) Meet

There's nothing like a big, juicy burger that drips all over the place. And Eugene-Springfield has tons of options for the carnivores among us (and most of these places also offer vegetarian alternatives).

Cornucopia is a must-visit for any Eugene newbie, and with three locations, it's not difficult to include it in your itinerary. Its burgers feature half-pound patties, and the menu has classic versions (barbecue sauce and bacon) but also more wild concoctions (coffee crusted burger patty with pepper jack and guacamole). And what's a burger without a solid side of fries? Not only have readers chosen Cornucopia for several years as Best Burger, but also Best French Fries.



Eugene's Whiteaker neighborhood has pretty much everything. And now it has a restaurant dedicated to burgers. **The Whitburger** opened a few months ago and keeps its menu simple, a sign of a restaurant that stands behind the quality of its meat. And if you're a vegetarian — or have one in your party — this is a place to bring them. Whitburger has Beyond Burgers and cheese-based alternatives.

We're not sure whether **Toxic Wings and Fries** was named after the classic song "Toxic" by Brittany Spears because the food is just as intoxicating as the song. Of course, Toxic's wings are in the name, but the burgers are the showstealer. Featuring a one-sixth pound patty, Toxic's burgers for the most part capture the beauty of minimalism. But that's not to say they don't dive into excess. One of *EW*'s favorites is the Intoxicator, which has four one-sixth pound patties, pepper jack cheese, jalapeños and Frank's RedHot pepper sauce. Now that's a burger.

Springfield's Main Street has a few great burger options — PlankTown and The Pedaler, to name a couple — but venture out a little and you'll find places that will make you wish you had a Steven Tyler-sized mouth. **Chow Gastropub**, located a block south of Main Street, is right by the Springfield EmX station. Chow plays with the burger, offering variations from the peanut butter and jelly burger to pork butt and burger. And it's the only joint in town with several burgers named after two of Oregon football's most popular quarterbacks

who now play in the NFL: the Marcus Mariota and the Justin Herbert.

Head farther east on Main Street, and you'll find **Giant Burger**, another gem of Springfield. Giant Burger's meat is locally sourced and, like Chow, it has several variations of the burger, from an open-faced chili burger to a burger with chicken tenders, bacon and ham. And if you give the restaurant two days' notice, you can participate in the five-pound burger challenge and bring home something better than a medal from the World Athletics Championships.

Visit CornucopiaEugene.com for addresses. Whitburger is at 298 Blair Boulevard; WhitBurger.com. Visit ToxicWings.com for addresses. Chow Gastropub, 471 S. A Street in Springfield; find on GrubHub. Giant Burger, 3760 Main Street in Springfield; WeltandWelt.com.

Take a Drive to Florence to See the Oregon Coast

OK, we can't resist the allure of the Oregon Coast. If you haven't seen it before, hop in the car (or take a bus, if you don't mind some walking when you get there) and drive 90 minutes to Florence, a small tourist and fishing town on Highway 101.

On your way west, stop at **Cupz** for your java. Local sculptor Jud Turner tells *EW* the folks are friendly, the coffee is good and they always have treats for his pet pigs. If you forget to caffeinate before you go, no worries. **Alpha-Bit**, the funky coffee and gift shop that was once the community outreach for the Alpha Farm intentional community, has reopened in Mapleton under a new owner. Once you hit Florence, locals tell us that **Venny's Café 101** has not only good Mexican coffee but good Mexican food.

In the quaint Old Town next to the Siuslaw River bridge, stroll through the marina to admire the boats and stop by the great used-book store Books 'n Bears.

If you have a car, drive north 12 miles to Heceta Head, where you can see a classic lighthouse, stroll on a small sandy beach or, for the reasonably fit, hike the two-mile **Hobbit Trail** from the lighthouse through rugged forest with great ocean views to a more-secluded beach. Any trip to the Oregon coast isn't complete without exploring the **dunes**, where you can sit and enjoy the silence or pretend that you're on Tatooine from *Star Wars*.

While in Old Town, you've got several eating options. Sure, it is a longstanding Oregon tradition to eat at **Mo's Restaurant**, a coastal chain, but there are other options. **Homegrown Public House and Brewery** is a gastro-pub with a large menu of unique sandwiches, hearty salads and filling fish and chips. For fancier dining, head to **Nosh Eatery**. It's near the Siuslaw River, which feeds into the ocean, and has a menu of quality food without pretense — and its brussel sprouts will convert any hater of the controversial vegetable.

Cupz, 203 State Hwy 99 N. Alpha-Bit, 10780 Hwy 126, Mapleton. Venny's Café 101, 1517 Hwy 101, Florence.

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cascadehealth.org/flavorfest

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