

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Discover Eastern Oregon — others have already

Umatilla County is no longer a secret, hidden from tourists from around the state, region and world. As we reported last week, visitors to the area increased 13 percent in 2017 from year prior, just one piece of a wider increase in tourism statewide.

That means Oregon’s advertising campaigns are working, and travelers are liking what they see when they get here. Duh. Oregon is great. And that steady increase in traffic and visibility offers an opportunity for local businesses and municipalities to capture tourist dollars, while also working hard to keep the Oregon we know and love unsullied.

According to a Travel Oregon study, Eastern Oregon saw \$383 million in direct spending from visitors in 2017, supporting 5,930 jobs and contributing \$17 million in tax revenue. Perhaps surprisingly, almost 60 percent of the tourism dollars spent in Eastern Oregon were dropped in Umatilla County — about \$165 million.

Much of that was spent in the Pendleton area, in a city that has history and tradition, and an infrastructure in place that caters to tourists. Others were spent in the farm and vineyard tours of the Milton-Freewater area, and at the gateways to our national forest lands.

To coax as many dollars out of tourist wallets, and to impress them to the best of our abilities, our economic development and tourism agencies must always think and rethink what draws people to our area and why.

There are the classics — the reasons why tourists have long visited and will continue to. These are places and events we need to protect, cherish and hold to high standards. They include:

Pendleton Round-Up

This needs no explanation. When a visitor stops in town any other time of year, you’re required to tell them: “Come back the second full week of September. You’ll love it.”

And they will. The Round-Up is as Pendleton and as Eastern Oregon as it



Courtesy of Umatilla National Forest

The Nine Mile Ridge Trail into the Blue Mountains.

gets, and should be the starting point for all travelers looking to come in contact with the culture, friendliness and fun that defines the region. It shows what Eastern Oregon is all about, and provides an interesting, unique, exceptional travel opportunity.

Wallowa Lake

The jewel in one of Oregon’s Seven Wonders, Wallowa Lake is one of the most stunning spots in the region.

For many people in Eastern Oregon who had the means, weekends on the lake in the heat of summer is part of their most-loved childhood memories.

Because nary a traveler forgets the lake — whether they travel from Hermiston or from across the ocean — a weekend in Wallowa County sticks with you. Despite the long journey it takes to get there, or perhaps because of it, Wallowa Lake is a critical tool to increasing tourism to Eastern Oregon, which benefits all the towns people pass through to get there.

Pendleton’s busy summer

Round-Up used to be the be-all, end-all of Pendleton’s tourism season. Now, barely a summer weekend

goes by without some big events. Add the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest, a massive draw that fills the Round-Up Grounds, to Bike Week and Oktoberfest just to name a few. A Fourth of July celebration returns in 2018, and there’s the always popular wiener dog races down Main Street, also home to an excellent weekly farmers market.

Add in nearby events — like concerts and powwows in Mission and motorcycle festivals in Athena and Pilot Rock — and you’ve got something for every kind of tourist. Pendleton has positioned itself to succeed in the tourism game, and will reap the financial award for doing so.

Still, today’s tourism industry is often about finding out the *next* new thing, and Umatilla County and Eastern Oregon have plenty of still-hidden gems that can knock tourist’s socks off. Here are a few ideas:

Harris Park

Just 10 miles outside Milton-Freewater, Harris Park is a county-owned hotspot for camping, hiking and biking.

There are easily accessible trails

for families and people of all ages, as well as a larger trail system that can challenge the most intrepid of hikers. Mountain bikers use the trails too, which include all kinds of Instagrammable points along the South Fork Walla Walla River, and up into the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

And for people lucky enough to call Milton-Freewater and the Walla Walla area home, it’s one of the wildest near-urban parks in the Northwest. It’s sure to impress.

Hermiston Cinco de Mayo

This annual celebration of Mexican culture has trouble finding a permanent home, but has the potential to draw from miles and miles in its new venue.

It has outgrown two previous locations and moved this year to the new EOTEC grounds, which is likely big enough to host for the foreseeable future. More than 5,000 people showed up in 2018 to celebrate, and expect that number to rise.

The Northwest’s Latino culture is growing stronger each and every year, and laying claim to this holiday offers a real opportunity for Hermiston to put a major draw on its social calendar each year.

The rural getaway

For the past century, more people have been moving to large cities. And those large cities just keep growing, making urban life crowded and stressful.

Much of Eastern Oregon is anything but. In this new world of travel, where Airbnb and other personalized services are leading the way, rural areas have lots to offer. Whether it’s a beautiful farmhouse surrounded by waving fields of wheat, a cabin to rent in Tollgate or Ukiah, a dirt patch to park the RV for a weekend, or a dusty trail to walk down with nothing in your way — those are all experiences that will become more rare. And more valuable.

As a region, we should protect these kinds of places for all their empty gorgeousness. Tourist dollars are spilled there, too.

OTHER VIEWS

Want more babies? You need less patriarchy

Last week, the National Center for Health Statistics reported that America’s birthrate reached a historic low in 2017, falling to 60.2 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age. For a population in the developed world to replace itself, the average woman needs to have around 2.1 children. In the United States, where fertility has been below replacement for about a decade, the average woman now has 1.77.

Several commentators have described the plunge as a mystery, particularly since we’re in a period of economic growth. Some on the right have, absurdly, blamed the shrinking birthrate on abortion, even though abortion rates are also as low as they’ve been since Roe v. Wade was decided. More thoughtful conservatives, like National Review’s David French, speculated that the baby bust could be a sign of the same sort of sweeping despair that has been linked to America’s decreasing life expectancy.

I have another theory. Perhaps the United States is becoming more like the rest of the industrialized world, where declining birthrates are correlated with a lack of support for working mothers.



MICHELLE GOLDBERG
Comment

Outside the United States, the pattern is pretty clear. Developed countries that prioritize gender equality — including Sweden, Norway and France — have higher fertility rates than those that don’t. The world’s lowest fertility rates are in countries that are economically developed but socially conservative,

where women have professional opportunities but must shoulder most of the burdens of domestic life. (With its progressive reputation and low birthrate, Germany might seem, on the surface, like an exception, but the country has a tradition of stigmatizing mothers who work outside the home.)

Most women seem to want both jobs and children, and when they’re forced to choose, some will forgo parenthood or have only one child. In a 2000 paper, Australian demographer Peter McDonald theorized that if women have educational and employment opportunities nearly equal to those of men, “but these opportunities are severely curtailed by having children, then, on average, women will restrict the number of children that they have to an extent which leaves fertility at a precariously low, long-term level.”

Livia Oláh, a demographer at

Stockholm University, has studied how gender equality affects choices about having children at the family level. She found that in Sweden, women were more likely to have a second child if their male partner took paternity leave with their first child, a proxy for his willingness to share the work of parenting. In Hungary, she told me, couples that shared housework equally had a higher probability of having a second kid. Women “want structures and policies that make it possible for them to combine family life — housework and child care — with career,” she said.

This correlation between feminist social policy and higher fertility is widely recognized throughout the world; as David Willetts, a former Tory minister in the United Kingdom, once put it, “feminism is the new natalism.” The link is one reason that Japan, where the fertility rate is around 1.4 children per woman, has undertaken “womenomics,” a broad — if only mildly successful — government initiative to promote gender equality.

In the past, the major exception to the rule about pro-women policies and higher fertility was the United States. The American government does next to nothing for working parents, yet fertility rates, after reaching a low of around 1.7 children per woman in 1976, rose over the next 30

years, even as Europe’s fertility fell. There were several reasons for this, including substantial levels of Hispanic immigration, a high teen birthrate and, some speculated, America’s exceptional religiosity.

Since then, however, the teen birthrate in the United States has fallen to an all-time low, Americans have become less religious, Hispanic immigration has slowed, and Hispanic fertility rates have declined. At the same time, pressures on working parents have only grown. In 2014, the Pew Research Center reported that more mothers were staying at home with their kids than at any time in the last two decades, an increase researchers ascribed in part to the rising cost of child care.

Right now, America’s fertility rate is still pretty high compared to most European countries; it’s lower than France or Sweden but roughly in line with other countries in Scandinavia. If my theory is right, though, it will keep falling unless America invests in paid family leave and subsidized, high-quality child care, while birthrates in France and Scandinavia remain stable.

Some people might wonder why we should worry about birthrates at all. Anxiety about demographic decline has a bad odor; historically it’s been a preoccupation of people panicked by changing gender roles and

the waning racial advantage of particular groups. But if a shrinking number of workers must support a growing elderly population, even our threadbare social safety net will be strained. An obvious solution is increased immigration, but declining native-born populations tend to react to large influxes of immigrants with terrifying xenophobic backlashes.

None of this, obviously, is a reason to pressure women into having more kids than they want. (Even if it weren’t immoral, it would be counterproductive, given the link, in developed countries, between higher birthrates and women’s rights.) But survey data shows that women actually desire more kids than they’re having. As Lyman Stone wrote in *The New York Times*, the “gap between the number of children that women say they want to have (2.7) and the number of children they will probably actually have (1.8) has risen to the highest level in 40 years.”

Our culture is failing to support women in creating the lives they want, and that failure threatens the future. One lesson of cratering fertility rates is that in the modern world, patriarchy is maladaptive.

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Michelle Goldberg, a New York Times op-ed columnist, covers politics, gender, religion and ideology.

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