

The Asian Reporter

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MY TURN

■ Dmae Roberts



Cultural touring

As a writer and artist, I have met intriguing people and had an opportunity to travel to out-of-the-way locales around Oregon. In this column, I thought I'd share some cultural destinations I've found that make for great road trips while experiencing the beauty, nature, and activities available in our state.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Back in high school, my English teacher took our class to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) in Ashland to watch *The Winter's Tale* and *Oedipus Rex*. Without a decent drama program at my school, that trip became my inspiration to study theatre in college. I still regularly travel to Ashland to see the very best of regional theatre. Besides the high quality productions, OSF broke ground early in the '80s by casting actors of color. For many performers, especially those of color, OSF became the brass ring, the dream, to one day perform there.

This season I'm excited to see the U.S. premiere of *Snow in Midsummer* by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig. It's an adaptation of the classical Chinese play *The Injustice to Dou Yi That Moved Heaven and Earth*, written by Guan Hanqing during the Yuan Dynasty. Known as China's Shakespeare, Hanqing started writing plays in 1260. Of more than 60 known titles, only 14 have survived. This new adaptation focuses on the impact of trauma and injustice through a ghost story about a young woman convicted of murder who curses the city just before her execution. The play runs August 2 through October 27 at OSF's Angus Bowmer Theatre.

Another play I want to see is *Manahatta* by Mary Kathryn Nagle, a 95-minute production that looks at the legacy of exploitation and the removal and wiping out of the culture of indigenous people from both New York and Oklahoma. The production is featured through October 27 at OSF's Thomas Theatre.

To learn more, visit www.osfashland.org.

Kam Wah Chung & Co. museum

In 2005, I produced a radio documentary about Ing "Doc" Hay and the Kam Wah Chung & Co. general store in the dry sagebrush hills of John Day, a city that had featured a thriving Chinatown since the 1870s. Most of the Chinese men who arrived in Eastern Oregon at the time were gold miners or railroad workers who built the western half of the Transcontinental Railroad. While other parts of the country experienced racial violence and the murders of Chinese workers, Doc Hay and Lung On, his business partner, became respected community members. An herbalist and acupuncturist, Ing Hay became the only doctor for miles around. He died in 1952, and the Kam Wah Chung building was deeded

to the city of John Day three years later so it could be turned into a museum. The Kam Wah Chung & Co. museum contains one of the most extensive collections about the history of Chinese immigrants in the American West.

Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, Art Center East, Coos History Museum

As a facilitator addressing the topic of mixed-race and interracial families for the "Conversation Project," a series presented by Oregon Humanities, I have discovered three beautiful arts and history centers that have hosted talks. In addition to being great spaces to learn more about Oregon, they also have wonderful gift shops for collecting road trip mementos.

Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute

Besides curating national touring exhibits, the picturesque Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, located next to the Wildhorse Resort & Casino on a stretch of pastoral land in Pendleton, has an immersive permanent exhibit and "Living Culture Village" that highlight the more than 10,000-year history and traditions of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla tribes. Visitors can also watch *Spilyáy, the Magical Coyote of Legend-Time* in the institute's Coyote Theater. To learn more, visit www.tamastslíkt.org.

Art Center East

La Grande's historic Art Center East building is about an hour drive from Pendleton and was founded in 1977 to bring art programs to rural schools and communities in 10 Oregon counties: Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, and Wheeler. It hosts many rotating art exhibits and community events. Centers such as Art Center East are vital to providing cultural opportunities, workshops, and classes in small towns without much access to the arts. To learn more, visit www.artcentereast.org.

Coos History Museum

At the Coos History Museum, which is located at a bucolic waterfront location in Coos Bay, one can explore mining, logging, lumbering, and maritime history in the Coos region and south coastal Oregon. This beautiful community and arts gathering place hosts First Tuesday talks, lectures, cultural and heritage events, and other activities. If you happen to be in town on the second Sunday of the month, admission to the museum is free. To learn more, visit www.cooshistory.org.

These destinations are just a sampling of places to visit when driving around Oregon. While taking in the lovely landscapes, stop by and experience some of these enlivening arts and heritage opportunities.