

SignalViewpoints



SEASIDE VISITORS BUREAU

A train emblazoned with the Seaside logo makes its way through Portland.

Seaside flies under the radar no more

Barely had the ink dried on my column last month about out-of-town news alerts and digital traffic-getting listicles when international honors fell to the city of Seaside — and rather unexpectedly at that.

The lists are “Best Summer Vacations” and “Best Summer Vacations in the U.S.”

U.S. News Travel considered cities, parks, beaches and small towns around the world and in this country, measuring “affordability, weather and variety of things to do plus traveler and expert sentiment.”

According to the rankings, Paris, France is the world’s No. 1 summer vacation list, followed by Florence, Italy; Boston, Massachusetts; and Dublin, Ireland. Seaside, Oregon, is fifth. I mean, we’re talking about Paris, the City of Lights, and Seaside, the city of surreys and fried clams.

In the rankings limited to “Best Summer Vacations in the USA,” Seaside is even higher, second behind Boston and ahead of Steamboat Springs, Colorado; Nashville, Tennessee; and yes, Portland, Oregon.

In ranking 700 destination cities, parks, beaches and small towns, U.S. News Travel measured affordability, weather and variety of things to do plus traveler and “expert sentiment.”

Seaside is described as a relaxing resort town and “beloved West Coast getaway for families.”

Popular activities include biking, hiking and canoeing “and relaxing on the wide, sandy beach,” they write. “Seaside also boasts a tasty local food scene that spotlights seafood, street food and more.”

Selling Seaside

The recognition was announced by Jon Rahl, Seaside’s director of

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



tourism marketing, at the April 23 City Council meeting.

“Quite the pretty cool company that Seaside got,” Rahl said.

City Councilor Steve Wright added: “I think we can all agree this is a pretty big deal.”

Much of the reason why Seaside is on a list with the world’s finest cities is attributable to Rahl himself.

Rahl — recently named assistant city manager — has done a world-class job of focusing the city’s tourism resources and projecting them to a wider market via print, television and social media.

All you have to do is look at the brightly lettered Portland light-rail trains seductively whispering “Seaside,” with dazzling pastel imagery of seahorses, carousels, bikes and beaches. They rumble through the crowded city broadcasting to Portland’s visitors — and Portland’s visitors are worldwide.

On the ground, creative plays like the large orange Adirondack chair emblazoned with the word “Seaside” and strategically located in front of the Visitors Bureau invites travelers to sit right down and stay awhile.

“That continues to reap rewards for us,” Rahl said.

It’s not the biggest Adirondack chair in the world — not even the biggest in Oregon, Seaside Civic and Convention Center General Manager Russ Vandenberg added. But it’s plenty big and visitors love to take selfies on it.

Rahl attributed the city’s success to infrastructure development like the city’s convention center



STEAMBOAT.COM

Seaside edged out Steamboat Springs, Colorado, as a summer vacation destination.

expansion and renovation, along with the innovation and enterprise of hoteliers rehabbing properties and the influx of new restaurants, “which makes our destination that much more popular.”

The Visitors Bureau’s social media postings, Facebook videos and television ads are so emotionally resonant they are satisfying even after the fifth or sixth viewing. Their themes hit all the buttons: family, pets, scenic beauty and the great outdoors.

Rahl and his team kicked off the year by winning recognition from the Oregon Governor’s Conference on Tourism for Best Visitors Bureau, an award delivered by peers for marketing throughout the state.

Thumbs up

Editor Gwendolyn Shearman of U.S. News Travel said her team initiates the process by selecting destinations from throughout the world.

They score each destination in 11 different categories, Shearman wrote in an email.

For rankings such as the Best

Summer Vacations and the Best Summer Vacations in the USA, editors also factor in the seasonality of a destination and when the best time to visit is for the everyday traveler.

Rankings are based on user ratings and editors’ scores, from zero to five — “phenomenal.”

Editors apply these ratings to categories including sights, culture, people, food, shopping, family, nightlife, adventure, romance and accessibility.

Users vote “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” whether a destination belongs on the list.

Destinations’ overall scores are a weighted average of the individual editors’ averages, based on which factors users said were most important to them.

This is the first year Seaside has been included in the scoring, Shearman said, receiving high marks in the sights, family, food and accessibility categories.

“Seaside stood out this year because of its appeal to both beach-going families and outdoor enthusiasts. Plus, its location in the Pacific Northwest is a great alternative to more well-known (and more

Best summer vacations...

... in the USA

1. Boston
2. Seaside, Oregon
3. Steamboat Springs, Colorado
4. Nashville, Tennessee
5. Portland, Oregon

... in the world

1. Paris
2. Florence, Italy
3. Boston
4. Dublin
5. Seaside, Oregon

crowded) beach destinations further south.”

“What does it all really mean? “We can’t really predict or offer insight on how the destination’s popularity may increase as a result of the list, but we always welcome destinations promoting their rankings on social media and the like,” Shearman said.

In 2018, she said, editors have found readers are particularly interested in visiting more under-the-radar vacation spots and smaller towns in the United States. “More of those types of vacations appearing on many of our ranking lists,” she added.

In Seaside, all you have to do is take a leisurely stroll along the Prom on a clear 65-degree morning in May to place Seaside high on your own list. We’re proud to have our city named among the finest in the world.

Go early if you want the apple turnovers

I spent the morning in Gearhart the other day. It was a Monday morning and the Pacific Way Bakery and Café was open; they’re closed Tuesday and Wednesday. I got there early enough to snag an apple turnover. If you haven’t had one of their apple turnovers, you’re missing out. In a couple of weeks when school’s out and throngs of summer vacationers start rolling in, you’ll have to get to the bakery no later than 10 a.m. if you expect to find apple turnovers, lemon tarts, chocolate croissants, maple sugar rolls, or cherry almond scones in the case, that’s how popular the pastry is. When what’s in the case sells out, it sells out. So get there early if you have your heart set on something they make there.

After my Americano and pastry break, I took a walk. I had the dog with me. We walked on Ocean Avenue and parts of south Marion. For the two years we rented a house in Gearhart I walked everywhere. I walked up and down Cottage Avenue. I walked every street. I walked in the dunes and on the pretty, narrow, root and rock rutted foot trail known as the Ridge Path.

Walking in Gearhart is a treat if you haven’t done it in awhile. True, I have to get in my car now to get

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



there, but it’s worth the gas. This time of year is especially pretty as the rain has mostly stopped and it’s warmer and people have had a chance to get some work done in their yards. I noticed on this walk how many homes have been recently re-shingled and freshened up.

There’s a building boom in Gearhart: every where I looked, I saw new homes, renovations, new or rebuilt porches, new stairs, new windows, pretty additions. I wonder if the recent ruling on short-term vacation rentals has spurred a sense of pride in homeownership.

When I was living in Gearhart, I thought it humorous when long-time, full-time residents complained about the summer crowds and how there was no parking spaces available in downtown Gearhart and how annoying to have a dozen more people walking around town. The summer people come from Portland and Seattle mostly. Sometimes they come from very far away. Some of these summer people own property



EVE MARX

Beach path in Gearhart. New rules define how vegetation can be cut or removed.

in Gearhart they visit a few times a year. More often, they rent a house for a week or a weekend, or stay at the Gearhart Ocean Inn or Gearhart By the Sea.

The beach is pristine in Gearhart. And empty. Save for July and August, besides the terns and the

gulls, you’re very likely to be the only one. There’s no discernible leash law in Gearhart so people bring their dogs. In the peak months of summer when it stays light until 10 p.m., and people are out riding bikes and taking sundown strolls, it can get a bit crazy, especially if you had your heart set on peace and quiet and the dream of a stellar beach to yourself and the elk.

Should you be so lucky to be a coast native, now’s the time of year to appreciate the tiny jewel that is Gearhart. Right up until 4th of July weekend, Gearhart is quiet. It’s a great opportunity to appreciate the empty beaches, walk the quiet streets, peruse the downtown. There are some really darling shops. Besides McMenamin’s, which has a full bar, there are several dining options. Try the clam chowder or the chili at Gearhart Crossing, the fresh Dough Dough scones and Sleepy Monk Coffee at By The Way. There’s a new seasonal lunch and dinner menu at the Pacific Way Bakery and Café and the chef at the Sweet Shop has even devised a keto-friendly menu, which is a great way to jumpstart your beach body diet.

Best of all, the only line you’re likely to wait on is the one in the post office.

MEETINGS

MONDAY, May 14

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, May 15

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, 5:15 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A., Seaside.

Seaside School District Board of Directors, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin, Seaside.

Seaside Planning Commission, work session, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, May 16

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY, May 17

Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, May 22

Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

TUESDAY, June 5

Community and Senior Center Commission, 10:30 a.m., 1225 Avenue A., Seaside.



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