

Travel Oregon Editorial Principles and Style Guide

OUR EDITORIAL MISSION

“To be the trusted source for Oregon trip inspiration and information.

We tell Oregon’s story to inspire visitors and Oregonians

to visit every corner of the state in order to find happiness.”

HOW WE DO THIS

To support that mission, we publish content designed to ignite a traveler’s desire to experience our state. Our editorial lineup is designed to **inspire, educate, and activate travelers** on the range of places and people to experience in Oregon.

Cultivating trust however means we can’t just inspire through photography and narratives; we also must provide all the practical information to complete the journey, including things to see and do, places to stay, recommendations from locals and travel alerts and transportation.

EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

Access to trustworthy information is foundational to the work we do to help visitors and locals explore Oregon.

The following principles guide the editorial content created by Travel Oregon that appears in all formats (print, digital, audio and video) across Travel Oregon’s ecosystem, in the interest of transparency for our audiences¹.

Our Biases: Our stories aim to support the agency’s vision of “creating a better life for all Oregonians through strong, sustainable local communities that welcome a diversity of travelers.” Our journalism and editorial decisions are driven by the values and priorities identified in our [strategic plan](#), seasonal travel trends and serves the best interests of Oregon’s broader tourism industry including partner agencies, DMOs and tourism businesses.

¹ These principles are inspired by the [Society for Professional Journalists Code of Ethics](#) and [Online News Association Ethics Code](#).

Advertising: We accept display advertising (banners) that appears next to our editorial content along with sponsored content (editorial influenced by advertising). Sponsored content will always be clearly labeled and disclosed as “paid advertisements.” External advertisers do not participate in our editorial process and weekly story selection meetings under any circumstances.

Staff and Contributors: 70% of our editorial content is produced by Travel Oregon in partnership with a third-party custom publishing partner. Our commissioned writers and freelancers live and play in Oregon. We will disclose when our writers are personally involved in the issues we cover. We also appreciate that there are many amazing storytellers in Oregon and allow passionate locals to share their stories through a guest contributor program. (30% of annual content is through guest contributors.)

Diversity: We are committed to growing coverage and representation of age, women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities. We seek out journalists and sources with diverse backgrounds and perspectives to tell stories about their communities.

Accountability: We seek to minimize harm in our reporting. We follow publishing industry standards for basic facts and attribution. We strive to create and report factual and accurate information for our audiences. We strive to correct factual errors quickly, completely and visibly.

GUEST AUTHORS

Structure

- **Travel motivation:** Readers relate to your journey when they understand why you’re taking it. This adds tension, mystery, intrigue. It’s one of the key conventions of travelogue as a literary genre.
- **Clear “why this, why now” hook:** Your story should transport readers to a destination in Oregon *now*. What’s relevant about your story? Why does this story matter? Why are you writing about this topic right now?
- **Diversity in subject and voice:** We want to avoid painting a homogeneous picture of Oregonians by celebrating the diversity of the state’s peoples, cultures and histories. Everyone experiences destinations differently — how can you help tell the Oregon story in a new way or from a new perspective?
- **Compelling characters:** Half of what makes Oregon a dynamic place to travel is the people we meet along the way. So, whether you’re profiling an urban beekeeper or writing a travelogue about Eastern Oregon, bring your stories to life through vivid characterization.

Trip Ideas

In general, we look for trip ideas that fit one of these categories:

1. **News.** Short, newsy stories that describe something new and/or timely.
Example:
<http://traveloregon.com/trip-ideas/oregon-stories/stargaze-at-worthy-brewings-hopservatory/>
Suggested word count: 600-800
Photos: 3 minimum
2. **Oregon Stories.** These first-person inspirational narratives describe a certain place, person or event in Oregon. They can be photo-driven or focus more on telling the story through words.
Example:
<http://traveloregon.com/trip-ideas/oregon-stories/finding-the-gorges-hidden-waterfalls/>
Suggested word count: 600-800
Photos: 3 minimum
3. **Itineraries and Features.** These longer, feature-style stories go in-depth into one particular topic. Itineraries can focus on a specific trip, outlining stops along the way and include important information to help plan a similar trip. Features evoke a strong connection to Oregon by digging further into a theme, person or experience that highlights what makes Oregon, Oregon.
Examples:
<http://traveloregon.com/trip-ideas/itineraries/cowboy-camp/>
<http://traveloregon.com/trip-ideas/oregon-stories/the-humble-story-of-oregon-wine/>
Suggested word count: 1000-1200
Photos: 5 minimum

Asset Delivery

- Story copy, suggested title and high-resolution images
- Author headshot
- Author bio (1-3 sentences)

TRAVEL OREGON BRAND STYLE

Voice

The Oregon voice is like that of a wise, relatable aunt. She's proud of her home and loves to show it off, but she's not desperate to convince you how great it is. She lays out the facts and

lets you decide for yourself. But she might occasionally pepper these facts with a unique insight, colorful turn of phrase or light sense of humor.

- **HONEST**
Tone should be more conversational than a typical travel brochure. Say it out loud — does it sound like something you would say to a friend? If not, try again.
- **ABUNDANT**
No one has a monopoly on any part of Oregon, so we welcome multiple perspectives on a given region or topic.
- **IMAGINATIVE**
Ignite the audience's imagination and curiosity through bold and entertaining storytelling. Do not equivocate.

Tone

The tone should reflect our three brand pillars and is **LIGHTHEARTED**, **WELCOMING** and **PROUD**. How we say things tells as much about us as what we say. Here are some helpful tips to make sure your tone is right,

- Use the active voice
- Less is more. If it can be said in five words, don't use 10.
- As a general rule, avoid puns.
- Use exclamation points sparingly, if at all. There are better ways to express enthusiasm.
- Write as if you're talking to a friend. Be smart, humble, funny and matter-of-fact.
- Avoid bragging, overly flowery and over-the-top language.

Example: *Thousands of miles of roads wind and weave through Oregon. When you drive or pedal for a little while, you'll witness the landscape transform from valleys to snow-capped peaks and from craggy coastline to high desert. Along the way, you'll meet the people who make Oregon, well, Oregon — legions of crafty makers, Native American tribes, Shakespeare actors, cowboys on the range, and those jeans-and-T-shirts folk warming seats for you at the local brewpub. See? You fit in already.*

One quick word before you head out: Wherever you go, travel like an Oregonian. Take the pace slow, lay off the horn, leave the parks and trails better than you found them, and say a friendly word to everybody you meet. We've got a feeling you'll like it here.

DO: • Be concise • Use plain English. Imagine you are speaking to a friend. • Describe in specifics (especially with locations) • Share an opinion or idea • Ask a question • Show emotion • Use active verbs • Grab people's attention with unexpected associations • Give people an opportunity to respond, share and contribute	DON'T: • Use overly flowery language • Use idioms • Use puns • Use clichés • Use marketing jargon • Use exclamation points (for the most part) • Use criticism and negativity • Use highly sensitive or offensive topics (religion, politics)
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Standard style

Associated Press Stylebook and Merriam Webster's Dictionary.

Headlines and deks

- **Seasonal features.** Headlines can be short and playful and do not need to be full sentences. Deks should be longer and more descriptive.
- **News stories.** Headlines should be short and snappy. Use complete sentences or phrases. (i.e. Gear up for Biking, Serving up Summer, Summer Brews and News) Deks are not recommended since blog posts should be shorter, more concise and don't merit a long, explanatory subhead.
- Travel Oregon style is to capitalize all words except for small words like a, an, of, the.

Subheads

Subheads are recommended for use in longer stories, like Seasonal Features, to break up longer copy and guide the reader.

Photo captions

- Captions should be informative and accurate. What are we looking at? Where was the photo taken? While they can be playful, they should not sacrifice information for the sake of whimsy.
- Photo captions should be punctuated correctly. Put a period after a complete sentence.
Ex: Shorts Sands Beach in Oswald West State Park is a great spot for newbie surfers.
- Use complete sentences where information is imperative, as in photo essays and slideshows.

- If needed, put photo credit in parentheses after the caption. **Ex:** Shorts Sands Beach in Oswald West State Park is a great spot for newbie surfers. (Photo credit: Justin Bailie)

Specific style notes:

- Wild and Scenic is always capitalized when referring to the national designation of a river.
- Powwow (one word)
- Oregon State Parks is our official source for state park names (e.g. Devils Punchbowl)
- Do not capitalize wine varietals unless it was named after a specific place. **Ex:** pinot noir, chardonnay, Chianti, Chablis
- Fly fishing (noun)
- chinook salmon (lowercase)
- Farmers Markets (no apostrophe)
- Avoid ampersands unless used in the formal title of a business.
- Italics within the body of a story are best avoided unless using uncommon words from a foreign language (typically on first reference) or to add conversational emphasis (as in direct quotations).
- When seeking to clarify something in direct quotation, any changes should be bracketed — not parenthesis.

Travel Oregon-specific style

- Capitalize references to Oregon regions. **Ex:** Eastern Oregon, the Coast.
 - Use only when referring to the formal name of the region. **Incorrect:** The Oregon Coastline
- stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) on first reference, SUP on subsequent references
- When referring to “wine country” broadly speaking across Oregon, use lowercase. Use Oregon Wine Country (capitalized) to refer to the official brand name of the Willamette Valley Visitors Association.
- Use The 7 Wonders of Oregon on first reference. Oregon’s 7 Wonders OK on subsequent references.

Words and phrases to avoid

- “Be” verbs can often be replaced with more compelling and specific verbs.
- “The most beautiful/amazing/scenic/delicious/[anything]” is subjective and often betrays limited travel experience. Best to use more specific descriptive phrases.
- “Nestled” — virtually any of its synonyms is better given the term’s overuse.
- Sparingly use the word “gem,” and mostly when referring to a *literal* gem. Oh, and lose “hidden” altogether — if it truly were, you wouldn’t be writing about it.

- “Quaint” — use a more descriptive adjective to describe a place.
- “Boast” sounds braggadocious. It’s best to use the simpler “have” or “has.”
- “Friendly locals” doesn’t really mean anything if every town in the world has friendly locals.
- “Breathtaking” — instead, try explaining how specifically something might take your breath away.
- “There’s something for everyone” — instead, give specific examples of places or experiences that might appeal to different types of travelers.

Social media-specific style notes

- Keep copy and captions short and to-the-point.
- Consider the audience when writing copy. Promoted posts/ads will reach a broader audience of fans and non-fans who may or may not be familiar with Oregon. Organic posts are mainly for current fans who are typically very knowledgeable about the state.
- Use emojis where appropriate for the platform (ex: Instagram), but limit use to one or two maximum and make sure they are directly related to the photo and copy.
- Use hashtags sparingly and when appropriate to the platform (ex: Twitter, Instagram). Regional hashtags take priority; additional hashtags on Instagram that help with search/discovery can be added in the comments section. Our brand hashtag (#traveloregon) is not used on our own posts, but is priority for anyone sharing Travel Oregon content on their own accounts (brands, influencers, etc.).
- Don’t use exclamation points unless necessary to convey tone.
- When replying directly to consumers, being helpful is more important than being witty.