

Weekender


MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR WEEKEND

Capital Charm

Olympia isn't just another stop on I-5

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Olympia offers a cute downtown, great food and, yes, even a waterfront.

A FEW MONTHS AGO my girlfriend went to Washington's state capital for a work conference. I was conveniently free and, having never been to Olympia, took advantage of the room she got at the Doubletree. I would meet her there and explore during the day while she was occupied with business.

I booked a train from Portland. While the route mostly parallels the interstate, it pulls away at opportune times into far more bucolic settings than I-5 provides. After a journey that skirted a wildlife refuge, paralleled the mighty Columbia River and visited open meadows punctuated by views of Cascade volcanoes, the train arrived at the Centennial Station about 10 miles from downtown Olympia. I hopped on the 94 bus and in short order was downtown at Dillinger's Cocktails & Kitchen to rendezvous with the lady for cocktails.

The Prohibition-themed bar is right at home in one of downtown's many historic buildings. One drink turned into three as cocktail hour morphed into

dinner. The roasted duck with herbed polenta was a fitting end to a wonderful travel day and a harbinger of good things to come. The short walk to our hotel was a welcomed one, and sleep was immediate and sound.

The next morning I took a leisurely stroll to the 222 Market for breakfast. This conglomeration of all things artisanal is a must see. There's a bakery, creperie, broth bar, oyster bar, distillery, gelato shop and more.

After getting some caffeine to go from the Batdorf & Bronson Coffeehouse, I walked up and down Capitol Way, Olympia's main drag. It was utterly charming. I wandered through an already vibrant stretch of town that appeared to have much more on the horizon. Beaming with discovery, I retrieved our car from the hotel and drove southwest of town to inspect the Mima Mounds Natural Preserve.

The collection of oddly perfect, dome-shaped mounds cover roughly 640 acres of Puget

**EAT**

222 Market
222market.com

Iron Rabbit
ironrabbit.net

Three Magnets Brewing
threemagnetsbrewing.com

Dillinger's Cocktails & Kitchen
dillingerscocktailsandkitchen.com

STAY

Doubletree by Hilton
doubletree3.hilton.com

Swantown Inn & Spa
swantowninn.com

PLAY

Mima Mounds
dnr.wa.gov/MimaMounds


Hands on Children's Museum
hocm.org

Tumwater Falls Park
olytumfoundation.org/what-we-do/
tumwater-falls-park



Ingrid Barrentine

prairie grassland. As large as 8 feet tall and 30 feet wide, the mounds are still a bit of a mystery. Theories range from gophers and earthquakes to wind-blown sediments and even extraterrestrial activity. Regardless of origin, it is a hauntingly beautiful landscape easily explored via a paved, serpentine path.

That evening my girlfriend and I enjoyed some remarkable, top-tier beer from Three Magnets Brewing and a thematically perfect dinner at the upscale-casual Iron Rabbit before heading home the next morning. It's amazing the things you can overlook—so many times I've zoomed by Olympia heading to or coming back from somewhere else. Not anymore. It's a burgeoning destination with far more to explore than a weekend can afford. It's a good thing my girlfriend's conference takes place twice a year. 



Iron Rabbit Restaurant & Bar

FROM TOP Three Magnets Brewing owner Nate Reilly pours a beer at the Olympia brewery. The polenta portobello tower at Iron Rabbit Restaurant & Bar.