





Living for  
the weekend



# Much Ado About ASHLAND

—AND THERE IS SO VERY MUCH TO DO! OLD WILL MIGHT, IN FACT, HAVE THOUGHT NOTHING OF TAKING THE WORDS "AS MERRY AS THE DAY IS LONG" FROM HIS PLAY TO DESCRIBE THE PLACE THAT PAYS ANNUAL TRIBUTE TO HIS WORK.

In Ashland, all streets lead to the plaza. Along the way are galleries, boutiques, bookstores and welcoming places to have a coffee or a glass of wine and discuss the play you saw last night.

**W**illiam Shakespeare would have loved the town. His name, his face, his words are emblazoned on T-shirts, mugs, children's toys, trinkets for the tree, books for the coffee table—even on the ski slopes at Mount Ashland's ski area (there is a Romeo and a Juliet trail). Shakespeare is Ashland, the very reason thousands troop into the town to see his works come alive.

BY LYNN RUTH  
MILLER AND  
JADE WESSON

The place has a Bard of Avon aura, a summertime Stratford-on-Avon appeal. Indeed, it is the kind of place people discover on their way to somewhere else, and then cannot wait to return.

"You would be amazed how many people stop here for dinner on their way to Portland, sell their house and move here to live," says Heidi Grossman, who did that

very thing—before opening her Living Gallery right off the main drag, where she showcases painters, sculptors and glass artisans. "[Ashland] has unique magical goodness to it," she says.

A sense of neighborliness permeates the town. You feel it along Main Street, then when you wander down a side alley to Shakespeare and Company, a used bookstore filled with collectibles and books at prices so low, you don't need to resist. The charm only increases in the Railroad District, with its galleries, artist studios and specialty restaurants—and at the Ashland Food Co-op, where you might find yourself drinking a yogurt smoothie or eating a sprout sandwich alongside members of the cast of last night's play.

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The city and its festival have come a long way since an enthusiastic young teacher proposed a "festival" of two plays, to be held in conjunction with Ashland's 1935 Fourth of July celebration. The city advanced him a sum "not to exceed \$400," and on July 2 of that year, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival was officially born with a production of *Twelfth Night*. The city leaders insisted daytime boxing matches be held to offset the cost of the festival. The boxing lost money. The festival absorbed the losses. In September 2001, the 10 millionth ticket holder was welcomed. In 2003, *Time* magazine named the OSF one of America's top five regional theaters. It is now into its 76th year—and growing.

**Pleasure and action make  
the hours seem short.**

—*Othello*

**“Y**ou can go to the **Standing Stone Brewing Company** on a Saturday night and get the best food and beer I've ever had sitting right next to the star of the play you just applauded 20 minutes before,” says Ashland local Niki Potter. “You can't beat the **A Street Marketplace** for weekend rock and blues, or the **Wild Goose Café** for just about everything—karaoke, comedy open mikes and really great food.”

At **Alex's Restaurant and Bar** at 35 Main, you can sit by the fireside, mull over a glass of wine and contemplate, well into the night, the production you just saw. At **Thai Pepper**, you can eat in style on the patio that is literally in the creek bed. Hungry but don't want to take time for breakfast? Stop at the **Village Bakery**, or **The Apple Cellar**, for fresh-baked pastries. If omelets are your thing, **Munchies** on the plaza has them in every variety all day long. What about a gooey, hot fudge sundae like they served in the 1920s? Head for **Lithia Fountain & Grill**, where they also serve up comedy Monday nights. continued >



Things get busy at the Standing Stone Brewing Company—one of many popular eateries.

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SOMERSVILLE  
TOWNE CENTER



## East County Idol

The Antioch Music Foundation is holding auditions for the next East County Idol at Somerville Towne Center on the following dates:

Saturday, March 25

Saturday, April 1

Saturday, April 8

11:00am to 3:00pm

Applications & details available at Guest Services next to Macy's.

[www.SomervilleTowneCenter.com](http://www.SomervilleTowneCenter.com)

## Living for the weekend

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A treat is to stroll the neighborhoods, delighting in the numerous framed houses with their porches and pretty gardens.

Meg Sprouse came to Ashland from Hawaii 11 years ago and could not bring herself to leave. "It's such a sweet place," she says. "There is the real aloha spirit of love and kindness here." Serendipity led her to **Paddington Station**, where, from behind a counter in the housewares department, she loads customers with Oregon jam, cookies and chocolates, or points them to the eclectic emporium's clever refrigerator magnet selection.

Ashland abounds in unique places to browse and shop. **Tree House Books** features good gifts for children and teachers. **Village Shoes** stocks those soft, marvelous Italian leathers no one carries any more. For fabric and quilting materials, there is **Quiltz**. The **Web-Sters**, at 11 N. Main, has shaggy wools, brilliant colored fabric art and racks and racks of sweaters and capes too lovely to wear.

**Red Threads** has fashions that flatter every figure. The people who help you by day become fashion designers, dancers, actresses and writers after five, all waiting to be discovered. Every weekend, the **Lithia Artisans Market** is filled with strange, wonderful creations, bustling with talk, alive with music. Discover jewelry for a song, scarves of every color, watercolors for the wall, dolls and figurines to buy and remember.

**Bloomsbury Books** is a bookstore out of the past that features hard-to-find books, newspapers and magazines. There is a coffee shop upstairs to sit, relax and read what you purchased. It stays open late so theatergoers can talk about the play they saw over coffee and a pastry.

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## Living for the weekend

Ashland —see calendar from page 46

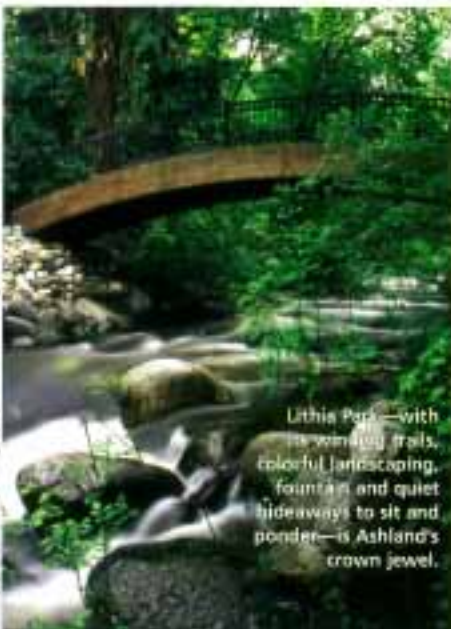
The **Hanson Howard Gallery** has been a landmark for art lovers for 27 years. Judi Howard runs this artist heaven and her experience shows in her professional displays of truly affordable art. "We always try to include a sense of whimsy in our collection," she said. "But that doesn't mean we don't feature serious art."

### Merrily, merrily shall I live now, Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

—*The Tempest*

May there be a pleasure greater than to walk these shaded streets, lined with framed houses, with large front porches and manicured gardens always in bloom? Ashland is indeed a storybook land dotted with corner drinking fountains and quaint little benches where you can rest and contemplate "the madness of life and the method in it."

The crown jewel of Ashland, at the hub of downtown, is 93-acre **Lithia Park** with its winding trails, picnic area, colorful landscaping, fountain and quiet hideaways to sit and ponder. The park follows **Ashland Creek** through undeveloped woodlands and features a Japanese garden, two duck ponds, a formal rose garden and groves of sycamore trees. When Ashland began in the 1800s, there was a water-powered sawmill and a flour mill standing on the banks of Ashland Creek. The mill occupied what is now the entrance to Lithia Park. The plaza, where today everyone gathers to drink the hot spring water and meet their friends, was once a popular place for settlers to hitch their horses, trade wheat for flour or purchase lumber.



Lithia Park—with its winding trails, colorful landscaping, fountain and quiet hideaways to sit and ponder—is Ashland's crown jewel.



Photo by L. Charles Erickson

The festival's Elizabethan Stage is one of three venues that each year showcase some of the best theater available. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Cyrano de Bergerac* will open on this stage in June.

### "All the world's a stage..."

—*As You Like It*

They call it a **Shakespeare** festival but Shakespeare's works are less than one-third of the repertoire offered each year between February and October. Instead, it is the spirit of the bard that guides the selection, performance and ambience of productions that never fail to thrill the most discriminating of audiences.

The festival's mission is to use Shakespeare as inspiration to create fresh and bold interpretations of classic and contemporary plays, shaped by the diversity of our American culture. The 2006 season reflects this goal. It opened February 24 with *The Winter's Tale*, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *UP*, a new play by Bridget Carpenter. The Elizabethan Stage opens June 16 through 18 with *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The season rounds out with Inge's *Bus Stop*, Shakespeare's *King John* and David Edgar's adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. ♡



By newman photography • newmanimages.com

The refurbished Ashland Springs Hotel, formerly the Mark Anthony—Ashland's only high-rise—is known for its Sunday afternoon tea and day spa.

### This is the short and the long of it.

—*The Merry Wives of Windsor*

To plan your visit, book shows, choose from a veritable anthology of accommodations and learn more about the attractions of Ashland, go to the festival web site, [www.osfashland.org](http://www.osfashland.org).

The **Timbers** is a motel so pet-friendly, it includes a little bed, water and treats for dogs at no extra charge ([www.ashlandtimberslodging.com](http://www.ashlandtimberslodging.com)).

The place to stay for luxury is the refurbished Mark Anthony Hotel, now called **Ashland Springs Hotel** ([www.ashlandspringshotel.com](http://www.ashlandspringshotel.com)). It is the town's only high-rise, with a day spa, the lush Larks-Home Kitchen **Cuisine** and posh Sunday afternoon teas.

For **cabaret** in Ashland, see [www.oregoncabaret.com](http://www.oregoncabaret.com)

For **Rogue Valley** wine tours, see [www.ashlandwinetours.com](http://www.ashlandwinetours.com)

**A Taste of Ashland** on April 29 and 30 is the big wine and food event of the year. Around 15 of the city's best art galleries pair with regional restaurants and wineries, so you can view art while nibbling and imbibing. Pick up a walking map to lead you through the experience, [www.atasteofashland.com](http://www.atasteofashland.com)

The fifth annual **Ashland Independent Film Festival** runs from April 6 to 10, [www.ashlandfilm.org](http://www.ashlandfilm.org)