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[Photos by John Gottberg Anderson / For The Bulletin](#)

A rainbow crowns the vineyards of the King Estate Winery, 20 miles southwest of Eugene.

EUGENE: Land of wine, and, of course, the Oregon Ducks

By [John Gottberg Anderson](#) / *For The Bulletin*

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EUGENE -

McArthur Court, the venerable basketball arena on the University of Oregon campus, is like an abyss. Four stories tall from floor to rafters, its 9,000 seats are packed into every available nook and cranny. Seats in the third balcony are of nosebleed quality. The noise is deafening. Long before gametime, the songs and stomps, claps and shouts of rabid fans in yellow UO shirts are echoing from one end of the arena to the other and back again. They call it "The Pit," and they call it that with affection. It's no wonder visiting teams hate to play here.

EXPENSES (3 nights)

- * Gas (250 miles @ \$2.50/gallon) - **\$25**
- * Lodging, C'est la Vie Inn - **\$330**
- * Oregon-Arizona State basketball ticket - **\$24**
- * Dinner, Beppe & Gianni's - **\$29.70**
- * Lunch, Fifth Street Market - **\$7.95**
- * Dinner, King Estate - **\$37**
- * Admission, Schnitzer Museum - **\$5**
- * Lunch, Marche Cafe - **\$5.50**
- * Oregon-Arizona basketball ticket - **\$28**
- * Dinner, Oregon Electric Station - **\$17.95**

TOTAL - \$510.10

IF YOU GO

- * **Convention & Visitors Association of Lane County, Oregon (CVALCO):** 754 Olive St., Eugene; 541-484-5307 or 888-437-4334; www.cvalco.org
- * **University of Oregon Athletics:** www.goducks.com

SHOPPING

- * **Fifth Street Market:** 296 E. Fifth St., Eugene; 484-0383, www.5stmarket.com

ATTRACTIONS

- * Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art: 1430 Johnson Lane, University of Oregon; 346-3027, <http://jsma.uoregon.edu>

LODGING

* **C'est la Vie Inn:**

1006 Taylor St., Eugene; 541-302-3014, www.cestlavieinn.com; standard rates from \$100 midweek, \$115 weekends

* **Timbers Motel:**

1015 Pearl St., Eugene; 541-343-3345 or 800-643-4167, www.timbermotel.net; standard rates from \$48.95; pet friendly

* **Valley River Inn:**

1000 Valley River Way, Eugene; 541-743-1000 or 800-543-8266; www.valleyriverinn.com; standard rates from \$139; pet friendly

RESTAURANTS

- * **Beppe & Gianni's Trattoria:** 1646 E. 19th Ave., Eugene; 541-683-6661, www.beppeandgiannis.net
- * **King Estate:** 80854 Territorial Road, Eugene; 541-942-9874, www.kingestate.com
- * **Oregon Electric Station:** 27 E. Fifth Ave., Eugene; 485-4444, www.oesrestaurant.com

For more than 80 years, this facility has withstood the test of time, even as arenas at other universities have come and gone. This was Oregon's home court when the university won the first-ever national collegiate basketball championship in 1939. Every great Duck basketball star performed on the hardwood here, along with many from other teams who later became professional stars. Ducks of the past still return to cheer those of the present: Miami quarterback Joey Harrington, broadcaster and former NFL star Ahmad Rashad, and ex-Oregon runner and Nike founder Phil Knight sat side-by-side at the Feb. 10 game.

"You have some great fans here," veteran ABC sportscaster Brent Musberger observed.

With Eugene only a 2 1/2-hour drive west of Bend, and the University of Oregon having its most successful basketball season in many years, it's only natural that Central Oregon sports lovers enjoy a weekend drive to catch a game. That's what I did last weekend ... and if you're holding tickets, you might consider doing the same next weekend, when Washington State and Washington visit the Ducks in Eugene at 6 p.m. Thursday and 7:30 p.m. Saturday. Both games are sold out, so if you don't have tickets, there's always next year.

Thursday

I arrived in Eugene around 4 p.m., checked into the C'est la Vie Inn, made a dinner reservation for 8:30 p.m. at Beppe & Gianni's Trattoria, and found an off-campus parking spot near the restaurant, a walk of only about a half-dozen blocks from Mac Court. I got there in plenty of time for the 5:30 p.m. Oregon game against Arizona State.

The game was a typically tight Pacific-10 Conference battle. The Sun Devils don't score a lot of points, but they play tough

defense. Oregon didn't put the game away until the final minutes, when Redmond High graduate Maarty Leunen, a solid player all season, scored seven straight points. The crowd erupted when Leunen hit a three-point shot from the top of the key with just under five minutes to play. Final score: Ducks 55, ASU 51.

The post-game mood was jubilant at Beppe & Gianni's. Lodged in a renovated early-20th-century home, it is what an Italian restaurant should be. It has a gracious host, attentive service and authentic Sicilian cuisine. I had tagliatelle with pork and lamb in a red sauce, followed by a house-made tiramisu dessert. "Life is about energy," I heard a man with a heavy Italian accent say behind me. "It's about the way you feel." I felt very good.

Friday

What better way to greet the next day than to go for a run - or in my case, a good walk - on Pre's Trail?

Most of Oregon knows the story of Steve Prefontaine, the most celebrated athlete in the state's history. In case you are a new arrival or have been in seclusion for decades, the tale bears repeating (*see sidebar*).

Before his death, Prefontaine had actively promoted construction of a soft-surface running trail in Alton Baker Park. By the fall of 1975, the path had been completed in his memory, its four miles of wood chips provided by local forest-products companies. Today, 32 years later, it remains perhaps the single most popular place for a run in Eugene. And it's a great place for morning exercise and reflection, even if your days of serious athleticism have passed.

There are several points of entry. For me, the most convenient is off Leo Harris Parkway, just opposite Autzen Stadium, where the university plays its football games. Adjacent to the stadium, on the second floor of the Len Casanova Center, home to Oregon's Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, is the school's Hall of Champions. A visit here is something of a pilgrimage for me. I was sports editor of the UO newspaper, the "Daily Emerald," when Prefontaine ran, when Dan Fouts played quarterback, when Stan Love was an all-American basketball player. Their exploits, and those of many other players whom I knew personally, are described in a hallway of exhibits that rekindle memories. The trophy cases detail decades of school sports glory.

Memories only go so far, though. I grabbed a sandwich downtown in the Fifth Street Market, once a farmers' market center, now an upscale assortment of retail stores and restaurants. Even here I couldn't escape Prefontaine's ghost. His eyes peer out the front windows of the Eugene Nike store, and on the back side are full-wall murals of him and his coach/mentor, Bill Bowerman.

I left there with most of the afternoon open. As a wine lover, I decided to spend it at King Estate, one of the older and larger wineries in the state. Its 1,033 acres of pinot gris, pinot noir and other grapes sprawl across rolling hills about 20 miles southwest of Eugene, beneath a massive French chateau-style building near the community of Lorane.

Key accounts manager Mary Bellando gave me a full tour not only of King Estate's wine-production facilities, but also its orchards and 12 acres of vegetable and flower gardens. The winery is completely self-sufficient, providing food for its own restaurant and selling the remainder to a hungry public at a regular summer marketplace.

I stayed for dinner, and winemaker John Albin joined me. After confessing that he nearly went to work for the Deschutes Brewery some years ago, he shared a bottle of his own private-label 2003 J. Albin Pinot Noir. It was a great complement to the tender lamb-shank osso buco that was my entree.

Saturday

Eugene's C'est la Vie Inn is a "painted lady," an immaculately restored 1891 Victorian mansion near the Lane County Fairgrounds on Eugene's west side. It is not by campus, but it's an easy drive - straight down 13th Avenue - to the university. The generous hospitality and morning culinary skills of its French-speaking hostess, Marie, makes it worth the extra dollars. I'm partial to the Toulouse-Lautrec room - he was, after all, among the most eccentric of the French impressionist painters - but there are also rooms named after Gauguin, Matisse and Monet. It's a great place to laze about on a lazy Saturday morning.

Last weekend, the Oregon-Arizona game (won by the "bad guys" 77-74 in the final seconds) was a 12:30 p.m. contest, so my day was cut in half. Next Saturday's game against Washington is in the evening, so you'll have a second full day to explore Eugene before the game. I suggest taking in the Schnitzer.

The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art incorporates the collections of the university's former Asian art museum while also displaying fine collections of classical and contemporary American and European paintings. You'll find 17th century Rembrandt etchings and pop art by Andy Warhol, as well as Russian Orthodox iconography and impressive exhibits of Chinese, Japanese and Korean art. Currently, through mid-April, there's an outstanding exhibit of modern Korean ceramics. The museum is open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday to Sunday, and it's not hard to spend a couple of hours here.

Afterward, grab a bit to eat at the Marche Cafe, a branch of the upscale restaurant in the Fifth Street Market. The quiche Lorraine is so creamy, it's like custard.

Before you know it, game time will be here. If Mac Court hot dogs don't excite you, I recommend wrapping up your evening with a burger or grilled salmon from the Oregon Electric Station, a longtime downtown hangout for diehard Duck fans.

Then the alarm rings, and Sunday has arrived. There are many ways you could spend this day in Eugene. I chose a leisurely drive home to Bend, up the McKenzie River Highway, pausing here and there to enjoy the river. It's a pleasant end to an exciting weekend.

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