



Not your
average state capital

Olympia balances its seriousness as the state capital with a notorious funkiness and laid back, indie vibe. Straddling Capitol Lake and Budd Inlet, miles of waterfront make for long walks and great views: Percival Landing, with its mile-long boardwalk, hosts one of the biggest farmers markets in the state and views of the Capitol Building and the Olympic Mountains. Capitol Lake also offers a 1.7 mile idyllic loop popular with walkers, joggers, and birdwatchers. Within walking distance of both is Olympia's historic district, a quaint downtown full of curiosities and coffee shops. Olympia is a haven for artists, too, with murals on walls throughout the city, art walks, galleries, theaters, and music venues. Acclaimed restaurants take up prime real estate along the waterfront, while an incredible assortment of dining opportunities abound downtown.

THINGS TO DO

OLYMPIA

1 PERCIVAL LANDING

With a mile-long boardwalk along the waterfront, plus pavilions, a playground, grassy areas, and Swantown Marina in proximity to Downtown Olympia, Percival Landing is a popular destination for strolls, picnics, and gatherings any time of year. After appreciating the scenery, enjoy it from a table at one of the popular seafood restaurants overlooking Budd Inlet.

2 HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Packed with shops, cafes, galleries, parks, museums, and the Capitol Building and waterfront a stone's throw away, Olympia is one of America's great small downtowns. Get misted in the public splash pad (even in winter!), take a sip from the artesian well, and support an array of small local businesses along the quaint blocks.

3 ARTESIAN WELL

Located on the edge of a parking lot next to a pet store, it's easy to miss, but look for the cobalt and white mosaic—and usually someone standing around with a jug. Flowing out of a pipe is pure water from an aquifer that historically gave Olympia-made beer its reputation ("It's The Water"). Fill up your water bottle before a long walk around town.

4 ARTS TOURS

While you wander through downtown Oly, be on the lookout for murals that span the sides of buildings, traffic box art wraps, and random acts of poetry that make this city an arts haven. Take a self-guided tour of the murals, starting at the New Traditions Fair Trade Gallery Building, with stops at the rainbow wings mural at the Estate Store and "You Are Here" at the Cascadia Grill, and many others along the way. Appreciate Olympia's poetry scene with a self-guided tour of installations or experiences, including words near the farmers market that only appear when water is poured on the bricks. In spring and fall, catch Arts Walk Olympia for gallery openings, craft demonstrations, kids' activities, and more.

https://www.olympiawa.gov/community/arts,_culture___heritage/poet_laureate.php



April–October, Saturday–Sunday in November–December, and Saturdays in the winter.
700 Capitol Way, olympiafarmersmarket.com

7 HANDS ON CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Climb high into an eagle's nest play structure, shoot balls into wind tunnel tubes, make a recycled art project, role play a first responder, shop for pretend food, learn about Puget Sound, and so much more at this excellent children's museum. Head outside for trike riding, rock climbing, play cooking, and a visit to the top of the lighthouse. Activities for young children, a nursing area, and a cafe make this a fun place for every member of the family.
414 Jefferson St NE, hocm.org

8 PRIEST POINT PARK

Located along the saltwater shores of Ellis Cove, Priest Point — named for a Catholic mission established there in the mid-1800s — contains hiking trails, beachfront, cliffs, streams, wildlife viewing, picnic areas, and a play ship, as well as a sweet rose garden and a lovely picnic shelter popular with gatherings and weddings.
2600 East Bay Dr NE

9 CAPITAL MALL

Capital Mall is a place to get mainstream essentials as well as to shop “loc-Oly”—visit the Artists' Gallery for local works and Hawley's for handmade gelato. Stay for dinner before catching a movie at Century Theater.
625 Black Lake Blvd, capitalmallolympia.com

10 PUGET SOUND ESTUARIUM

Explore the creatures that live at the intersection of freshwater and saltwater at this small aquarium. View sea anemones and sea stars in their tanks, and interact with Puget Sound specimens and shells in a hands-on exhibit. With some advanced planning, join the Pier Peer or Meet the Beach programs for expert-led excursions into the habitats of these waterbound creatures.
309 State Ave, pugetsoundestuarium.org

11 SHOPPING

Unique independent shops are a hallmark of Olympia. Window-shop and patronize downtown businesses like Hot Toddy, known for their vintage-style women's clothing; Archibald Sisters, where you can concoct your own cologne; the 5th Avenue Flea Market, a glorious collection of unique finds; Browsers bookstore; Captain Little, with its huge selection of kids gifts; Childhood's End art gallery; Bittersweet Chocolates; Psychic Sisters' practical magic store; Compass Rose gift shop... and the list goes on.

12 FOOD & DRINK

Olympia's waterfront is home to Anthony's Hearthfire Grill, Budd Bay Café, and the recently restored Olympia Oyster House. Diversity is the name of the game here. Visit a renowned breakfast joint such as Hash, King Solomon's Reef, and Wagner's European Bakery, and take a culinary tour of the world grabbing a meal at Rush In Dumplings, Inaka Ramen, Hotstone Authentic Korean, and DaNang Restaurant, to name a few. Java reigns supreme in this coffee house town—a weekend could be spent bouncing from Olympia Coffee Roasters to Batdorf and Bronson to Burial Grounds Coffee Collective to Dancing Goats to Ember Goods to Left Bank Pastry (and you still won't have tried them all). Wind down the day with visits to unique local breweries and distilleries, among them Well 80, which makes beer with water sourced from one of Olympia's remaining artesian wells.

5 STATE CAPITOL TOURS

Gain an appreciation of the legislative process by perusing the grounds and botanical gardens of the state capital. Take in the magnificent architecture of the 42nd state's legislative building on a free tour. The building's similarity to the US Capitol and its 287-foot-high dome—the tallest self-supporting work of masonry in the United States (it was built with sandstone from the small town of Wilkeson, Washington)—is an example of the early 20th-century City Beautiful movement. At the time of building, the Capitol was also a hotly debated project criticized for running up an unnecessary bill, with such extravagances as spittoons costing \$47.50 each. Tour the Governor's Mansion, the Georgian building that's been home to Washington's leaders since 1910. (Be sure to check in advance for tour availability.) Not able to book a scheduled tour? Virtual or self-guided tours are available of the campus, memorials and artwork, and trees of the West Capitol Campus.
des.wa.gov/services/facilities-leasing/capitol-campus/tours

6 FARMERS MARKET

This epic market hosts over 100 vendors selling produce, crafts, and artisanal foods from around the region, as well as restaurants and live musicians. Open Thursday–Sunday

