



Kayakers on the Rogue River negotiate small rapids in early spring. Right, the Covered Bridges Scenic Bikeway. Pictures: Suzanne Morphet



Suzanne Morphet
sand boarding at
Sand Master Park.
Picture: Kirsten
Alana



Run to find the great wild outdoors

The world athletics championships shine a light on energetic Oregon, finds **SUZANNE MORPHET**

Track and field fans are in the United States for the World Athletics Championships. Not only is the event, from July 15 to 24, being held in the US for the very first time, but the venue — Hayward Field at the University of Oregon in Eugene — is considered the spiritual home of track and field.

The 30,000 fans expected to have travelled to Oregon will be discovering a city and State where outdoor adventure abounds, on and off the track. When you're ready to check Oregon off your bucket list, here are five ways to exercise your inner athlete:

RUN WHERE NIKE WAS BORN

It was in Eugene where track and field coach Bill Bowerman famously used his wife's waffle iron to create a running shoe with a unique sole. Bowerman and his former student Phil Knight launched their brand as Nike in 1972 with Knight selling the first

prototypes from the back of his car at track meets at Hayward Field. The city's nickname — Track Town USA — is recognised worldwide says local running coach Jenn Lewis, and running is still a huge part of Eugene's folklore.

"They speak about this Hayward magic that the stadium was believed to have, records that were broken . . . it's a pretty powerful experience."

Even if you don't want to run the annual Eugene marathon, ending at Hayward Field, it's easy to find a local group to run with and a good selection of trails. Pre's Trail, a bark-chip trail named for Oregon track legend Steve Prefontaine, winds for 7km along the Willamette River.

Stay Graduate Eugene celebrates the city's track and field heritage with a collection of vintage Nike shoes at the front desk and photos and memorabilia throughout the hotel.

graduatehotels.com/eugene/

SANDBOARD THE DUNES

Sandboarding may not have started in Oregon (some think ancient Egyptians tried it first), but Oregon's central coast is home to the world's first privately owned facility dedicated to the sport.

Sand Master Park, near Florence, offers 40 acres (16ha) of wind-sculpted dunes, some as high as 100m. Rent boards and take lessons from local sandboarder and three-time world champion Gabriel Cruz.

Even though sandboarding resembles snowboarding, Cruz says the technique is closer to surfing.



A kayak guide with South Coast Tours enjoys some spray at Port Orford Heads State Park.

"As soon as you start leaning forward you've lost all your control and you're probably going to do a nosedive."

If you want a bigger playground, Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area has the largest coastal dunes in North America, stretching about 60km from Florence to Coos Bay.

Stay Driftwood Shores Resort is the only oceanfront hotel in Florence. driftwoodshores.com

RAFT THE MIGHTY ROGUE RIVER

The Rogue was one of the first rivers in the US to be designated "Wild and Scenic" in 1968. It still lives up to that description.

The setting of countless movies, including *The River Wild* with Meryl Streep, the Rogue has a reputation for challenging white-water, but there are plenty of tamer sections too. Those seeking less adrenaline, but still wanting to experience some fun sets of Class 1 and 2 rapids, should try a half-day guided trip with Orange Torpedo on the Hellgate section. The company also offers three and four-day trips where you camp on the beach, enjoy bonfires at night and sleep under the stars.

Stay In Grants Pass, Weasku Inn was a favourite of Hollywood celebrities including Clark Gable, Walt Disney and David Niven. The original log cabin-style lodge from 1924 was updated in 1998 and 11 cabins were added. Full breakfasts include American-style biscuits and gravy. weasku.com

KAYAK THE COAST

Oregon's coast is nothing short of magnificent, with wide sandy

beaches and pounding surf. You might think you'd need to be an elite athlete, or foolhardy, to tackle it in a kayak, but off Port Orford Heads State Park you'll find relatively sheltered water rich with wildlife. On a half-day guided tour with South Coast Tours you'll discover quiet coves, underwater caves and towering rock stacks. Watch seals play in the surf while pigeon guillemots fly to their cliffside nests and orange sea stars cling to the rocks below.

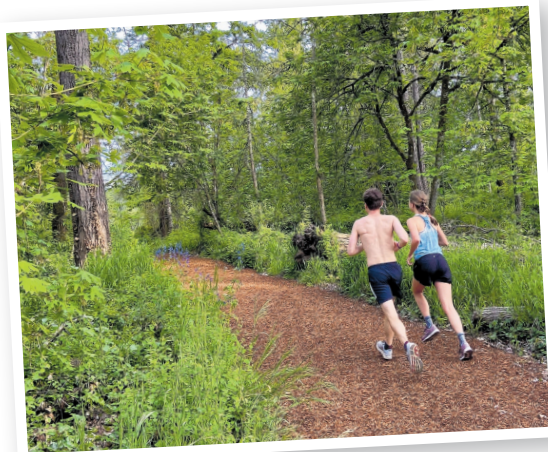
Stay Bay Point Landing at nearby Coos Bay offers modern cabins, Airstream trailers and RV sites. baypointlanding.com

CYCLE THE COVERED BRIDGES SCENIC BIKEWAY

Lane County, which includes the city of Eugene, boasts 20 historic wooden bridges that have survived the ravages of time and weather. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, bridges built from timber would be covered to protect them from rain and snow and extend their life.

The Scenic Bikeway begins in the former goldmining town of Cottage Grove. It follows a gently sloping former rail bed past Dorena Lake before joining a quiet road with views toward the Cascade Mountains.

The entire loop is just under 60km and passes four covered bridges with two more in Cottage Grove itself. **Stay** Graduate Eugene is a half-hour drive from Cottage Grove. graduatehotels.com/eugene/



Runners on Pre's Trail in Eugene, Oregon.

