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TRAVEL

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PHOTOS BY TAILYR IRVINE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A window to the universe is open in Oregon

BY ERIN E. WILLIAMS

Our gazes first met at a party, from across a crowded galaxy. I gaped at an object of impossible beauty seemingly bedecked in diamonds. It stared back at me, and the 34,000-light-year distance between us disappeared. Star-struck, I couldn't tear my eyes away.

The object of my attraction was Messier 3, one of the night sky's biggest and brightest globular star clusters. And the party was Astronomy Day, held on May 11 and Oct. 5 this year. I was celebrating at the Oregon Observatory at Sunriver, which houses about 30 telescopes in the country's largest facility for public viewing.

The nonprofit Oregon Observatory is dedicated to providing public access to the heavens. Unlike most research observatories where visitors admire telescopes from afar, it encourages aspiring astronomers to get an eyeful

SEE OREGON ON F6

YOU'RE GOING WHERE?

Missoula

With mountains to hike and rivers to fish, Montana's outdoor mecca will leave you hooked

BY DINA MISHEV

My boyfriend works for a software company based in Missoula, in northwestern Montana. I tag along on his work trips as often as possible and on every trip its relative dearth of tourists perplexes me. With a population of about 70,000, Missoula is Montana's second-largest city. It is an easy day's drive from both Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. A river flows through the center of downtown and is lined with a robust system of trails. Downtown is stuffed with historic, crenelated brick buildings. Restaurants serve seasonal menus that highlight local produce. There's even Lewis and Clark history; members of the 1804-1806 expedition were the first Europeans to visit the area. (The Salish had already been wintering in the Bitterroot Valley for hundreds of years.) ¶ "Missoula is a really, really small big city," says Todd Frank, who moved here in 1981 when it was still a mill town and today owns the gear shop Trail Head. "There's great dining, culture and social consciousness and anything you want to do outdoors — hiking, mountain biking, fishing, white water, backcountry skiing — is within an hour or two, and it is world-class. It's heaven." Since I can't live in Missoula, I'll just visit as often as possible, waiting for the trip when I discover the rest of the world has found my secret mountain getaway.

SEE MISSOULA ON F3

TOP: Chuck Yorlano hikes down Mount Sentinel. The mountain features a giant "M," built in 1909 by students at the University of Montana, that measures 120 feet long and 100 feet wide.

ABOVE LEFT: Cora Kramer changes the sign at Roxy Theater, home to the International Wildlife Film Festival. ABOVE RIGHT: Black and white portraits of grizzled regulars line the walls at Charlie B's, a popular bar in town.

London's bookstores punctuate the city

BY MICHAEL HINGSTON

The first time I went to London, I asked a friend who lived there for bookstore recommendations. "Well," he said with a pause, "that depends. What kind?" I was too embarrassed to admit I didn't realize I had to specify. But given that I was in the center of the English-speaking literary world, it was an entirely reasonable question.

That sense of overload returned immediately on a recent trip back to the city, but this time I was better prepared for the depth and breadth of London's literary marketplace. Looking for a first edition of "Brideshead Revisited"? No problem. How about a medieval map? You can find that, too. Want to pick up a stack of recent paperbacks — from inside a boat? Step right this way (and mind your head).

No matter your interests, or your budget, London has a bookshop for you.

SEE BOOKSTORES ON F5

NAVIGATOR

Why you should pay attention to the preflight safety demonstration. F2

GO HERE, NOT THERE

Explore Arizona's unsung Canyon de Chelly National Monument. F2