BEND, OR

## Central Oregon agritourism

Chef Bette Fraser loves to see the reaction when someone realizes how wonderful a fresh-picked leaf of spinach tastes: sweet and almost buttery. She founded The Well Traveled Fork in Bend, Oregon, in 2009 to provide these kinds of discoveries as she leads excursions such as her Farm and Ranch Tour in the Central Oregon countryside.

When Fraser moved from a metropolitan area to Bend three years ago, she noticed that Central Oregon's many small-scale, organic, family-run operations produced a wide array of agricultural products, and she wanted to give visitors the opportunity to meet the farmers and ranchers, learn about their work and sample their bounty. The four-hour Farm and Ranch Tour typically makes four stops, which may include an organic vegetable farm, an alpaca operation, a free-range-chicken farm and a goat farm.

Tours are offered year-round. In May and early June, visitors may taste radishes, spinach and first-of-the-season asparagus. Spring is also a good time for kids to visit, Fraser says, because they enjoy seeing young animals. In summer and fall, visitors can pick their own produce, and in winter, they can view animals in beautiful snow-covered pastures.

Fraser customizes the tours, which are by appointment (two-person minimum), based on the season and the group's size and interests.

Contact: 541-312-0097; www.welltraveledfork.com.

*—Jason Smart*

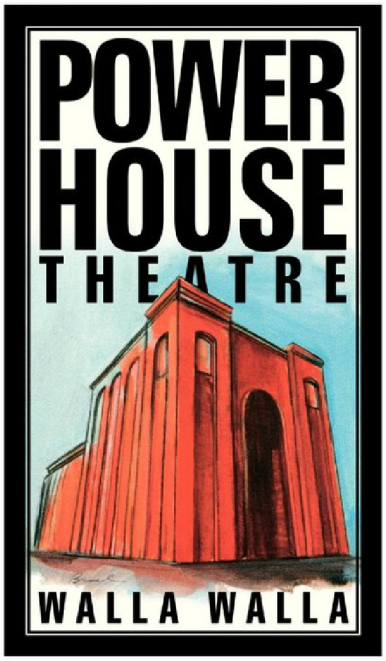
S. BROEL

WALLA WALLA, WA

# Notable spring activities

Shakespeare, wine, hot-air balloons and more

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a taste of wine prompts Caliban to choose Stephano as his new master. This spring, theatergoers can enjoy the celebrated play—viewed as one of Shakespeare's best works and regarded as the last one he wrote entirely on his own—amid Walla Walla's famous wine country, in a theater designed to evoke the interior of London's Blackfriars Playhouse, where Shakespeare's company performed during the winter.




Shakespeare Walla Walla will present *The Tempest* April 26–May 6 in the 340-seat Power House Theatre, a renovated 1890 power plant in the heart of downtown Walla Walla. "The stage and audience configuration are like those at Blackfriars," says Shakespeare Walla Walla Artistic Director Stephanie Shine, the respected former artistic director of the Seattle Shakespeare Company. "You're going to be right next to the actors, and the Power House uses Shakespeare's devices—such as no stopping for scene changes—for swift telling of a play. It will be like what King James himself experienced."

She adds that the part of Prospero will be played by acclaimed Shakespearean actor Johnny Lee Davenport, who won two 2011 Broadway-World Boston Awards in January, and has appeared in movies such as *The Fugitive*, in which he played a U.S. marshal.

Shakespeare Walla Walla will also present *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, July 31–August 26 (three actors "portray over 100 characters as they race through all 37 of Shakespeare's plays in less than two hours"), and *Romeo & Juliet*, August 7–26. For more information and tickets, go to www.shakespearewallawalla.org.

While in Walla Walla, visitors can enjoy wine-tasting as well as theater. Wine production in the area dates back to 1860, when Italian immigrants planted vines. Today, there are more than 100 wineries and 1,600 acres of vineyards in and around Walla Walla. Wine-touring information and maps are available at www.wallawallawine.com.

During the Spring Release Weekend, May 4–6, most of the wineries will open their cellars and tasting rooms to share their winemaking processes and pour the season's new releases. Visitors can be among the first to purchase the latest wines, including the valley's three most-produced varietals—Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah—along with many other varietals, says Duane Wollmuth, executive director of the Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance.

For instance, downtown Walla Walla's Sapolil Cellars, which also has a nightclub, will pour its Ridgeback Red (a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah) and Tre Amici (a blend of Barbera, Sangiovese and Nebbiolo) during Spring Release Weekend.

Alaska Airlines' Taste and Tote program allows its customers of legal age flying out of Walla Walla Regional Airport to check, free of charge, one properly packaged box of up to 12 bottles of wine. More than 70 wineries participating in the program are waiving tasting fees for passengers showing an Alaska Airlines boarding pass or receipt related to their current trip.

Another fun spring event will be the Balloon Stampede, "Splendor in the Sky," May 11–13. Now in its 38th year, the festival will include morning launches, a Nite Glow, live entertainment, a kids' zone, food booths, arts-and-crafts activities, a champagne reception, a classic-car show, a pancake breakfast and a dance party. Approximately 40 balloons and more than 40,000 attendees are expected.

Walla Walla–area attractions also include bird-watching areas; bicycling trails; river and lake activities; golf courses; Umatilla National Forest; Whitman Mission National Historic Site; and Fort Walla Walla Museum, which has a Pioneer Village, and vineyards with Black Prince grapes—the same variety planted by the Italian settlers—being cultivated via a method common in the 1800s.

Contact: 509-525-0850; www.wwvchamber.com. *—Jordan Meyers*