

The Myths of Oregon Rain

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, PORTLAND IS DRIER THAN NEW YORK!



We Oregonians take a lot of flack about our rain. The way some people talk, you would think that the state is suited only to salamanders, waterfowl and crayfish. They would have the world believe that in the words of Ken Kesey, Oregonians "... have lived and worked in the wet so long that they are no longer capable of distinguishing it from the dry."

A little research on rainfall, however, reveals some surprising facts. For starters, Oregon as a whole receives less annual rainfall than most other states. The average yearly precipitation in the United States is about 29 inches. Oregon's average is only 27 inches, compared to Pennsylvania (42.3 inches), Michigan (30.4 inches), Texas (30.5 inches), and dozens of other states that are spattered more heavily than we are.

Louisiana, the wettest state in the union, receives 55 inches of rain annually - more than twice as much as the Beaver State. At the other end of the scale, the driest state is our neighbor Nevada, with an average of only 8.8 inches of precipitation each year.

Oregon's drier than average climate, of course, is a statistical abstraction. All the soggy spots west of the Cascades like Gold Beach (76 inches) and Coos Bay (61 inches) are mathematically off-set by arid places like Paisley (8 inches) and Condon (12 inches). If Eastern Oregon and Western Oregon were separate states, no doubt the statistics would show us to be among the very wettest and driest states in the union, side by side.

The rainiest spot in Oregon is a place called Glenora, in Tillamook County, where 132 inches of rain fall each year - that's 11 feet of rain!

The record for a single year is held by Valsetz which had 168.9 inches in 1937. Water-logged as Valsetz and Glenora may be, they are downright dry compared to Waialeale, Hawaii - a mountaintop on the island of Kauai that is drenched by 460 inches of rain annually - 38 feet of water!

By John R. Howard
Courtesy of Realtors Inc.