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MCM NOSTALGIA:

A Portland Self-Guided Tour

BY TAMARA BELGARD

If the mid-century modern (MCM) style conjures up images of your parents' or even your grandparents' home—or your bachelor uncle's rumpus room from the '60s, geared for a rat-pack-style party—you're in for a nostalgic treat next time you visit Portland, Oregon.

But before we take you down Portland's MCM trail, let's ask: What is MCM? Mid-century modern is a rare mashup of beauty and function that jettisoned the mid-20th-century population into the future (“The Jetsons” pun intentional). Today, MCM's influences are everywhere you look—in our furniture, architecture, design and even in our lifestyles.

True, MCM can be polarizing—maybe you love it, maybe you hate it—but, either way, it's a style that's not going away any time soon. In fact, MCM seems to be getting more popular, with contemporary stores like Ikea and West Elm knocking off notable and iconic mid-century designers.

Blame it on “Madmen” and Don Draper. (I'd blame everything on Don Draper if I could.) Whatever the reason, the whimsical, minimalist, clean and unambiguous lines of MCM offer a timeless look that somehow still feels just as hot, fresh and current as they did 60 years ago. How can avocado green and pumpkin orange somehow still look cool?

The MCM movement took hold after WWII and is still ruling the design world. When a design style not only stands the test of time, but also seems to practically make time stand still, it's far from trendy—instead, it's revolutionary. One reason for its longevity could be its broad generational appeal. Baby boomers who grew up with these classic designs find a direct connection to their youth—they're drawn to its familiarity, history and nostalgia. More transient 20-somethings living the urban lifestyle appreciate MCM's casually elegant style and the light materials and slender frames that can fit into smallish spaces.

Now, back to Portland, where you can easily time-travel into the heart of the '50s, '60s and '70s with this guide of where to eat, drink, stay and play, all while enveloped in cool mid-century modern style.

The Slide Inn, 2348 SE Ankeny Street, slideinnpdx.com

With its eclectic German-influenced menu that also caters to vegan and gluten-free, this restaurant is mid-century at its finest. The decor features an array of sunburst clocks and starburst chandeliers. The cozy wood paneling, comfy seating nooks, big easy chairs, and collections of Big Eye paintings make it feel like home. Named for the family's old Sierra Nevada ski lodge of the mid-70's, the Slide Inn welcomes you for brunch, fondue or cocktails.



© Slide Inn, photo by Kathryn Elssner

Olympia Provisions Public House Eatery,

3384 SE Division Street, olympiaprovisionspublichouse.com

The mid-century gas station-turned-restaurant is still serving its community—just with sausages instead of gasoline. “Fill ‘er up” is still the mantra, but the pumps are long gone, having been replaced by an outdoor patio, ample parking and a menu of Olympia Provisions’ delectable, well... provisions.

The Original Dinerant, 300 SW 6th Avenue, originaldinerant.com

In the 1950s and ‘60s, diners and supper clubs were social hubs, places we gathered to end our days or begin our nights. The menus were comprised of comfort foods brought to this country by the immigrants who shaped it, refined to satisfy contemporary tastes. This downtown destination for all-day Portland dining, serves up playful variations on the classic standards in an atmosphere that’s stylish, sophisticated and oh-so-cool. Settle into a spacious booth, stretch out in their plush retro-luxe banquette or unwind at their candle-lit bar for that much deserved post-prandial nightcap.





© Aalto Lounge, photo by Katana Triplett



© Aalto Lounge, photo by Katana Triplett



© Hotel Moderno

Aalto Lounge, 3356 SE Belmont Street, aaltolounge.com

Named for Finnish designer, Alvar Aalto, the comfortable space features a decidedly MCM vibe throughout the bar and outdoor patio. Their cocktail list emphasizes the classics, and since martinis are the signature drink of that period, order yours shaken not stirred.

Neat Whiskey Bar, 2637 SE Hawthorne Blvd, (*no website*)

This quirky and unpretentious watering hole that specializes in classic cocktails and whiskey from around the world features comfortable mid-century seating areas with truly oddball décor (look for the mustachioed ladies).

Case Study Coffee, three Portland locations, casestudycoffee.com

Inspired by the MCM architectural movement of the same name, Case Study Coffee beams you into three Portland locations infused with mid-century-inspired design elements (who doesn't love Sputnik chandeliers?) and all the coffee-house trendiness of today.



Hotel Modera, 515 SW Clay Street, hotelmodera.com

Chic, mid-century style and modern simplicity defines this sophisticated boutique hotel in downtown Portland. Located in the heart of the city's theater district, surrounded by fine restaurants, art galleries, museums and entertaining nightlife, this delightfully reimagined retro hotel is at the hub of it all.

Hotel Eastlund, 1021 NE Grand Avenue, hoteleastlund.com

Featuring classic yet modern sophistication and floor-to-ceiling windows indicative of that period, Hotel Eastlund is in downtown's thriving Eastside. The mid-century-inspired lobby offers spacious, elegant yet loungey sitting areas flooded with natural light and stylish, artistic allure.

The Jupiter Hotel, 800 E. Burnside Street, jupiterhotel.com

Born out of a desire for a hotel with good design aesthetics that didn't break the bank, The Jupiter Hotel was transformed from a 1960s motor lodge into Portland's original boutique hotel with a charming '60s vintage vibe.

Play

Vintage Pink, 2500 SE Hawthorne Boulevard, ilovevintagepink.com

The spacious, groovy emporium specializes in mid-century pieces, such as unique furniture, glassware, lighting and an array of vintage treasures.

Lounge Lizard, 1310 SE Hawthorne Boulevard, pdxlounge lizard.com

This eclectic bazaar showcases funky furniture with a past and features an ever-changing variety of mid-century furnishings, décor, retro '50s shades and lamps.



Music Millennium, 3158 East Burnside Street, musicmillennium.com

Here, vinyl is still king. Owner Terry Currier, local music encyclopedia and president of the Oregon Music Hall of Fame, runs the 47-year-old Portland institution, making it a true mid-century shop. Relive your younger days sifting through the stacks for those records that still call to you.

Grand Central Bowling Lounge,

808 SE Morrison Street, thegrandcentralbowl.com

The sport of bowling peaked in the '50s and '60s across the U.S. with the advent of the automatic pin setter. It was a simpler time when people didn't fret about wearing shoes someone else's feet had just bowled in. Thankfully, balls are still rolling at places like Grand Central. More MCM in spirit than style, 12 boutique lanes, games (like billiards, shuffleboard and pinball), drinks and a classic American food menu make good, clean fun the way it used to be just a pin away. 🎳