An often overlooked aspect of the importance of natural landscapes is the tourism it generates. While discussions generally focus on the timber economy and wildlife restoration, a huge component of our natural resource economy is not the resources themselves, but the people who visit them. Just this year, a government report stated that outdoor recreation generates $646 billion in direct consumer spending, supporting 6.1 million direct jobs, and producing $80 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue each year. And it is in this industry that graduates of the Tourism and Outdoor Leadership (TOL) degree program will find employment with the government and private businesses or by beginning their own companies.

The TOL degree program provides the technical and group leadership skills needed to be an outdoor guide or trip leader, including the concepts, theory and business skills needed to move beyond guiding and into management or creation of your own business. Within the TOL degree program are four options that allow you to specialize in your area of interest. The first, Eco and Adventure Tourism, focuses on developing and managing a business related to outdoor recreation or tourism, with emphasis on marketing, entrepreneurship, human resource management and business planning. The International Ecotourism option presents students with aspects of nature-based tourism in other countries as well as managing local resources for international visitors. Language skills, business skills and the broader socio-political issues in international tourism are emphasized. The Adventure Leadership and Education option teaches students to apply educational theory in and about the outdoors, emphasizing outdoor and adventure education and adventure therapy. The final option is Recreation Management which focuses on the management of visitors by agencies and emphasizes forest ecology and dendrology, resource and environmental interpretation and planning.

The TOL degree program also boasts some attributes that make it unique within the College of Forestry. The program is offered only at OSU-Cascades, which shares a campus with Central Oregon Community College (COCC). This results in smaller class sizes, a full 4-year degree program for a lower cost due to partnership with COCC, association with the prestigious Oregon State University while remaining on a smaller campus and being located in Bend, Oregon, a hive of tourism and recreation opportunities in the state. Additionally, it requires each student to complete an internship, often resulting in job opportunities and offering confidence building experiences.

The TOL degree program is an excellent path for anyone who wants to be involved in the natural tourism industry at any level by providing a perfect mix of classroom and hands on learning that results in a well-rounded, competitive graduate ready to succeed.
Michael Gassner

When one thinks of a college instructor, frequently the image of a wizened old man in a tweed jacket complete with leather elbow pads lecturing in monotone comes to mind. Fortunately for students in the TOL program, this is definitely not the image or experience presented by Michael Gassner.

Michael is an instructor for TOL and the Program Lead for TOL, a position similar to Department Head and necessary because of the distance between the TOL program and its actual academic department (almost 130 miles!). When he isn’t busy administrating the TOL program, Michael teaches a variety of courses, including Experiential Education, Risk Management for Tourism & Outdoor Leadership, Ethics in Adventure Leadership, Nature and the Human Experience, Expeditions I, Expeditions II (Land), Expeditions II (Water) and Wilderness & Adventure Education. With a Ph.D. in Education (Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Studies), Michael is an excellent source of knowledge for his students. He is also a fount of experience, having worked in Sabah (also known as East Malaysia) and Hong Kong as well as having travelled extensively in large portions of Asia.

Michael first came to OSU as an undergraduate student in Geology before moving on and teaching as an assistant professor at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. Longing to come back to the west, Michael seized the opportunity to teach at the OSU Cascades campus five years ago and has been loving it there ever since.

When asked what he enjoyed about the TOL program, Michael was quick to answer, “Teaching the expedition courses is always great; it’s nice to get out into nature rather than teach about it in a classroom. I also enjoy the small campus atmosphere of OSU Cascades and the large university resources and prestige afforded by being part of the OSU system,” Michael tells us.

“I love being in Bend because of the west coast location and the fact that Bend is such a hub of outdoor recreation in the west. Also, I can see the mountains I learned to climb on every day from campus,” he continues.

When asked what advice he has for those interested in TOL, Michael said, “Follow what you’re interested in and not necessarily what the job market is. Don’t get caught up with what the jobs will pay; follow your passions. If you like working with people, with tours, with the outdoors and the idea of adventure leadership, the TOL program will serve you well.”

Michael researches extensively into the long-term benefits of outdoor adventure programs and the history of outdoor adventure education programs in Asia.
While Michael Gassner focuses on adventure leadership and education, Kreg Lindberg is the person to talk to about tourism and recreation; together, they form the core of knowledge and teaching for the TOL program. Kreg is an associate professor within the Forest Ecosystems & Society (FES) Department and serves as an informal advisor for students. Although he used to serve as the program lead for TOL as well as the advisor, since Michael Gassner and Dianna McGinnis were hired, he mainly focuses on teaching.

Courses taught by Kreg include Eco and Adventure Tourism, Ecological Aspects of Park Management, Sustainable Communities, Tourism and Recreation Data Analysis and Research Methods in Social Science.

Kreg originally came to OSU to complete his Ph.D. in the 1990s, returning eight years later after working in Australia, Norway and Colorado. “I came to OSU Cascades because I love living in Oregon, and Bend, in particular, is an excellent place to live and to work in the field of tourism and outdoor leadership. Within about half an hour from town, one can engage in almost any outdoor recreation activity, with the exception of scuba diving or surfing,” Kreg tells us.

When asked what his favorite aspect of the TOL program is, Kreg told us he was a fan of its comprehensive nature. “It provides an excellent combination of tourism concepts, business skills, and outdoor group leadership skills. Graduates are truly ready to work in the outdoor industry,” he explains.

“There are many outdoor-oriented tourism businesses here, and we take advantage of that in TOL. We have representatives from those businesses as guest speakers in class. We also have field components in many classes, and we spend time on national forest and BLM lands to illustrate concepts and issues discussed in class,” he says.

Despite all these great attributes, Kreg warns potential students about making an ill-researched choice. “Contact OSU Cascades to learn more about the program. TOL isn’t for everyone, but if you want to work in this field I think you’ll find that TOL is the best available degree program, and it’s located in one of the best places in the world for people who like to be outdoors...or drink beer; did I mention there’s a dozen breweries here?”

When Kreg isn’t busy teaching and advising future TOL graduates, he spends his time volunteering by serving on advisory committees, doing trail work. He also regularly road bikes, swims, hikes and is even training for a triathlon.
Dianna McGinnis

Whether you’re pursuing a degree in Tourism & Outdoor Leadership or Natural Resources, if you’re pursuing them at the Oregon State University Cascades campus, you will be advised by Dianna McGinnis. Dianna is an academic advisor at OSU-Cascades and the primary advisor for Tourism & Outdoor Leadership, Natural Resources, Art, American Studies, Liberal Studies and Social Science, as well as the instructor for the College Success course offered to freshmen.

Dianna started her current position in May, 2008. After working at several different higher education institutions in enrollment and financial services, Dianna was looking for a change of pace. “I found I wanted to continue to help create success for students and to help students develop and grow as they are college students,” she tells us. “So I got my Masters of Science in Postsecondary, Adult and Continuing Education from Portland State University. I applied for the position at OSU-Cascades because I had worked at Central Oregon Community College in the past and really enjoyed the environment. I also thought it was a great opportunity to be a part of a University that is growing and changing so quickly, like OSU-Cascades has been these last 4 years.”

And for Dianna, it was the right choice. Since joining the OSU family, she has enjoyed many aspects of the job. “I really enjoy the enthusiasm of the students who choose the TOL program. Students who find the TOL major are often very passionate about this discipline/area of study. That makes for creative and successful advising partnership with the students,” says Dianna. But not only does she enjoy the students, she also supports the goals of the TOL program and the College of Forestry overall. “I appreciate the philosophy and principles of the TOL program, especially the experiential education focus. In fact I admire the hands on learning that are found throughout the College of Forestry programs. I see the success and confidence it brings to my students as they move into the work world from OSU-Cascades.”

With more than four years of experience as an advisor for TOL and five other degree programs, Dianna has some words of wisdom to impart on people who are considering pursuing a degree in TOL. “Research what types of courses you will be taking before committing to this program (or any program of study),” she warns, “There are multiple overnight outing commitments and needs to be planned into your life outside of school. Sometimes I get students who are surprised by this. Also make sure you take the time to understand the commitment you are making. The TOL program must be a top priority for you to be successful and complete the courses and internship/practicums required.”

When Dianna is not on the job, she takes to nature as much as her students. From paddle boarding to reading to silly horror movies, Dianna has a host of hobbies. “I live in Bend, Oregon, so basically I have to list hiking as a hobby,” she tells us with a smile.

Dianna creates a fun and energized environment for her advisees and is determined to help them succeed on whatever path they have chosen. So if you are considering the Tourism & Outdoor Leadership degree program, or any of the other degree programs that Dianna advises for, be sure to make the most of her enthusiasm and expertise.
A unique aspect of the TOL program is their internship program, an 8-credit course designed to combine academic preparation with practical experience by offering a jointly sponsored and supervised learning experience. The organizations that students intern with, known as intern hosts, range from businesses, government agencies and NGOs, both within the United States and abroad. By working with these organizations, the TOL allows students to receive important professional development that cannot be gained in the classroom alone.

Not only are the students benefiting from the internship program, but their hosts as well. Intern hosts are able to use the academically talented and energetic student to complete special projects and in that student find a potential permanent employee with minimal hiring risk. The host will also establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the host and OSU and will have input on the TOL curriculum, improving the program and the potential hires it produces.

Most students in the TOL program enjoy their internships and learn a huge amount from them; one such case is Alex Scagliotti, a current TOL student who recently returned from his internship in Peru. Alex was able to secure an internship with Galaxia Expeditions, a mountain tour agency in Huaraz, Peru, that has been a trusted presence in the region since 2000.

As an intern, Alex described his duties as fluid, spending time both in the office and on trips with senior guides. “For the first half of my stay, I was an assistant guide on 1-, 4- and 6-day backpacking trips and for the second half Galaxia started to work me into mountaineering trips more,” Alex explains. “At the office, I spent my time creating a sustainability plan for Galaxia. It was a plan, budget and timeline for them to follow to help

Outdoor Internships

This view was a regular one for Alex during his internship in Peru (Photo: Alex Scagliotti).

Alex takes a rest by a nameless lake in the high mountains of Peru. (Photo: Alex Scagliotti)
make steps towards a more sustainable business.”

In addition to the impressive feat of designing a sustainability plan for the company, Alex also helped by organizing equipment, conducting inventories and doing whatever else he could to streamline the company.

Outside of the company itself, Alex was able to experience the culture and community of Huaraz. “It is the center of Peru as far as outdoor activities are concerned,” say Alex. “The locals are very used to people from around the world coming there to mountaineer, trek, mountain bike and rock climb.”

Despite all of this international attention, Alex assures us that the culture of the Peruvian people in Huaraz remains intact and vibrant. “There were big parades at least once a week if not two or three times,” he remembers. “Their Independence Day is July 28th and they celebrated for an entire month with fireworks, fiestas and music.” And although South America has been portrayed as a dangerous region by the news, Alex told us that he never felt himself to be in danger at any point during his internship.

An important detail Alex pointed out to us about his internship was that the company did not have an internship program in place before he worked there. “I contacted them and proposed an internship for a few months and they were very open to the idea, so we made it happen,” says Alex. Students shouldn’t feel that they can only intern with companies that have established programs; instead, seek out the companies you want to intern with and try to set up a program.

From the program, Alex tells us that he learn a variety of important lessons. “I learned a great deal about how a mountaineering/backpacking/biking outfitter operates and gained a huge hard-skill knowledge base. Also, all of their guides were certified and being able to work alongside them allowed me to pick up a lot of techniques for improving my own guiding.”

The greatest thing he took away from the experience was the Spanish language. “I had a good conceptual understanding of the language but I was very slow and clumsy,” explains Alex, “three months in Peru helped me enormously.” Additionally, Alex gained a sense of self-reliance and confidence from the trip. “I was thrown into a lot of new circumstances that made me think outside the box, and made me deal with circumstances pushed the barriers of my comfort zone.” Overcoming these circumstances provided real life confidence in his abilities not often gained in the classroom.

After his own experience, Alex had some advice for TOL students looking for an internship. “My advice for students seeking internships is safety in numbers. I sent out 20 or so resumes all over Peru and a couple other countries in South America (but Peru was my dream country) and I chose the best out of those companies. Its nice to have options and not put all your eggs in one basket.”
First Term Survival Guide

Making the transition into college for the first time can be daunting with all the opportunities and freedoms that are suddenly available to you. It’s easy and common for students to become overwhelmed during their first term, but do not fear. We have created a survival guide to help you make the most of your first term without becoming frazzled!

Explore!
Although Corvallis is not the largest city to be found in Oregon, it has a diverse set of locations within its boundaries and more just beyond. Take a walk around Corvallis (easily done in a day) and discover what it has to offer. From local restaurants along Monroe and 9th to the small, unique shops in the downtown area, shopping and dining opportunities abound. For those more interested in recreation, take a walk around Avery Park, Chip Ross Park, Fitton Green or hike to the top of Bald Hill or Marys Peak. One can even find a multitude of trails in the College of Forestry McDonald Research Forest and the Peavy Arboretum!

Socialize!
It’s important to build a network of friends and acquaintances in order to enjoy your college experience. Join a campus club, find a religious group, play and intramural sport, take classes at our Craft Center or even walk around your residence hall and meet other new students. There are plenty of opportunities to meet fun and exciting people around campus!

Exercise!
Being on your own for the first time, it can be tempting to pile on the junk food with your newfound freedom. This leads to the college phenomenon of the “Freshman 15”; keeping fit and eating something green now and then is not only important for your well-being, but it will help you employ your full mental capabilities on your homework and exams. Visit the Dixon Rec Center to work out or sign up for an intramural sport!

Educate!
First and foremost at college (but not on this list) is your education—it’s the primary reason you’re here and it’s your responsibility! Be sure to write out the assignment schedules for the term during your first week of class and build a comprehensive term calendar. Have exam times and all assignments so that you can be sure you will have everything done and studied for. Otherwise, you might find that you’ve slept through a test!

Clean!
One’s room can become a warzone of clothes, food containers and papers due to the busy schedules of most students. A clean room promotes studying and removes distractions, so be sure to recycle excess paper and plastics and to clean up now and then. Also, be aware that you share campus with over 25,000 other students every day, so washing your hands, clothes and maintaining good hygiene will help prevent illnesses.

Enjoy!
College is always fun and there is nothing like your first term there, so be sure to relax and enjoy yourself. Take advantage of the great amount of opportunities presented to you each day!

Remember that if you ever need help with anything, there are resources and people all over campus just waiting to assist you. Good luck!

When in season, the Corvallis Saturday Market is a popular destination for residents and visitors alike. Crafts, food, drink and fresh farm produce are a few of the items for sale. (Photo: Sally)