SOUTHERN OREGON RELOCATION GUIDE

Start in Grants Pass.

A neighbor's guide to choosing your place in the Rogue Valley, before you choose the house.

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BEFORE YOU START

Pick the life first. Then the house.

Most people relocating here start on Zillow. I understand why. But the thing that decides whether you're happy here two years from now usually isn't the kitchen. It's what a normal Tuesday looks like, how far away the things you love really are, and what comes with the land you're buying.

This guide starts where I live and work, in Grants Pass, and moves outward the way your week would: across the valley to Medford and Central Point, over to Jacksonville and the Applegate Valley, down to Ashland, Talent and Phoenix, then out to the Oregon Caves and the coast.

I'll be straight with you about the trade-offs. Some outings fit into an evening. Some need a reservation, a full tank and a full day. And if you're looking at acreage, a handful of questions about water, septic, access and wildfire will matter more than the square footage.

I've left out school ratings, tax figures and commute times on purpose. Those change, and they deserve current, dated numbers. Ask me and I'll pull them for your situation.

Read this with a map open. Mark what fits. Then let's build a plan around your actual week.

Michael O'Coyne

Oregon Broker, RE/MAX Integrity, Grants Pass

How to read the trip labels

EVERYDAY

Part of a normal week from a Grants Pass home base.

VALLEY OUTING

An evening or half day. Worth planning around.

FULL DAY

Plan ahead. Check roads, reservations and current hours.

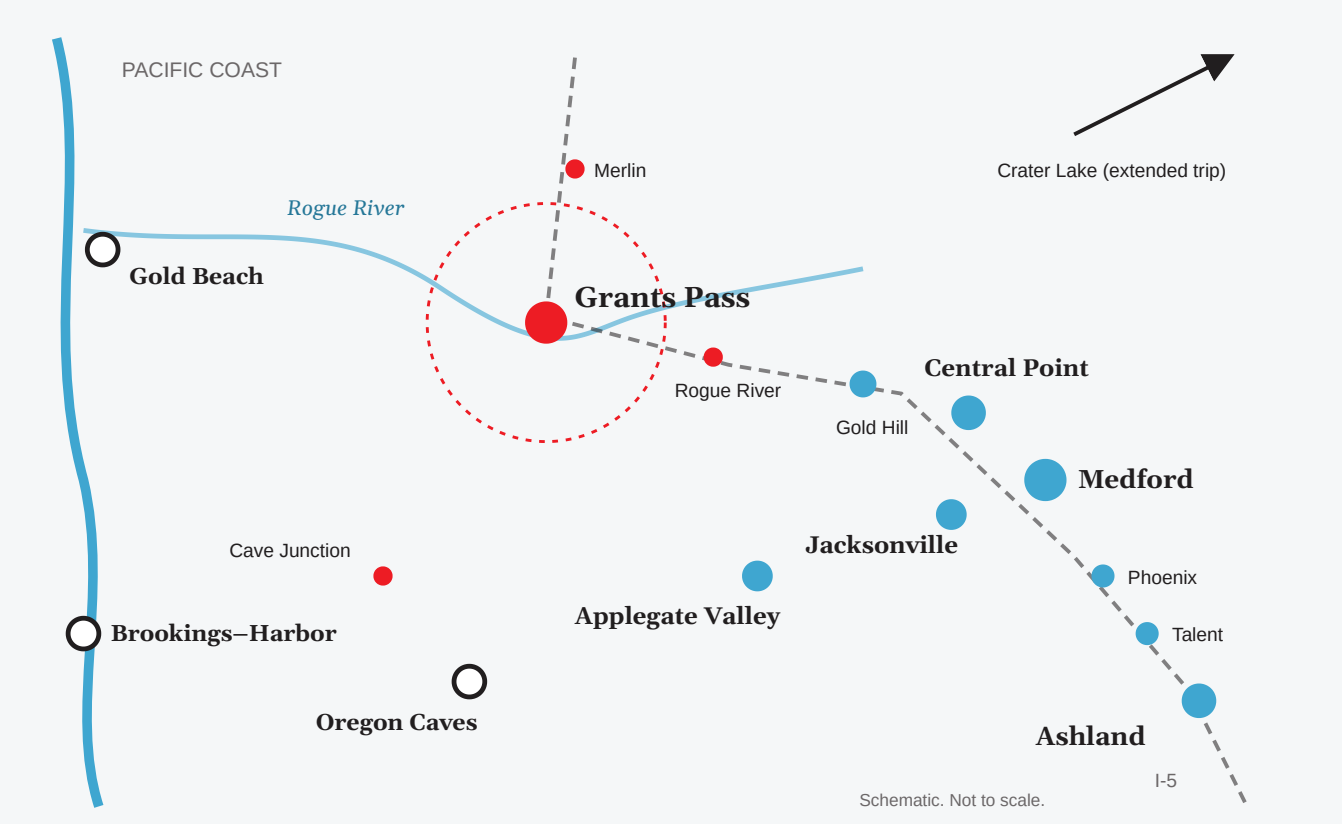
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ORIENTATION

How the region fits together

Think of Southern Oregon as a home base with rings around it. Grants Pass sits on the Rogue River at the western end of the valley. The larger Medford and Central Point hub is across the valley to the east, with Jacksonville and the Applegate tucked to the south and west of it. Ashland, Talent and Phoenix form the south valley. The caves and the coast sit at the outer edge.



Home base: Grants Pass area · Valley outings and other home bases · Full-day trips

What each area does well. Grants Pass gives you a working downtown, the river in town and rural land close by. Medford and Central Point carry more of the valley's larger events, venues and services. Jacksonville trades on history and summer music; the Applegate on farms and wineries. The south valley is built around theatre, Lithia Park and mountain access.

What this map won't tell you. Drive times depend on where in each area you start and where you're headed, and on the season. I treat every time in this guide as a planning range, not a promise. For live road status, use ODOT TripCheck before any longer drive.

FIND YOUR FIT

What kind of week are you after?

Pick the one or two that sound most like your household. Each points to the places worth seeing first and the pages to read next.

River and outdoors

Riverside Park and the Rogue right in Grants Pass. A guided jetboat trip on the river. Applegate Lake on a warm day. The Jacksonville Woodlands trails. Lithia Park and the Ashland Creek Watershed.

Read pages 5, 9 and 10

Family routine

The playground and spray park at Riverside Park. Wildlife Images. Rogue Valley Family Fun Center and Crater Rock Museum for active or rainy days. ScienceWorks in Ashland.

Read pages 5, 8 and 10

Food, wine and entertaining

The Applegate Valley Wine Trail and a farm stop at Pennington Farms. Rogue Creamery's cheese shop in Central Point. The Rogue Valley Wine Passport. DANCIN Vineyards, reservations in hand.

Read pages 5, 8 and 9

Arts and culture

The Grants Pass Museum of Art and the Schmidt House Museum. Shows at the Craterian in Medford. The Britt festival season in Jacksonville. Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland.

Read pages 6, 8, 9 and 10

Acreage and privacy

Rural Josephine County around Grants Pass, Merlin and the Applegate Valley. Room for a shop, animals or a garden, with a different set of questions about water, septic, access and wildfire.

Read page 7 before you tour

Walkable town life

Downtown Grants Pass and its river parks. Jacksonville's historic downtown. Ashland's streets around Lithia Park. Ask me which neighborhoods put you within an easy walk.

Read pages 5, 9 and 10

Not sure which fits?

Tell me where you're moving from, what a good Saturday looks like, and whether you want a lot in town or land. I'll send back a short, Grants Pass–first comparison of the two or three areas that match.

01 · HOME BASE EVERYDAY

Grants Pass and Josephine County

The guide starts here because a lot of relocating households find the balance they came for in Grants Pass: a real downtown, the Rogue River running through town, and rural Josephine County close by when you want room. It's also where I live, so expect specifics.

On the river, every week

Riverside Park is the city's living room: picnic spots, a playground and spray park, gardens, a riverside path and sports fields. It's also home base for Boatnik weekend.

The wider city parks system adds dog parks, a pool, a skate park, more play areas and boat ramps for getting on the water yourself.

When family comes to visit

Hellgate Jetboat Excursions runs guided trips on the Rogue, the easiest way to show visitors the river without owning a boat.

Wildlife Images is a conservation and education center that works for grandparents and kids alike. Check the visit page for current hours before you go.

Downtown and culture

The Josephine County Historical Society runs the Schmidt House Museum, a good rainy-afternoon stop and a quick way to learn how the town came to be.

The Grants Pass Museum of Art keeps rotating exhibits downtown, a short walk from shops and restaurants.

Food, wine and a Sunday drive

The Applegate Valley Wine Trail starts just south of town. Pair a tasting room with a farm stop like Pennington Farms, or spend a warm day at Applegate Lake and the Hart-Tish area.

Treat the Applegate as a planned outing. How long it takes depends on which end of the valley you're aiming for.

The year in Grants Pass

The town keeps a steady calendar: harvest events and markets in the fall, a holiday tree lighting and parade in winter, winery events through the Applegate, and Boatnik when the weather turns. Dates move year to year, so I point people to Visit Grants Pass for the current calendar rather than printing dates that go stale.

A normal week might include

- A weeknight walk along the river path at Riverside Park.
- Saturday morning on a guided jetboat trip with visiting family.
- A Sunday drive into the Applegate for one tasting room and one farm stop.
- A rainy afternoon at the Schmidt House or the Museum of Art, then dinner downtown.

Best for

- People who want a working downtown and the river in town.
- Households who want acreage within reach of town services.
- Anyone who'd rather drive across the valley for a big event than live next to one.

Consider if

- You're comfortable crossing the valley for some larger venues and services.
- You want rural land and are ready for the questions on the next page.
- River access ranks above being close to theatre or ski season.

PLAN AHEAD

Jetboat trips and winery tastings are seasonal, and hours shift. Confirm directly with the operator before you go. If you're visiting to house-hunt, I'll build the river and wine country into your tour days so you see the area the way you'd live in it.

A longer outing from here

The Oregon Caves sit beyond Cave Junction, south of Grants Pass. It's a real trip with a timed tour and a mountain road. Details are on page 12.

BEFORE YOU BUY LAND

City lot or acreage? What changes.

My background is construction project management, so this is the part of the conversation I like best. A house in town and a house on a few acres outside Merlin can look nearly identical on a listing page. They're different purchases.

Topic	In town, usually	On acreage, ask about
Water	City water service.	The well: its yield, its water quality, its age, and whether it's shared with neighbors under a written agreement.
Wastewater	City sewer.	The septic system: age, permit history, condition, and whether it's sized for the bedrooms you plan to use.
Water rights	Rarely a question.	What rights, if any, come with the land, what they allow, and whether they've been kept in use.
Access	A public street.	Private roads, recorded easements, who maintains the road and how, and what the drive is like in winter.
Zoning	Set by the city.	What county zoning allows: outbuildings, a second dwelling, animals, a home business. Confirm with the planning office, not the listing.
Wildfire	Varies by neighborhood.	Defensible space around the house, access for fire crews, and insurance availability and cost. Call an insurance agent early, before you're in contract.
Outbuildings	Garage or shed.	Whether the shop, barn or studio was permitted, how it's powered, and what it would take to finish your plans for it.

Get the rural-property checklist

I keep a pre-offer question set for land and rural homes that walks through every row above, plus the project-scope questions I'd ask on a build or remodel. Ask for it and I'll send it over.

This page is a starting point for conversation, not a substitute for inspections, surveys, title review, or advice from licensed well, septic, insurance, legal and land-use professionals. Verify zoning and permits with the city or county.

02 · ACROSS THE VALLEY VALLEY OUTING

Medford and Central Point

Medford and Central Point are the valley's larger hub for events, venues and services. Plenty of Grants Pass households come over for a show, an event at the Expo or a hike up Roxy Ann. Others decide they'd rather live closer to all of it. Both are reasonable choices.

Outdoors

Prescott Park and Roxy Ann Peak give you trails and wide views over the valley. Bear Creek Park is the everyday, multi-use park: a walk, a game, a picnic.

Family

Rogue Valley Family Fun Center is the active option. Crater Rock Museum is the all-weather one, with rocks, minerals and regional history.

Food and wine

The Rogue Creamery cheese shop in Central Point is an easy first stop. The Rogue Valley Wine Passport helps you plan a tasting day, and DANCIN Vineyards is worth booking ahead.

Shows and events

The Craterian Theater books touring and local performances downtown. The Expo in Central Point hosts fairs, shows and concerts through the year. Travel Medford's events page is the live calendar I check.

A normal week might include

- A morning hike on Roxy Ann, then lunch in town.
- A cheese and wine afternoon in Central Point.
- An evening show at the Craterian.

PLAN AHEAD

Tasting rooms often want reservations, and event dates change. Use the live calendars above rather than last year's dates.

03 · HISTORIC TOWN AND WINE COUNTRY VALLEY OUTING

Jacksonville and the Applegate Valley

These get lumped together, but they're two different Saturdays. Jacksonville is a historic small town with a cultural calendar. The Applegate Valley is farm and wine country spread along the river. Decide which one you want more often, because that shapes where you'd want to live.

Jacksonville

See the town. Trolley tours and the themed tours at the C.C. Beekman House are a good first afternoon. Both are seasonal and some need reservations.

Walk it. The Jacksonville Woodlands trail system and the Sarah Zigler Trail start close to town. Check posted trail notices and rules before you head out.

Hear it. The Britt Music & Arts Festival is the summer anchor. The lineup changes every year, so go by the live calendar.

The Applegate Valley

Taste it. The Applegate Valley Wine Trail links tasting rooms along the valley. Pick two or three, not seven, and bring a designated driver.

Shop it. A Sunday growers' market and local farm stands round out the day. The Jacksonville Chamber keeps a current list.

Live it. If you're drawn to land, the Applegate is one of the places I'd show you. Read page 7 first.

The Jacksonville year

Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Wildflowers in the Woodlands.	Britt season and trolley tours.	Wine-country events and harvest.	Holiday lights downtown.

PLAN AHEAD

Tours, concerts and tasting rooms run on seasonal schedules. Confirm dates and reservations on each operator's site before you build a day around them.

> *Pick two or three tasting rooms, not seven. You'll actually remember the day.*
>
> Michael O'Coyne

 VALLEY OUTING

Ashland, Talent and Phoenix

The south valley is its own choice, not a bigger version of Grants Pass. Ashland is built around theatre, Lithia Park and quick access to the mountains. Talent and Phoenix sit between Ashland and Medford with their own small-town history. From Grants Pass, Ashland is a shorter day trip. Living there changes the rhythm of your week.

Everyday outdoors

Lithia Park is for strolling, gardens and the creek, and it connects to the larger trail network of the Ashland Creek Watershed. Travel Ashland has current maps.

Family and rainy days

ScienceWorks is a hands-on science museum. Check its visit page for schedule, admission and sensory and accessibility information.

Date night

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival is the reason many people know Ashland. Plan around its live performance calendar.

Mountain days

Mt. Ashland is seasonal and depends on conditions. Check its status the morning you go.

Food, wine and heritage

The south valley shares the Rogue Valley's food and wine scene. For a short heritage stop, the Talent Historical Society and the Phoenix Museum are worth an hour. Check hours before you drive.

A normal week might include

- A morning loop through Lithia Park.
- A rainy Saturday at ScienceWorks.
- An evening at OSF, dinner first.

> *Ashland makes a good day trip from Grants Pass. Living there is a different week. Visit both ways before you decide.*
>
> Michael O'Coyne

SIDE BY SIDE

Compare the valley

No area here is objectively best. The right one is the one that matches your week. Here's how I'd frame them for someone deciding where to start looking.

Area	Best for	Consider if	From a Grants Pass base
Grants Pass and Josephine County	A working downtown, the Rogue in town, and rural land close by.	You don't mind crossing the valley for some larger venues and services.	EVERYDAY
Medford and Central Point	Living closer to the valley's larger events, venues and services.	A bigger-town pace suits you, and Roxy Ann and Bear Creek Park appeal as everyday options.	VALLEY OUTING
Jacksonville and the Applegate	A historic small town, or a farm-and-vineyard setting.	You're happy planning around seasonal events and rural roads.	VALLEY OUTING
Ashland, Talent and Phoenix	Theatre, park and watershed time, and mountain access.	Culture is the center of your week and you'd rather be near Mt. Ashland than the Rogue.	VALLEY OUTING
Caves and coast	Planned adventures and overnights.	You treat them as trips, not errands.	FULL DAY

Five questions to ask your household

- ☐ What do we want close by on an ordinary weekday?
- ☐ What are we happy to drive for once a month?
- ☐ Do we want a yard, a few acres, or real land?
- ☐ Which matters more: river, theatre, wine country or mountains?
- ☐ When family visits, what do we want to show them?

Want this filled in for your household?

Send me your answers to the five questions above and I'll return a short, Grants Pass–first comparison of the areas that fit, with the homes worth touring in each.

05 · THE OUTER EDGE FULL DAY

Longer day trips: plan, don't promise

Part of living here is what's within reach for a long day or an overnight. None of these is a quick errand, and I won't pretend otherwise.

Oregon Caves National Monument & Preserve

FULL DAY

Guided cave tours plus geology, hiking, wildlife and a Junior Ranger program. Tours use timed tickets.

The National Park Service warns that the final eight miles are narrow, steep and winding. From Cave Junction to the visitor center is about 50 minutes, plus a roughly 900-foot walk. Check the vehicle guidance before you bring a trailer or a big rig.

Gold Beach and the lower Rogue

FULL DAY

A relaxed river-and-wildlife day on a jet boat tour, then food and a walk on the beach. Visit Gold Beach lists fishing, cycling and beachcombing options.

Brookings–Harbor and the Boardman corridor

FULL DAY OR OVERNIGHT

Harris Beach State Park, the Boardman viewpoints (Arch Rock, Thunder Rock Cove, Natural Bridges, Lone Ranch), paddling with South Coast Tours, the Chetco Valley Historical Museum and harbor events.

Plan on roughly two hours to this stretch of coast; Brookings can run longer. I usually suggest an overnight.

Crater Lake

EXTENDED TRIP

Worth it, but it's a longer, conditions-dependent day. Check seasonal hours and current conditions before you commit.

BEFORE YOU GO ODOT TripCheck · Oregon Caves tours · Caves directions · Crater Lake conditions

> *If a trip needs a mountain road, a timed ticket or a tide check, it's a full day. Plan it like one.*
>
> Michael O'Coyne

YOUR PLANNING SHEET

Relocation checklist

Print this page, fill it in together, and bring it to our first call. It's the fastest way to turn a vague "we want Southern Oregon" into a short list.

Your week

- [ ] Our top three weekly activities: _____
- [ ] Must be close: grocery, medical, school, work, river, trails
- [ ] Happy to drive for: shows, wine country, mountains, coast
- [ ] How often family or friends will visit

The property

- [ ] In town, edge of town, or rural
- [ ] Lot size or acreage we want: _____
- [ ] Shop, barn, studio or ADU plans
- [ ] Single level, guest space, home office
- [ ] Timing: when we need to be moved: _____

If you're looking at land

- [ ] Well: yield, quality, shared or private
- [ ] Septic: age, permits, capacity
- [ ] Water rights, if any, and their status
- [ ] Road access, easements and maintenance
- [ ] County zoning for our plans
- [ ] Wildfire: defensible space, insurance quote
- [ ] Permits on existing outbuildings

Planning your visit

- [ ] Two or three areas to compare in person
- [ ] Homes to tour, grouped by area
- [ ] One outing that matches our week
- [ ] Reservations made, roads checked

FAQ

Straight answers

Which areas suit a river-and-outdoors routine?

Grants Pass, with the Rogue running through town and Riverside Park on its banks. For trails, add the Jacksonville Woodlands, Roxy Ann in Medford and the Ashland Creek Watershed.

What should I look into on acreage?

Water first: the well and any water rights. Then septic, road access and easements, county zoning for your plans, wildfire exposure and insurance, and permits on outbuildings. Page 7 walks through each.

Which outings need reservations?

Plan ahead for Oregon Caves tours (timed tickets), guided jetboat trips, Jacksonville trolley and Beekman House tours, Oregon Shakespeare Festival performances and many tasting rooms. Confirm with each operator.

Which trips take a full day?

The Oregon Caves and the coast. Crater Lake is longer still and depends on conditions. Ashland is a shorter day trip from Grants Pass.

What about schools, taxes and commute times?

I left them out on purpose. They change, and they deserve current, dated numbers for your exact situation. Ask me and I'll pull them with sources.

What does a visit with you look like?

Usually two or three days. We orient you to the areas that fit, tour the homes that match, and fit in one or two stops that reflect how you'd actually spend your time here.

Do I need to be ready to buy to call?

No. Plenty of people call a year out. The earlier we talk, the better your visit goes.

Have a question that isn't here?

Call or text 541-218-7762, or email mocoyne@michaelocoyne.com. If I don't know the answer, I'll find out and tell you where it came from.

NEXT STEP

Let's build your plan.

Pick whichever is most useful right now. Each one is written for your household, by me, not generated by a form.

Area comparison

A short, Grants Pass–first comparison of the two or three areas that match your week.

Visit itinerary

A two- or three-day plan that mixes area orientation, homes to tour and stops your household will enjoy.

Rural checklist

My pre-offer question set for land and rural homes: water, septic, access, zoning, wildfire, outbuildings.

To get started, tell me: where you're moving from, your timing, what a good week looks like, the kind of property and land you want, and how you like to be contacted.

Build my relocation plan

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I live in Grants Pass and serve buyers and sellers across 24 communities in Josephine and Jackson Counties. I'm a founding board member of Main Street Grants Pass and serve on the city's Tourism Advisory Committee.

2024 Reader's Choice Best Realtor, *Southern Oregon Magazine*

Valuing relationships over transactions.

Equal Housing Opportunity. RE/MAX Integrity. Each office independently owned and operated. Information was compiled from official operator, park, museum and government sources and checked October 31, 2026. Hours, events, tickets, trail status and road conditions change; confirm with each operator before you travel. Drive times are planning ranges. Nothing in this guide is legal, tax, insurance or land-use advice.

SOURCES

Where to check before you go

Official pages used for this guide, checked October 31, 2026. Use these for current hours, dates, tickets and conditions.

Grants Pass and Josephine County

City of Grants Pass: Riverside Park

City of Grants Pass: Parks, Recreation and Urban Forestry

Hellgate Jetboat Excursions

Wildlife Images: Plan Your Visit

Applegate Valley Wine Trail

Visit Grants Pass: Applegate Valley

Josephine County Historical Society

Grants Pass Museum of Art

Visit Grants Pass

Medford and Central Point

Travel Medford: Prescott Park

City of Medford: Bear Creek Park

Rogue Valley Family Fun Center

Crater Rock Museum

Rogue Creamery: Central Point Cheese Shop

Travel Medford: Rogue Valley Wine Passport

DANCIN Vineyards

Craterian Theater

The Expo, Jackson County

Travel Medford: Events and Festivals

Jacksonville and the Applegate

Jacksonville Chamber: Trolley Tours

Historic Jacksonville: Victorian Theme Tours

Jacksonville Woodlands Association

Britt Music & Arts Festival

Jacksonville Chamber: Explore Southern Oregon

Ashland, Talent and Phoenix

Travel Oregon: Six ways to explore Ashland

Travel Ashland

ScienceWorks: Visit

Oregon Shakespeare Festival: Plan your visit

Mt. Ashland

Travel Oregon: Food and wine in the Rogue Valley

Talent Historical Society

Travel Oregon: Phoenix Museum

Day trips and the coast

NPS: Oregon Caves guided tours

NPS: Oregon Caves directions

Travel Oregon: Gold Beach to Brookings

Oregon State Parks: Harris Beach

Visit Gold Beach: Jet Boat Tours

South Coast Tours

Chetco Valley Historical Museum

Port of Brookings Harbor: Events

NPS: Crater Lake hours and seasons

NPS: Crater Lake conditions

ODOT TripCheck