

# ROGUE RIVER

## Lots to crow about for small city on the river

By Tricia Drevets  
for the Daily Courier

Rogue River is a small town with a lot to crow about.

In her 2025 State of the City message, Mayor Pam VanArsdale, who presides over a six-member City council, writes. “In the 25 years that I’ve been here, the city has managed to keep its values and charm yet grow and improve.”

One of the highlights of 2024 VanArsdale mentions in her message is the completion of Rooster Park with a mural wall dedicated to Wanda Nesbit, founder of the Rogue River Mural Society. Giant colorful murals depicting the early 20th century decorate Rogue River, adding a sense of small-town charm.

And speaking of crowing, Rooster Park is home to the city’s annual Rooster Crowing Contest, which celebrated its 71st year in 2024. The festival includes a crowing contest — for birds and humans — a parade, a car show, live music, and vendors with arts and crafts and food.

With a population of just over 2,400, Rogue River is nestled between Grants Pass and Gold Hill along I-5 and the banks of the Rogue River. You can’t miss the distinctive bridge spanning the river or the giant white “RR” letters that emblazon the hillside above the town.

Established in 1912, the City of Rogue River has been recognized as a Tree City USA for four decades. It boasts seven city parks, including the Palmerton Arboretum with its collection of some 100 different tree species from around the world, including a Hiroshima Peace Tree. The ginkgo grew from seeds collected from a tree that survived the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

Like many of its neighboring towns, the city of Rogue River was important to 19th-century gold miners. Legend has it that miners crossed the Rogue during periods of high water by holding onto their horses’ tails. Thus, the river crossing where the town now sits became known as Tailholt.

About 1850, an enterprising Davis Evans built a ferry and two cabins at the mouth of Evans Creek. That location served as a spot for mule trains that freighted supplies to gather for their trip to the gold mines. In 1868, a covered bridge was built to further aid the Evans Creek crossing.

In 1872, John Woods settled on the east side of Evans Creek, and Tailholt became known as Woodville for its new lumber mill. The Woodville post office operated from 1876 until 1912 when the name officially changed to Rogue River. You can learn more about the city’s history at the Woodville Museum at 199 First St.

Murphy Plywood, one of the last working mills in Southern Oregon, and the distinctive gold and blue domes of the area’s only Eastern Orthodox church, St. Innocent of Irkutsk, are other notable landmarks near the Rogue River I-5 exit 48.

Attractions located in or near Rogue River include:

- Downtown murals, a series of colorful murals depicting early 20th-century life, painted by artist Bob Eding, were commissioned by a small community group.

- John F. Fleming Veteran’s Memorial Park, 8880 Rogue River Highway, 541-582-0242.

- Greenway Trail, Depot Street Bridge and Interstate 5 to Twin Bridges Road in Gold Hill; [roguerivergreenway.org](http://roguerivergreenway.org).

- Palmerton Arboretum, 300 W. Evans Creek Road; 541-582-4401.

- Rooster Park, 200 Pine St.; 541-582-4401.

- Rogue River Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center, 8898 Rogue River Highway, 541-582-0242.

- Rogue River Community Center, 132 Broadway St., 541-582-0609.
- Wimer Covered Bridge, Covered Bridge Road, 7 miles north-east of Rogue River in the small town of Wimer, [wimercovered-bridge.org](http://wimercovered-bridge.org).
- Woodville Museum, 199 First St.; 541-582-3088.

## ROGUE RIVER PARKS



The city of Rogue River offers seven parks. Here’s a complete list:

- 1. Palmerton Park.** In addition to an arboretum, the park features a playground and paved walking paths. Skevington Crossing bridge leads across Evans Creek to Anna Classick Bicentennial Park.
- 2. Anna Classick Bicentennial Park.** It features tennis and basketball courts and access to Palmerton Park via a footbridge.
- 3. Ponderosa Memorial Tree Park.** Located off of Willow Lane, this park offers paths for walking.
- 4. Downtown Plaza.** In addition to parking for downtown businesses, this corner spot offers bathrooms, a water feature and the Tree of Hope memorializing Hope Warren.
- 5. John F. Fleming Memorial Park.** A boat ramp offers access to the Rogue River. A war monument was built in 2010.
- 6. Coyote Evans Park.** This park offers access to the Rogue River.
- 7. Rooster Park.** Next to the Woodville Museum, this park will host Rooster Crow and museum events.