

## [Dalai Lama set to visit Portland Oregon](#)

### Local News

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Portland, OR (AP) - Portland seems like a natural place for the Dalai Lama to visit. City leaders infuriated the Chinese government three years ago when they approved "Tibet Awareness Day" and a city commissioner raised the Tibetan flag in front of City Hall. Residents, meanwhile, have a reputation for environmentalism and a desire for self-development. They are spiritual, not dogmatically religious. But the red-and-saffron-robed spiritual leader, despite frequent U.S. tours, has not been to Portland since he told a sold-out Memorial Coliseum crowd that humanity appeared to have learned its lessons from the violent 20th century, and expressed hope for a more peaceful next 100 years. Terrorists brought down the Twin Towers four months later, triggering a century that has so far been defined by war, fear and heightened security. Now, as the country reels from a bombing at the Boston Marathon, the Buddhist monk known as His Holiness finally returns to Oregon. A May 10 speech at the University of Oregon, where \$20 tickets were reportedly being re-sold for more than 10 times that price, is sandwiched between environmental-themed events in Portland.

"The topic is really cool and it fits well with the place," said Katrina Brooks, who is studying the Tibetan language at Maitripa College, the Buddhist institution in southeast Portland that is hosting the visit. Though big for the city, the Dalai Lama's appearance is huge for a college that was founded just seven years ago and has one classroom, a meditation room, roughly 60 students and an endowment of less than \$1 million. School president and professor Yangsi Rinpoche said he approached the Dalai Lama about visiting Portland when he saw him in Madison, Wis., in 2006. His Holiness was agreeable to the idea, Rinpoche said. Five years later, in southern France, he got up the nerve to remind him. "I had met him several times, but I didn't want to bug him all the time. But, of course, I bugged his secretary all the time," he said with a laugh. Rinpoche said the Dalai Lama probably does not come to Portland regularly because "though naturally beautiful; it's not as politically strategic an area as New York or Washington D.C. to pursue his goals of greater autonomy for Tibetans and the protection of their traditional Buddhist culture. The 77-year-old spiritual leader was chosen as the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940. Believed to be the reincarnation of his predecessor, he has lived in India since 1959, when he and thousands of other Tibetans fled following a failed uprising against Chinese rule. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Rinpoche said "everybody wants a ticket" to next month's events, but the demand has yet to translate into a surge of people seeking to enroll at the tiny college that, even with its name attached to the Dalai Lama's visit, is virtually unknown in Portland. Despite its low-profile, the school has attracted students from as far away as Romania and Australia. "Somebody who is looking for something, they will find it," he said cryptically. One Maitripa student, Don Polevacik, took a break from his work as a social worker and therapist to study under Rinpoche in the Master of Divinity program. He is eager for his first opportunity to be in the Dalai Lama's presence. "I'm one of the few at the school who hasn't seen him yet," he said. "I'm relatively new to Buddhism, at least in this life, and I'm really, really excited about this incredible opportunity, not only for our school but for Portland. It's the joy of having a world figure come to our city and spread

the word of peace, compassion and really caring for other people first.&rdquo;