

Traveling the Northern Oregon Coast: Breathtaking Views and Historical Reviews

by Roger Sauer, PassPorter Guest Contributor

With few exceptions (those of Washington State, Alaska, and Hawaii), one cannot get farther in the United States from Walt Disney World than the Oregon Coast. Stretching about 300 miles from the mouth of the Columbia River in the north to the California Border in the south, the Oregon coastline offers a variety of recreational, historical, and novelty sites. Most of these can be visited along Highway 101, which offers breathtaking views of the blue Pacific Ocean in between the small towns that dot the coastline.

How to get there: If travelers are flying in, Portland International Airport (PDX) is about 90 miles east of Highway 101. Reach the coast via U.S. 26 westbound from Portland, passing through the Coast Range (elevation about 1,600 feet). Most national car rental chains are located at PDX.

The first coastal town one will encounter after leaving U.S. 26 is Seaside, a tourist-centric little city with lots of hotel/motel space. A lengthy beach featuring a great surfing area is at the south end of town, adjacent to the promontory known as Tillamook Head (experienced surfers will do better here due to the rocky shore). Unlike the temperate seas near Florida and California, the water here is almost always cold. The Seaside Aquarium is a fun way to spend a few hours and during the summer months, and here are amusements such as bumper cars and indoor garden golf along the main business/tourist street known as Broadway. For seafood with a view, try the Shiloh Inn at Broadway on the "prom," a promenade walkway that parallels the beach for two miles. For better seafood without a view, one cannot do better than Dooger's (also found in Cannon Beach and Warrenton).

Historically, the Seaside area is recognized as the end of the Lewis and Clark Trail. Toward the south of town is the site of the duo's salt cairn, where the explorers collected salt by boiling seawater. In addition, modern explorers might like to hike over Tillamook Head to Cannon Beach in the south and see the same terrain that Lewis and Clark viewed over 200 years ago. The explorers traversed the promontory to view a dead whale that had washed up near what is now Indian Beach. There are two well-equipped picnic areas near Cannon Beach; but if you prefer not to hike, the town is only a ten minute drive south of Seaside. Cannon Beach is recognized as a leading Oregon arts

community and there are many galleries featuring paintings, sculpture, glass, and fiber pieces. Several motels line the main street and offer reasonable seasonal rates.

There are two public golf courses nearby: Seaside Municipal (9 holes) and the Highlands Course (18 holes) about five miles north. The latter course has a few tees that overlook the ocean. A private course can be found at the Astoria Country Club further north. This links-type course is advertised as the St. Andrews of Oregon due to its similarity to the famed Scottish course.

Also north of Seaside are the neighboring towns Warrenton and Hammond. Known as centers for deep sea fishing, there is a large boat basin where tourists can sign up for fishing trips (salmon is the principal catch) during the season. Due to recent severe low levels in the salmon runs, these seasons can be very short or limited to areas well beyond the mouth of the Columbia River on which these towns reside. Going over the Columbia River bar into the open Pacific can present a challenge to those whose stomachs are queasy. Nearby is the re-creation of old Fort Clatsop where some of the first explorers including Lewis and Clark made an early settlement.

Beyond these two towns one crosses the Young's Bay Bridge into the city of Astoria, which lies on a hill between the bay and the Columbia River. A bridge connects Astoria with Washington State across the river. Along the slopes of the hill are many older homes featuring Gothic exteriors with lots of gingerbread details. One home, the Flavel House, is open for tours. To the west of town lie the Maritime Museum featuring artifacts of the town's historic relationship with the sea, and also a large indoor public water park that can be used year-round. Undoubtedly, you have seen Astoria in any number of movies. Short Circuit, Goonies, The Ring 2, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2 are but a few films made in the area. (When I was principal at Seaside High School in 1990, I was lucky enough to get Arnold Schwarzenegger to speak at the school's graduation when he was working on Kindergarten Cop!)

One can get a great view of the entire region by driving up to the top of the hill on which the town rests and climb the Astor Column, a tower decorated on the outside with a fresco-type painting depicting the history of the area. A visitor can see north to Washington, west to the ocean, south to the Young's River Bay, and East across the Oregon Coast Range.

The best time to visit the North Oregon Coast? Rumors about Oregon rain are based on fact and winters tend to be wet though mild. Summers

can be sunny. When it gets hot in the Oregon interior, clouds and fog can last for days along the shoreline. Fall is a great time to visit as summertime tourist numbers are down and the beaches enjoy lovely weather.

About The Author: Dr. Roger Sauer is a retired educator who, with his wife Donna, has visited every Disney theme park in the world over the past seven years. He has written articles for PassPorter News on Tokyo Disney Parks, Maui, Tibet, and the debate over taking children out of school for Disney vacations.

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