

Oregon Coast Adventures Summary

by Pete & Christina King

Updated Oct 14, 2024

This is not a river story but a guide to the Oregon Coast - one of our favorite places to visit. Yes, we pass by some whitewater rivers along our coastal travels but have never run any rivers in Oregon or California. Friends and family have asked why we keep returning again and again, this guide attempts to explain why. Unfortunately, this guide only gives you a taste of Oregon, there is much more to the coast than we have been able to capture here. Enjoy!

Distance: It is approximately 3,700 miles round trip from Buena Vista, CO to the Oregon Coast and back. Our preference is to go from Astoria (south on Hwy 101) to Brookings, Oregon, then turn around and return the way you came. We usually drive quickly across Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Oregon and then slow down dramatically once we get to the Columbia River Gorge. Aire and Cascade Outfitters (Maravia) are fun stops in Boise which can break up the trip. Once you reach Hwy 101 in Oregon, unless you are a logging truck or large RV, my advice is to give way to these big rigs. They will not shift over and will win if they hit you. The Oregon coast is fairly crowded during the prime summer months but can be quite empty in early June and Oct through the Winter. The commercial Oregon Crab season usually runs from Dec to August but it seems like a crabworker strike (or regulatory agency) always delays the annual official opening of Dec 1 to several weeks/months later every year. It can start as late as Jan 15.

Weather: It can rain a lot! Be mentally and physically prepared (rain slickers) and do not let it stop any beach and hiking activities you have planned. We have visited in early June (nice weather and not crowded) and numerous times from October through January. Winter surf and storms can be quite intimidating but also wonderfully exciting. It gets dark early in the winter so plan on dining at restaurants for dinner when possible. *Hint: An odd trend I have noticed is that most seafood markets seem to be located on the south end of towns. I do not know why.* Temperatures (even in December) can be mild (highs of 50 to 60's). We have had warm trips and cold/rainy trips - all were great. Note the numerous Tsunami warning signs that abound along the coast. I wish you good luck if you hear the sirens for a real Tsunami. We have heard communities test the sirens but since most of the Oregon State Parks on this stretch are on the beach, my guess is that most campers would find it impossible to escape if a Tsunami arrives quickly. It would be incredibly difficult to run to high ground for safety in the middle of the night. High ground can be far away.

Camping/Restaurant ratings: Almost all of the Oregon state park campsites are open year round and MOST have showers included (they do not have to worry about freezing temperatures and no separate coins are needed for showers). In addition, Yurts and Cabins are available. I would recommend against tent camping if you can avoid it because packing up wet rain tents EVERY day can get old quickly. In my opinion, Oregon State Parks are the best in the country! They are usually located on prime beachfront real estate with soft sand dunes, steep cliffs, brilliant sunsets, colorful tide pools, wind twisted trees, steep hiking/biking trails, etc....Go to [Oregon State Parks](#) to get the details. My impression is that there are far fewer hotels directly on the beach compared to the prime real estate in state parks. I have set up a personal rating system for some of the camps mentioned below that also apply to my personal restaurant ratings as well! I am usually not a fan of clam chowder but this coast produces a delicious product.

5 = Excellent

4 = Good

3 = Average

2 = Poor

1 = Do not stay/eat here!

Activities:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking • Biking • Crabbing • Clamming- very easy to learn and be successful! • Tidepooling • Fishing • Shelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rockhounding • Whale watching • Boating- both ocean and whitewater • Aquarium- Oregon Coast Aquarium • Walking the beaches • Seafood- opportunities abound for delicious dining out or the ability to purchase fresh seafood to cook at home or at camp
---	--

Whale watching tips: bring good binoculars, unless you have seen whales spouting before I recommend stopping if you see a lot of people at a viewpoint. There are several [whale watching seasons](#) so plan accordingly if you want to do this special activity. Cape Foulweather usually has volunteer whale spotters on duty to help you out. They are the pro's and can help you spot them. Calm seas help when spying for whale spouts. Once you have spotted one whale, you can usually recognize whales on your own the next time around.

Things to bring:

- Rain slickers
- Rubber rain boots
- Sturdy Large Umbrella
- Binoculars
- Your Dog- they will love the beach and Oregon beaches are very dog friendly! (do not forget to use pooper scooper mitts)
- Hiking boots (waterproofed)- Sandals are too cold in the off-season

Recommended Reading:

- [Oregon Mile by Mile Guide Free!](#) - order it by calling 1-888-628-2101
- Annual Tide Charts & Tide Pools- pick up materials at any Oregon visitor center
- [The Journals of Lewis & Clark](#) by Stephen Ambrose
- Undaunted Courage by Stephen Ambrose
- Oregon Coastal Access Guide
- Magnificent Places: Oregon Coast
- Photographers Guide to the Oregon Coast
- Frommer's & Fodor's Oregon
- [Exploring the Wild Oregon Coast](#) by Bonnie Henderson

Useful Links:

- [Oregon State Parks](#)
- [Oregon Coast Visitors Association](#)
- [Oregon Tidepools & State Parks Tidepools Brochure Map](#)
- [Columbia River Gorge](#)
- [Streaming Video of the Coast](#)
- [One of our YouTube trip videos](#)
- [Another YouTube trip video](#)

Interesting and Scenic Oregon Lighthouses: many have free tours

Cape Meares Yaquina Head Yaquina Bay Heceta Head	Umpqua River Cape Arago Coquille River Cape Blanco
---	---

Favorite Tide Pools and my notes:

Tide Pools	Comments (E, M, D)- easy, moderate or difficult to get to
Ecola State Park - 2 miles north of Cannon Beach	M
Hugpoint State Park, up on the famous "Hugpoint" area	?
Haystack Rock - At Cannon Beach	E- minimal if at all
Cape Meares - 10 miles west of Tillamook & 1 mile north of Oceanside	M
Oceanside @ south end of beach, by rock cliff	minimal
Maxwell Point - 9 miles west of Tillamook	E, next to Oceanside
Cape Lookout - 18 miles south of Tillamook, Pacific City Loop	M
Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area - Three Capes Scenic Loop (Pacific City)	E/M, lots of smooth polished ocean stones also
Lincoln City @ Roads End Wayside	
Boiler Bay - 1 mile south of Depoe Bay at the State Scenic Viewpoint	D and hazardous surf; underwater at most medium tides
Otter Rock - 9 miles north of Newport	M
Agate Beach Tide Pools	Could not find them at low tide
Yaquina Head - Agate Beach, 4 miles north of Newport. Seal Rock State Recreation Area - 12 miles south of Newport	E, go to Basalt beach – see below, not the Quarry area, fee area- worth it at low tide only
Basalt Beach - Starting at the Yaquina Head lighthouse, you follow a winding stair down to a cobbled beach - the round, smooth, jet-black basalt stones are a result of underwater volcanic eruptions	M, much better than quarry fee area at Yaquina Head, lots of seals too

Seal Rock State Recreation site	E/M
Yachats State Recreation Area - Just north of the Yachats River	E, very good
Cape Perpetua Scenic Area Captain Cook Trail (to tidepools) - 0.6-mile loop from the Interpretive Center, under Highway 101, through wind-sculpted vegetation, past an old CCC camp, Indian shell middens and tide pools. At high tide the Spouting Horn can be observed across Cook's Chasm. Paved, easy walk.	E, very good
Neptune State Park - 13 miles south of Waldport Bob Creek (Bray Point) - Southern edge of Neptune State Park	E
Bob Creek to Bray Point	E/M, very very good!
Sunset Bay State Park - 9 miles south of Coos Bay	E
Cape Arago State park - 11 miles south of Coos Bay (3 coves to explore)	M
Five Mile Point - 13 miles south of Coos Bay at Seven Devils Road	E
Coquille Point - West of Bandon at south bank of Coquille River	E
Cape Blanco State Park - 10 miles northwest of Port Orford	M
Port Orford - North of Boat dock on west 9th street Rocky Point - 3 miles south of Port Orford Arizona Ranch Beach - 12 miles south of Port Orford (fee through private campground)	E
Lone Ranch Beach - 5 miles north of Brookings	E
Harris Beach State Recreation Area - Just north of Brookings Winchuk Beach - North side of Winchuk River	E

West/then North to South: Our favorite spots...and ratings:

State	Cities	Nearby Campsites	Ratings	Hotels	Restaurants	Ratings	Notes
CO	Glenwood Springs & Two Rivers Park	Glenwood Canyon Resort – not stayed here	3	Quality Inn West Glenwood along the river	Qdoba	3	Great dog walking park along the river
CO	Fruita	James M Robb State Park, Fruita section in Colorado	4	Comfort Inn	Fiesta Guadalajara (great soft chili rellenos)	4	Campground: Open year round but no showers in winter
UT	Many locations				Kneaders & Quick Quack Car Washes	5	Great pastries & bread, many locations in the West Great fast carwashes
ID	Twin Falls	Twin Falls 93 RV Park	3		Papa Kelsey's Hot Sub sandwiches	5	RV park: Open year round
ID	Twin Falls	KOA also in Twin Falls	3		Idaho Joe's great breakfast	4	KOA: Open summer through Oct but might accommodate you in winter, call to check
ID	Meridian		4	Comfort Suites in W Meridian		3	Boise Cascade Outfitters & Maravia, Aire river boats
OR	Boardman	Boardman Marina & RV Park	5				favorite campsites along the river include; #30, 29, 26, 27, 28, 15, 17, 19, 21
OR	Columbia River Gorge		5				Celilo Park & Indian fishing platforms, Bonneville Dam system
OR	Hood River		5	Columbia River Gorge Hotel			Start looking for Mt Hood vistas
OR	The Dalles		3	Shiloh Inn & Comfort Inn			Bonneville Dam & fish ladder tour seasonal, City Park, Windseeker Rest area & Columbia Gorge River Discovery Center)
WA	Hwy 97 turnoff over the Sam Hill bridge	Maryhill State Park	?				Looks good but never stayed here

OR	Multnomah Falls		5				Great day stop before entering Portland
OR	Westport				The Berry Patch Restaurant	Marionberry Pie 4 Chowder 3	Mt St Helens vistas & Pie!
WA	Long Beach				Crab Pot Seafood Market and Restaurant	Crab 4	Oysterville loop drive, can also drive on the beach
OR	Astoria					4	Astoria Column , Columbia River Maritime Museum , check out the Ship Report
OR	Seaside				Doogers Restaurant	Clam Chowder 5 Steamers 3	Tuesdays & Wednesdays
OR	Astoria , Cannon Beach, Florence, Lincoln City, Newport, Newport Annex, Otter Rock, PDX, Seaside				Mo's Seafood & Chowder	Steamers & Crab 4 Clam Chowder 4	
OR	Astoria, Seaside , Cannon Beach, Lincoln City, Newport				Pig n Pancake	Crepes 4	Great breakfast!
OR	Seaside		5	Best Western Seaside Ocean/Beachside View OR VRBO Seaside Beach Condos			
OR	Seaside/Warrenton	Fort Stevens State Park	5				Peter Iredale wreck, many trails, beaches, jetty, Lewis & Clark Fort Clatsop
OR	Seaside				Seaside Brewery	Steamers 4	

OR	Seaside				Bell Buoy Seafood Market	Crab 5 Chowder 3	
OR	Seaside				Norma's	Clam Chowder 5	Crab, Fish n Chips, Seafood Pasta, etc...yummy
OR	Seaside				Dundeess	Steamers 4 Clam Chowder 3	
OR	Seaside			Best Western Seaside Ocean/Beachside View		5	Rooms 311, 411, 511
OR	Seaside Aquarium		1				<i>Seaside Aquarium is depressing (do not visit or support this particular type of aquarium*). Think of seals trapped in a backyard swimming pool and you get the experience</i>
OR	Cannon Beach	Ecola State Park, day use only	5				<i>Art community & Haystack Rock</i>
OR	Astoria, Cannon Beach , Florence, Lincoln City, Newport, Newport Annex, Otter Rock, PDX, Seaside				Mo's Seafood & Chowder	Steamers & Crab 4 Clam Chowder 4	
OR	Astoria, Seaside, Cannon Beach , Lincoln City, Newport				Pig n Pancake	Crepes 4	
OR	Tillamook	Munson Creek Falls - day use	4		Tillamook Cheese Factory	4	<i>Factory tour</i>
OR	Cape Kiwanda	Cape Lookout State Park , no beach sand at high tide	4				<i>Three Capes scenic route, Cape Meares State Park, Lighthouse, Octopus tree, Cape Kiwanda</i>

OR	Pacific City				Inn at Cape Kiwanda	5	<i>Sea Cave. Rooms 301-310</i>
OR	Astoria, Cannon Beach, Florence, Lincoln City , Newport, Newport Annex, Otter Rock, PDX, Seaside				Mo's Seafood & Chowder	Steamers & Crab 4 Clam Chowder 4	<i>Taft Historic District</i>
OR	Astoria, Seaside, Cannon Beach, Lincoln City , Newport				Pig n Pancake	Crepes 4	
OR	Depoe Bay & Newport/Nye Beach				Chowder Bowl	Clam Chowder 4	<i>Watch surf crash up on seawall</i>
OR	Cape Foulweather	Beverly Beach State Park, wrong side of highway	1				<i>From here to Beverly Beach- great whale watching sites, Otter Crest Loop and Devils Punchbowl</i>
OR	Astoria, Cannon Beach, Florence, Lincoln City, Newport, Newport Annex, Otter Rock , PDX, Seaside				Mo's Seafood & Chowder	Steamers & Crab 4 Clam Chowder 4	Seasonally open
OR	Newport	South Beach State Park	5	Comfort Inn		4	<i>Oregon Coast Aquarium 5, huge marina bayfront district & seals, from Newport to Carl Washburne lots of beach access points and trails, many places to stop and enjoy</i>
OR	Astoria, Cannon Beach, Florence, Lincoln City, Newport , Newport Annex , Otter Rock, PDX, Seaside				Mo's Seafood & Chowder	Steamers & Crab 4 Clam Chowder 4	

OR	Astoria, Seaside, Cannon Beach, Lincoln City, Newport				Pig n Pancake	Crepes 4	
OR	Depoe Bay & Newport/Nye Beach				Chowder Bowl	Clam Chowder 4	
OR	Newport				Newport Café	4	<i>Great breakfast</i>
OR		Beachside State Recreation site	5				<i>Closed after Oct 31</i>
OR		Tillikum Beach FS campground	5				<i>Forest service site, no showers or hookups, #17, 18, 13, 15</i>
OR		Carl Washburne State Park	1				<i>Wrong side of highway - No beach access but has showers, Cape Perpetua- closed on winter, Spouting Horn & Cook's Chasm, Heceta Head Lighthouse, Sea Lion Caves (tourist trap)</i>
OR	Florence						<i>Historic District with seals Oregon Dunes (no beach or view access but lots of ATVing in sand dunes)</i>
OR	Astoria, Cannon Beach, Florence , Lincoln City, Newport, Newport Annex, Otter Rock, PDX, Seaside				Mo's Seafood & Chowder	Steamers & Crab 4 Clam Chowder 4	
OR	Umpqua	Umpqua State Park	1				<i>Dark no ocean views</i>
OR	Reedsport	Umpqua River Discovery Center	1				<i>BLM Dean Creek Elk Viewing area- 3 mile side trip up Hwy 38</i>
OR	Coos Bay area	Sunset Bay State Park	4		Bandon Dunes Golf Resort	4	<i>Bandon Dunes can be very expensive, no views</i>

OR	Bandon	Bullards Beach State Park	4		Tony's Crab Shack	Crab 5 Clam Chowder 3	<i>Coquille Lighthouse, historic district, Cranberry Sweets, Bandon Baking Company</i>
OR	Bandon				Table Rock Motel	5	