

Oregon Road Trip - Take the Slow Road



JANE MUNDY

Published on: September 29, 2017 | Last Updated: October 18, 2017 9:41 AM PDT



Manzanita beach JANE MUNDY

The best road trips aren't just about driving. If you want more time to unwind and explore than sit behind the wheel, take at least a week to meander

down the Pacific Coast and take in the natural beauty of Washington and Oregon.

Rather than drive all the way, we took the Amtrak from Vancouver and seven hours later arrived in Portland relaxed. (Next time we'll pack a lunch and snacks to go with the wine.) In our rental car, we checked into the Cannery Pier Hotel in Astoria with enough time to enjoy the Columbia River view from our private balcony and meet fellow travellers sipping wine in the lobby. We also planned on eating the freshest seafood—easy to do along the Oregon Coast—starting with Clemente's, run by four generations of fishing families, where the daily specials are determined by what hits the net that day.



Cannon Beach is a great place for the family. *JANE MUNDY*

Since much of the Oregon Coast is public land, you have access to endless beaches and great picnic spots from highway 101. We topped our cooler with bagels from the Astoria Co-Op, drove 20 minutes to Cannon Beach and picnicked at Haystack Rock, a monolith that rises 235 feet out of the sea at low tide. Known as one of nature's most amazing outdoor aquariums, visitors are mesmerized by the tide pools filled with orange and purple starfish and sea anemones. Mussels and limpets vie for space on the rocks and all overseen by terns and puffins that call this area home year-round.

If you love beaches and shopping (only privately-owned businesses are found at Canon Beach, including art galleries, two fabulous book stores and too many clothing stores where I did serious retail damage), you might want to stay two nights at the Ocean Lodge, just steps from the beach. Bonus: the Lodge gave us yoga passes to Canon Beach Yoga Arts—nothing like a good stretch after sitting in a car for any length of time. Don't miss dinner at The Wayfarer: Everything we had, from the Black Sands Ginger Drop martini to Chinook salmon, was perfect. Chef's philosophy is to "let Mother Nature show off", and the restaurant prides itself on product traceability, from the fishing vessels hauling in salmon to foragers picking wild mushrooms to olive oil from the Oregon Olive Mill. And lunch at Pelican Pub is a must—it's one of those happy places where you can go barefoot and sink your toes in the sand while enjoying a bowl of steamers and a tower of onion rings.

Next stop is Newport, the Dungeness crab capital of the world. Bring a bucket to build sandcastles, or weather permitting, pop into the Kite Company. At Local Oceans Seafoods almost everything on the menu comes from Newport Docks across the street. It doesn't get much fresher, unless you bring the cooler and cash and join a free "Shop at the Dock" tour that connects seafood lovers with commercial fishers.

Florence and points south are all about sand dunes and sea lions. Billed as home to the world's largest stellar sea lion den, the Sea Lion Caves are accessible only by an elevator ride down to a massive window overlooking these animals in their natural habitat. From underground to far above sea level, we pulled the car over at several viewing points for jaw-dropping views and photo ops, including Cape Perpetua, which is the highest scenic outlook at 800 feet above sea level. It's here where you can really get a feel for the rugged and awesome Oregon Coast.

Florence is the gateway to Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, so strap yourself into a dune buggy and laugh and scream like you're on a roller coaster. How about a sleepover in a lighthouse? Perched 150 feet above the sea, Heceta Head Lighthouse is also a B&B.

By day three, some exercise was required. Just south of Florence, C&M Stables offers a variety of horseback rides and 50 horses to match everyone's ability. Our conscientious guide took us, clip-clopping along, through the dunes to a misty beach, which is pretty much accessed only by horseback.

You've got to visit Eugene if only for dinner at the Oregon Electric Station, originally built in 1914 as a train station. We slid into one of the antique railroad cars and settled on more steamers and salmon and S'mores cake. From Eugene we headed inland, stopped at Red Hills Market for pizza and refilled our cooler with local cheeses and snacks for a trip through wine country.



Charcuterie at Stoller Vineyards *JANE MUNDY*

With 200 wineries within a 30-minute drive it's tough to decide on where to taste. We read that Stoller Vineyards is the first LEED Gold Certified winery in the world, and it was a good choice. As we gazed over acres of vineyards, heard nothing but songbirds, and tucked into our picnic with a gorgeous Pinot noir, all was right with the world.

In the heart of Willamette Valley is the Vintages Trailer Resort and our 1965 Boles Aero, parked next to a 1959 Airstream. For someone who doesn't

camp it was a bit cramped, but fun nonetheless. Each trailer comes with a propane grill and everything you need to cook dinner, including a wine opener. But we heard so much about Nick's Italian Café in McMinnville we had to go. No wonder the winemakers discuss their grapes here over home-style pasta. And if you're fond of quirky, check out McMenamins Hotel Oregon. Actually, it's almost creepy, which of course is their intention. After a brief walk down its halls, the walls heaving with eerie art and spooky portraits with eyes following you, we made our way up to the rooftop lounge for jalapeno margaritas and found out that here is alien central: the UFO festival is held here every May. Of course.

Our last night was South-East Portland and Tiny Digs Hotel, a refreshing change from hotels. Individually and tastefully decorated, I had the "Beach House" and my friend glamped in the "Gypsy Wagon." And talk about attention to detail: the charming owners know that every inch counts in small spaces.

We had planned on dinner downtown but loved our new digs and the cool Kerns neighbourhood, starting at the Stammtisch for German beer and ending at Fifty Licks, arguably the best ice cream in Portland. And all within a few blocks.

Before catching the train home, we drove to Washington Park, home to the world-famous Japanese Garden and International Rose Test Garden. If you only have time for one stop, this is it. Next trip will have to be two weeks.

The writer was a guest of Travel Oregon, which neither reviewed nor approved this article before publication.

TRENDING STORIES



Trending Stories

[Read More](#)

[◀ Previous](#)

Comments

We encourage all readers to share their views on our articles and blog posts. We are committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion, so we ask you to avoid personal attacks, and please keep your comments relevant and respectful. If you encounter a comment that is abusive, click the "X" in the upper right corner of the comment box to report spam or abuse. We are using Facebook commenting. Visit our FAQ page (<http://www.vancouver.sun.com/news/story.html?id=7195492>) for more information.

([HTTP://WWW.POSTMEDIA.COM](http://www.postmedia.com))

© 2017 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication strictly prohibited.

Powered by WordPress.com VIP (<https://vip.wordpress.com/>?

[utm_source=vip_powered_wpcom&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=VIP%20Footer%20Credit&utm_term=vancouver.sun.com](https://www.vancouver.sun.com/news/story.html?id=7195492))