



Oregon Coast Odyssey

Storm Light on Seastacks, Bandon State Natural Area

Mark Rasmussen
Hennepin, IL



Mark Rasmussen

Any mention of products or services in this article or anywhere else in the *PSA Journal* does not constitute an endorsement or approval of those items.

Cannon Beach

Let's start our Oregon coast odyssey in the land of sand castles. There isn't a better place to begin a fantasy trip. Each summer thousands of enthusiastic people: young, old and every age in between, gather at Cannon Beach to enjoy sand castles and brightly colored kites zipping about in the ocean breezes. Friends and family relish the marvels of the sea. Romantic evenings await those who invite into their souls the tranquil mood of an evening stroll that the coast provides. Some choose to have their hearts and hands warmed by amicable company and a beach fire on a crisp quiet night. Others allow the magic of the coast to help absorb themselves in reflection.

Oswald West State Park

As we drive the winding coastal highway southward, leaving sand castles and Haystack Rocks behind, the land rises. Oftentimes, on days of seemingly impenetrable fog, as the road and land rise, we find ourselves emerging from the fog, as if waking from a dream. Except our dream is real, we remain cruising along the Oregon coast.

The high, scenic cliffs of Oswald West State Park seem more reminiscent of Hawaii than what one might expect of the pacific coast of the mainland. Most of the Oregon coast is level, with easy access to the water's frolicking edge. Thankfully, due to the foresight of the State of Oregon, most all of the land on the coast is owned by the state. Fortunately for us visitors, this

wonderland has been designated as State Parks! This means that we have the freedom to pursue our dreams, to walk right into the incoming surf and enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of the joining of the wonderful world of water and land's end.

Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area

Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area is likely the most intriguing location in our odyssey at the Oregon coast. Cape Kiwanda is one of the more explosive locations as well! The relentless onslaught of waves battle the sea cliffs formed of solidified ancient sand dunes. This story has been acted out for eons. Grain by grain, though sometimes boulder by boulder, this ancient "grudge match" between the energy of the sea and the resiliency of the land is won and lost.

We are the real winners, being fortunate enough to have the precious chance to witness this battle. The sounds and sights of this furious struggle captivate us. The beauty of evening light is entrancing, as it accentuates the color of the cliffs. The tension of water versus stone is released in earth-shattering blows delivered by the waves.

Devil's Thumb State Park

After curving down off of the coastal highway, onto a side road that swirls around the hills much like the incoming surf swirls around rock formations on the beach, we arrive at Devil's Thumb State Park.

It is a fabulous time to get out of the vehicle and

stretch our legs and horizons by making a short, but exhilarating, hike up and around the coastal headlands on our way to experience the Heceta Head Lighthouse. The lighthouse is superb, but the view looking out is just as spectacular!

Shore Acres State Park

When the surf is crashing at Shore Acres State Park, there is no place more exciting to be! Immense walls of breaking surf, carrying with them awe-inspiring amounts of sheer energy, come hurling themselves against the rocky slopes. The state park visitor can not help but be caught up in all the action and boundless energy of the sea set free.

On occasion, the year round resident grey whales can be seen from the viewpoints while one walks along the well-maintained trails. Even at times when the surf is not crashing, pleasures await the visitor at Shore Acres State Park, for the Botanical Gardens can supply the eyes with superb colors of nature's flowering bonanza.

Bandon State Natural Area

Bandon State Natural Area is a beautiful waterscape born of the sea and of the wind. Often, at dawn, tender sunlight finds its way through the breaking storm, until at last reaching a place of rest upon a sea stack worthy of being its perch. The sea stacks are worn relentlessly by the water and wind. They too perhaps may find comfort in being bathed by the light's warmth.

Whether the visitor finds themselves winding their way through a profusion of sea stacks; searching for, finding, and exploring intriguing sea caves or enjoying a horseback ride amongst these ancient remnants of headlands on a late afternoon jaunt, there is always joy, adventure, and intrigue to be experienced at Bandon.

After an exciting day of exploration for us, the colors of the Oregon coast become alive once more as the sun nears setting and beyond. Peace and tranquility again find their way into our hearts, inspired by glowing skies and heart-warming reflections.

Bandon State Natural Area is one place that we can't resist staying for an extra hour, an extra day, or even an additional week. To some, a lifetime here would still not be enough time spent. The fascinating beauty of the waterscape, the ocean whispering "sweet nothings" in our ears, all has a magnetism that reaches out and embraces us. We know that we'll be back. Not only that, but the ocean knows that we will return, just as the river returns to the sea, so shall we.

Harris Beach State Park

While state park visitors match wits and foot speed in a game of beach football, our traveling companion gleefully tosses bread to the reeling



seabirds flying over their head. Let's make our way up the sea stack that lies waiting for us at the edge of the parking area at Harris Beach State Park.

The view looking out at sunset from our newfound perch is a marvelous on this fine evening. Don't you agree? Many wonderful memories will forever be part of our experience from our "Oregon Coast Odyssey"! ■

*S Curve and Sunstar,
Cannon Beach*

Photos © Mark Rasmussen

*Frozen in Time, Cape
Kiwanda*

