

Oregon Coast

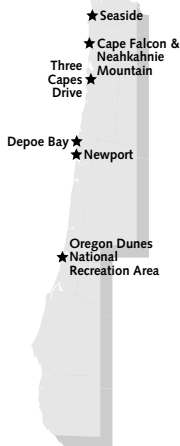


Driving along Oregon's coast is a must-see highlight any time of year. Rocky headlands loom high above the ocean, providing astounding vistas, while craggy rocks lie scattered along the shoreline like oceanic sentinels. The Coast Range is deeply etched by great rivers and patched with forests, offering outdoor enthusiasts excellent boating, fishing and hiking opportunities. The Oregon Dunes – among the largest coastal dunes in the world – stretch for over 50 miles, and, offshore, gray whales migrate from Alaska to Mexico and back.

Thanks to a far-sighted government in the 1910s, Oregon's 362-mile Pacific Coast was set aside as public land and strung with over 70 state parks and protected areas. The northern Oregon coast has developed more quickly than the southern end, offering travelers a choice between bustling beach resorts and blissfully laid-back retreats. And everyone from campers to gourmet-lovers will find a plethora of opportunities to enjoy this exceptional region.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nibbling fish 'n chips or crab cakes in a cheap shack or fine restaurant in towns like **Seaside** (p293)
- Spotting gray whales during their migrations up and down the coast from **Depoe Bay** (p299)
- Hiking the **Cape Falcon and Neahkahnie Mountain Trails** (p295) for awesome views
- Checking out the jellyfish and sea otters at Newport's **Oregon Coast Aquarium** (p299)
- Sticking to the coast when US 101 veers inland by taking the stunning **Three Capes Drive** (p296)
- Camping and hiking among the towering sand dunes of the **Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area** (p305)



Geography & Climate

Spectacular cliffs and rocky beaches characterize much of the region (the best are in the stretches running between Yachats and Florence and between Port Orford and Brookings), and the central coast boasts some impressive sand dunes. The Pacific Ocean's moderating influence makes for mostly frost-free winters at lower elevations on the coast, with average lows in around 35°F and highs around 50°F. The barrier to the east formed by the Coast Range triggers a lot of winter precipitation, though, and annual totals reach between about 55in and 110in, depending on the area. Summers are fairly dry, with high temperatures averaging in the mid-to-upper 60s.

Getting There & Around

The entire Oregon coast – from the Washington border to the California line – is traversed by US 101. It's a mostly two-lane highway, and in summer often gets clogged with traffic. Still, considering the public transportation gaps and sometimes spotty bus schedules, your best bet for conveniently seeing the whole coast is by car.

The coast is served by a patchwork of city and county bus systems. Amtrak Thruway or Porter Stage Lines buses run between small towns along the coast to major inland cities like Portland or Eugene, providing connections to train stations. The only scheduled flights into the area are from Portland to the south coast town of North Bend (Coos Bay), on Horizon Air.

NORTHERN OREGON COAST

Oregon's northern coast stretches from the mouth of the Columbia River south to Florence. Here lie the state's biggest and most touristy beach towns – Seaside, Cannon Beach and Lincoln City – while Depoe Bay is big on whale-watching and Newport is famous for its excellent aquarium.

Because of its popularity, the northern coast tends to get clogged with weekend visitors from Portland and the Willamette Valley. Traffic can slow to 20mph in sections, since US 101 is mostly two-lane highway and there are many RVs on the windy stretches. Also, expect to join the masses during summer

