

Take a hike!

Top 5 treks at Oswald West State Park



View of Neahkahnie from the trail leading to Cape Falcon.

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The first time I heard about Manzanita, it was because a tornado had rolled in from the ocean and torn through the small coastal town.

On October 14, 2016, a cyclone with wind speeds of 130 mph ripped through the city's downtown, damaging 128 homes and causing \$1 million of damage in just two minutes.

"There were pieces of downtown all over downtown," City Manager Jerry Taylor told the North Coast Citizen. "It was a total surprise. I keep telling the story of my cell phone going off saying 'Tornado! Tornado!' and I said my phone was busted because we don't have tornadoes here."

One year later, the damage is barely noticeable. There are a few impacted buildings around town, but beyond that, the main attraction has returned to the area's natural beauty.

And there is a lot to be had. Nestled between Neahkanie Mountain to the north, and Nehalem Bay to the south, Manzanita is a town on the doorstep of two state parks.

While fishing, kayaking and surfing are all popular here, hiking is probably the area's most common activity for visitors.

Here's a breakdown of the area's best hikes, which travel to mountaintops, coastal beaches and old-growth forest.

5) Manzanita Beach

Miles of sandy beach between Neahkanie Mountain and Nehalem Bay make for excellent hiking, fat biking or just building sand castles.

It's easy to stroll from downtown Manzanita onto the beach and there are multiple access points for parking.

My favorite area is on the north side of town, where the cliffs of Neahkanie seem to rise straight overhead and you can actually see the rocky cliffs that mark the sum-



Top: A viewpoint overlooks Manzanita along the Oregon Coast. **Bottom:** Neahkahnie Mountain Trail is home to one of the area's best hikes.

PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

mit at 1,680 feet.

Directions: Drive to downtown Manzanita and follow Laneda Avenue toward the beach. More parking can be found along Ocean Road.

4) Nehalem Bay State Park

This 5-mile loop includes the beach and a forested trail, with the highlight being the north jetty of Nehalem Bay.

The trek begins and ends at Nehalem Bay State Park at the main day-use and horse rental area.

Start by following the Spit Trail for two miles, through coastal forest and occasional views of the bay, until you reach the North Jetty.

Then, enjoy the mouth of the river while walking out onto the beach. Follow the sandy beach back to your car.

It's a somewhat challenging

hike, given all the beach walking, but worthwhile.

Directions: From Manzanita, drive south to Nehalem Bay State Park. Start from the day use area.

3) Short Sand Beach

The most popular hike at Oswald West State Park, just north of Manzanita, follows a short and easy trail through old-growth forest to one of Oregon's more famous beaches.

It's just a 1-mile round-trip to reach this cliff-walled beach, after beginning at a large and sometimes crowded trailhead right off U.S. Highway 101.

You'll often find surfers here, which makes for some entertainment. And the hike, while short, is beautiful, navigating ancient cedars in temperate rainforest.

The trail follows Short Sand Creek, crosses a bridge and reaches the beach. If it's a nice weekend, you'll want to start early, because this area fills up quickly.

There's a host of side loops along the trail, including Sitka Spruce and Old Growth Forest trails. There are lots of possible loops that could extend the walk.

Directions: From Manzanita, drive north on U.S. 101 for four miles to the multiple large and obvious trailheads along the highway.

2) Neahkanie Mountain

There is magic on this mountain. The tallest peak on the northern coast is the legendary home of gods and buried treasure, as well as the inspiration for movies and novels.

Today, it's home to one of the area's best hikes with a 1,680-foot summit of spectacular beauty.

The hike can be as short as 3 miles out-and-back, or a longer 3.5 miles one-way. The most common climb up the mountain begins from the South Neahkahnie Trailhead and ascends 900 feet through shady old-growth forest.

You'll reach a beautiful viewpoint along the trail at mile 1.5, but

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Free entry, food at Oregon state parks on 'Green Friday'

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The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is looking to lure people from the malls to the trails with free entry, snacks and drinks at state parks the day after Thanksgiving.

The agency declared Nov. 24 to be "Green Friday," an outdoors-based holiday intended as the antithesis of shopping-focused "Black Friday."

All parking fees will be waived at Oregon's state parks, and drinks and snacks will be offered at five of Oregon's most

popular parks, including Silver Falls.

"We started this tradition three years ago to encourage people to opt outside," said OPRD director Lisa Sumption. "Why not get some fresh air with your family and create a new holiday tradition?"

The hot drinks and snacks will be offered at Tryon Creek State Natural Area, Fort Stevens State Park, Rooster Rock State Park, Silver Falls State Park and Cape Blanco State Park.

Refreshments — which were donated by Starbucks Coffee, Nossa Familia Coffee, Smith Tea, Stevens Cocoa and KIND Bars — will be served to guests by volunteers.



Visitors hike the South Falls trail on "Green Friday" last year at Silver Falls State Park. Oregon's state parks, including Silver Falls, were free on Black Friday as a way to encourage people to get outdoors instead of spending the day shopping. DANIELLE PETERSON / STATESMAN JOURNAL