

Outdoors

Best hikes near Brookings, Oregon



A view of Vulcan Lake in its orange basin in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. PHOTOS BY ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Zach Urness
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

For the vast majority of Oregonians, the city of Brookings takes a long time to reach.

It's a five-hour drive from much of the Willamette Valley — and even longer from Portland — to visit this town on the extreme southwest end of Oregon's coast.

But don't let the distance dissuade you from a trip.

Brookings, in combination with Gold Beach to the north, represents my favorite part of the Oregon Coast. The main reason is that you can access three distinctly different regions: Oregon's only collection of old-growth redwoods, the utterly unique Kalmiopsis Wilderness and what's arguably the most beautiful

stretch of coast.

Just west U.S. Highway 101 between Brookings and Gold Beach is an experience to behold.

But let's stick to hikes. Here are my 7 favorite hikes near Brookings, including a mix of easy and more challenging options.

Honorable mention: Harris Beach

One of Oregon's great state parks offers everything you could want in a family camping experience: nice campsites, yurt rentals and a stunning ocean beach.

Located just north of town, Harris Beach features a nice collection of short family-friendly hikes — mostly near the campground — to the beach and through the coastal forest.

It's well worth a stop here for an easy

day trip — or better yet, camping.

Directions/coordinates: Drive just north of Brookings to the park's entry.

Coordinates: 42.0655479,-124.3060599.

Oregon Redwoods Trail

The first of the two trails among old-growth redwoods, this 1.8 mile hike offers a quieter experience and a fun backstory.

In 1988, the U.S. Forest Service planned two timber sales for this grove. The sale included plans to cut about 300 trees, resulting in a whopping 3 million board feet. A story in the Register-Guard newspaper outraged Oregon's populace, and eventually resulted in the sale being canceled.

Today, a trail explores this once-condemned grove of redwoods on a path cut

in preparation of the timber sale.

From the trailhead, the path begins among unimpressive Douglas firs. After 0.4 miles, the trail reaches a junction in the first grove of redwoods. Stay right at all junctions, and in a short while you'll reach a hollowed-out redwood you can walk inside. The trail reaches a second redwood grove at mile 1.3 and the best grove at mile 1.5. Savor each step before looping back to the trailhead.

Directions: From Brookings, drive south on Highway 101 for five miles. Turn left on Winchuck Road (following signs for Oregon Redwoods Trail) for 1.5 miles, then turn right across a bridge onto Peavine Ridge Road for 4 miles of somewhat bumpy gravel road to the trailhead. The route has many signs pointing people in the correct direction.

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Middle schoolers are a tough audience

Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

A recent speaking engagement at the Salem Creekside Rotary Club reminded me about a 1945 quote attributed to Winston Churchill about then-British Prime Minister Clement Attlee: "Attlee is a modest little man who has a great deal to be modest about."

Call me Clement. Speaking, you see, is not my forte. As several people have noted, I have a face made for radio ... and a voice best suited to writing.

Your truly suffers from an affliction when speaking to a roomful of strangers that I call "balloon tongue."

It's a temporary speech impediment in the throes of which everything comes out as if you're talking through a mouthful of dry saltines smothered in marsh-

mallow fluff. The timbre, tone, pitch and volume of my delivery has been charitably described as "strained voice of terrified hostage delivered over a sketchy connection."

It turned out that my first speaking engagement after three years of being ignored in retirement was a relatively painless gig.

The Creekside Rotarians were an affable, thankfully manageable group of about a dozen attentive listeners.

My wife, Kay, knowing about my trepidation of public speaking, asks me why I persist in getting back on the balky bronco.

To which I reply that it's because of something that the late, great columnist Jerry Easterling once told me about his willingness to speak to any and all groups.

Paraphrasing: "Henry," he said. "I do it because after they hear me, every time they read one of my columns, they'll

hear it in my voice." Which upon further reflection might not be that much of a bonus.

Jerry, a longtime auctioneer, had a pleasant voice as relaxing as honey-laced chamomile tea and as comfortable as a well-worn pair of kid gloves.

Mine is more along the lines of pea gravel in a blender on the puree setting.

RE: Churchill's alleged description of Clement Attlee's abilities.

I related a story at the Rotary Club about one of my first efforts at community outreach as a guest speaker at Mill City Middle School.

My vision was to share my love of the printed word and the unbridled pleasures of conveying it to others with a roomful of prospective journalists or, dare I say it, award-winning authors.

Note to self about speaking to middle-schoolers: If it's just before lunch, or the dismissal buzzer, they're going to be

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Anybody have a clue what these are? Not the dollar, silly, that's for size perspective. These ginormous, flapjack-colored mushrooms were on the trail into Woodmansee Park when Harry and I took a walk there. HENRY MILLER / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

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