

Outdoors

THE BEST OUTDOOR TRIPS ACROSS OREGON IN 2019



A kayak loaded up for a trip to one of the boat-in, or dispersed campsites, at Waldo Lake. ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

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One of the joys in writing about Oregon's outdoors is that you never run out of interesting places to visit.

There are so many rivers, mountains and campgrounds that even after 13 years of outdoor reporting I haven't seen half of the cool places this state has to offer.

At the same time, it's also interesting seeing places in a new way — and that was a big theme for our outdoors section in 2019.

Whether hiking a trail transformed by wildfire, fishing a reservoir at extreme low water or paddling a flooded Salem park, this year was a good reminder that Oregon's outdoors is dynamic, not static.

With that, I give you the 10 most interesting travel destinations of the past year. It does include completely new spots, but it also highlights ways to experience places we know and love in a different way.

As ever, we're counting them down in reverse order.

See the online edition for links to the full stories and podcasts for each place listed.

10. Treasure hunting in Oregon's beach and mountains

One of the more successful tourism campaigns of the past few years has



Adam Spencer of Redwood Rides navigates his boat into the "redwood float" on the Smith River at Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park. ZACH URNESS / STATESMAN JOURNAL

been officials hiding glass treasure on the Lincoln City beaches as a way to inspire people to get outdoors during the off-season.

In the last two years, the idea has expanded to the mountains and forest, with the Willamette Valley Visitors Association hiding 200 glass Christmas tree ornaments on hiking trails in Willamette National Forest.

Both ideas have worked. The idea that there is treasure hidden in the sand or forest has inspired a handful of trips with my two young children, and we've met a lot of other families doing the

same.

It's a fun and new way to experience the outdoors and I hope both areas continue it in coming years.

9. Flooded forest at Minto-Brown Island Park

As the Willamette River rose to levels not seen since 2012, water flooded across Salem's Minto-Brown Island Park.

Salem's largest park was closed to hiking, biking and all the normal activities, but it offered the opportunity to

paddlers to explore a unique flooded forest.

As the river hit borderline flood stage, around 25.5 feet, the tops of signs sprouted up through the muddy water, helping us navigate a network of pathways that had literally become water trails. A sign on the park's main entry road reminded us to keep our paddling speed below 20 MPH.

This is the second time I've paddled Minto in the water. The first time, the Willamette was at about 18 feet.

8. Visiting the inside of Oregon's lighthouses

Over the last two years, Statesman Journal producer David Davis and I have visited every lighthouse in Oregon that you can visit.

We documented the trips and interviewed the tour guides for an episode of the Explore Oregon Podcast and a story that looks at the strengths and weaknesses of each lighthouse.

We decided our two favorites were Yaquina Head Lighthouse near Newport and Cape Blanco Lighthouse near Port Orford.

You can listen and subscribe to the Explore Oregon Podcast on your iPhone, Google Play or Stitcher. You can also find all 20 episodes we've recorded at: <https://www.statesmanjournal.com/outdoors/explore/>

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Henry Miller's clamming guide for 2020



Fishing
Henry Miller
Guest columnist

Looks as if 2020 is going to have some great opportunities to play in the mud ... and the sand, for that matter.

Yes, it's time once again for Henry's annual clamming calendar featuring highlights of minus tides on Oregon's central and north coast.

In keeping with the theme of the previous week's column, the "tiers of joy" art of outdoor recreation on the cheap, a pair of minus tides fall during Free Fishing Days in Oregon when no license or tags are required to clam, crab or fish in the Beaver State.

For the thrifty among us, those are the weekend of June 6 and 7, which feature some of the lowest tides of the year.

As a bonus, both bottom out at respectable hours — minus-1.52 feet at 8:08 a.m. on Saturday, minus-1.46 feet on Sunday at Taft on Siletz Bay; minus-2.26 feet at 7:54 a.m. Saturday and



Clamming is a shovel-ready outdoor pastime for you and a couple of hundred new bucket buddies. HENRY MILLER/SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

8:38 a.m. minus-2.17 feet Sunday at Garibaldi on Tillamook Bay.

Taft, just south of Lincoln City, is the closest clamming bay to Salem and provides an absolutely awesome first trip for kids or beginning clammers.

So much for the freebies.

As far as the pay-to-play options that fall during holiday weekends, I could find only one: bodaciously low tides on

July 4 and 5, with a full moon, no kidding, rising as the sun sets on Saturday, July 4.

Next up for those willing to shell out (again, can't help myself) \$10 for an annual resident shellfish permit (12 and older) who are gainfully employed and can't get away on weekdays are the minus-tides series that fall on the weekends.

Sorry. I should have asked sooner. Clueless about clamming?

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has a wealth of information online, including maps, at https://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/fishing/crabbing_clamming.asp

For the sake of brevity, since I can't insert sour-face emojis in the column, I'll just use a (D) for weekend low tides that fall during inky darkness and (D+) for inky darkness but with a full or near-full moon.

Likewise, (D-) stands for minus tides that fall near the new (read that no) moon, while (+) stands for minus tides that hit low ebb during daylight...

Disclaimer: Despite my awesome

powers as a retired outdoor columnist and outdoor writer, cloud cover, rain, etc. are beyond anyone's control, including editors.

Weekend minus tides fall on Jan. 11 and 12 (D+, full moon is Jan.10); Jan. 25 and 26 (D-, moonsets are before minus tides both nights); Feb. 8 and 9 (D+, full moon is Feb. 8); March 7 and 8 (D+, full moon is March 9); April 11 and 12 (+), lows move into daylight hours); May 9 and 10 (+!); May 23 and 24 (+!); June 6 and 7 (+!); June 20 and 21 (+!).

July 18 and 20 minus tides are (+, sort of), right around sunrise, as are the tides on Aug. 1 and 2 (Saturday's falling just before and Sunday's just after the sun peeks out).

Rounding out 2020 are a couple of (D-) weekends on Oct. 17 and 18, Nov. 14 (new moon that night) and Nov. 15, and Dec. 12 and 13. Ironically, the new-moon timing is irrelevant for all of those, October, November and December weekends because the moon dips below the horizon before each of the minus tides.

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