



Bayocean Peninsula County Park is a narrow strip of coastline between Tillamook Bay and the Pacific Ocean. THOMAS PATTERSON/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Coast

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that’s easy on elevation gain, this is it.

David’s pick: Clamming at Garibaldi

In Tillamook Bay at Garibaldi, there are three types of clams you can harvest during the “minus tides” that allow access to the mudflats: the cockle, butter and gaper. I’ve found the cockle has the best combo of easy to harvest and best flavor

and texture.

The easiest way to access the bay is a sandy bar on the north end by the town of Garibaldi (itself famous for the large G on the hillside overlooking the town.) Park in a gravel lot just off Highway 101 and make your way to the pier, then down a cement staircase to the bay.

You can harvest a limit of 20 cockles per day, which can usually be found before the tide starts coming back. Cockles are usually found by looking for a pair of air holes in the sand and digging down a few inches

just next to them. There’s no shortage of recipes out there but a simple clam chowder or clam linguine with cockles you pulled out of the sand makes for a satisfying dish.

You’ll need a bucket, rake or shovel, and a shellfish license before you head out. They’re just \$10 for Oregon residents for the calendar year.

Zach: coastal estuary kayaking

There’s no shortage of rivers and estuaries that make for fun and easy flat-water paddling adventures in Tillamook County. One of the most unique is Sand Lake, which is typically paddled in winter when tides are high enough to flood into the estuary and create passageways in the marsh grass. The lake features dunes and wildlife — including only suspicious harbor seals. Other places worth paddling include the Nehalem and Nestucca river. The outfitter Kayak Tillamook offers a range of trips.

Adam: Steam Donkey Trail

A Steam Donkey was a steam-powered winch that was a critical component of logging operations in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The very easy 0.8 mile combined interpretive loops of the Steam Donkey Trail provide a glimpse into that history, as well as a wonderful walk in the woods. And it’s all right behind the Sunset Rest Area on Highway 26. Who knew?

David: Cape Meares State Scenic Viewpoint

Oregon’s shortest lighthouse is perched 200 feet above the ocean here. At just 38 feet high, the lighthouse almost feels like it could fit in your pocket. In normal times — and hopefully after COVID-19 passes — you can take a tour of the lighthouse and even climb up to the lens room. But even now it’s worth visiting for the scenic hike and oddities like the Octopus tree, a unique sitka spruce that -- the story goes -- was



Camping at Cape Lookout State Park. PHOTO BY DIANE STEVENSON

trained by Native Americans into having arms that go out and then travel skyward to look an awful like, yes, an octopus.

Zach: winter steelhead fishing

The most enjoyable fish to catch in Oregon, in my humble opinion, is the winter steelhead. Big and powerful, yet graceful and with a beautiful silver body, they really are the athletes of the rivers. Tillamook County has a number of places to catch them, from the Nestucca to the Wilson, along with the Trask and Kilches, which are mostly catch and release. My recommendation is to find a good fishing guide in the Tillamook area — there are loads — and make it happen while contributing to the local recreation economy.

Adam: Mount Hebo

About 15 million years ago (give or take) a lava flow from the east formed Mt. Hebo. Quite some time after that, native tribes created a path between the Willamette Valley and the coast that crossed over the high meadows of the mountain. Later, that same trail was improved and served as a horse route for area settlers. The Forest Service found it in 1975, shored it up a little, and in 1984 opened the 8-mile long Pioneer-Indian Trail stretching from Hebo Lake to South Lake. If you catch it on a clear day, the view from atop Mt. Hebo is one of the best in the county, if not the entire north Oregon Coast.

David: Cape Lookout State Park

Most famous for the iconic Cape Trail that travels 2 miles out into the ocean on Cape Lookout, last year’s Labor Day storm knocked down so many trees that all the trails are currently closed at the park. But don’t despair. The state park is still open and provides access to the beach. Yurts and cabins just recently became open for rental. So, even though the famous trails won’t be open



Munson Creek Falls in Tillamook County, an oasis in the Coast Range foothills. THOMAS PATTERSON/STATESMAN JOURNAL

for a bit, this state park still provides a fun escape.

Zach: Proposal Rock and the Neskowin Ghost Forest

This small and inconspicuous beach in Neskowin, north of Lincoln City, packs a lot of history and fascination into a small spot.

From the Neskowin Beach State Recreation Site, walk down onto the beach and you’ll first come across Proposal Rock. As legend goes, it earned its name when 19th Century sailor Charley Gage asked for local gal Della Page’s hand in marriage by taking her out to the sea stack. Today, when the tide is out, you can climb onto Proposal Rock and hike around it. But be careful not to get stuck on the rock when the tides comes back in or you’ll be trapped.

For a less romantic but more interesting experience, visit the beach at the lowest tides to get a glimpse of the Neskowin Ghost Forest. The stumps are all that remains of a forest that was entombed

when a massive earthquake dropped the coastal forest below the sand and preserved it in the salt-water. The ghost forest became visible in 1997-98 after a series of storms swept away layers of sand and now it can be seen at low tide.

Adam: Munson Creek Falls

At just over a half a mile total, the walk to Munson Creek Falls might not qualify as an actual hike. But if ever there was a walk of less than a mile worth taking, this is it. The stroll to Munson Creek Falls is set among massive old-growth western red cedars and Sitka spruce that literally drip with moss and lichen. The falls are 319 feet of three-tiered, awe-inspiring, cascade goodness. It is the tallest in the Coast Range and perhaps the tallest in the state west of the Willamette River.

Honorable mentions: Oswald West State Park (we’re planning a future story on the park and former governor); Tillamook Forest Center (very cool but closed for the pandemic).

Miller

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The trip to Roaring River was cut short because the highway was flooded.

But I did get pictures of a homeowner rescuing his terrified horse in the high water.

While I wasn’t there for the marlin, we caught about a half-dozen warm-ocean-loving foot-long sharks while trolling for salmon about the same time.

I once asked my dad, a 30-plus-year physics teacher, what he liked most about his chosen profession.

“Because it’s different every day,” was his response.

The same can be said for being an outdoors, Sports, Life, news, crime-and-courts reporter, box-

score-taker and columnist.

The best story I ever covered?

The next one.

Optimism elevators

A pleasure in normal times, a positive delight given the current situation, and a guaranteed balm for the winter doldrums has arrived.

Three weeks or so ago, the catalog from Territorial Seed Company in Cottage Grove showed up in the mailbox.

Ditto the week after that, when the annually much-anticipated catalog from Nichols Garden Nursery in Albany arrived.

Both great reads during the frosty, bleak winter months and real spirit-lifter with the anticipation of spring planting.

And that’s on top of recent emails from The

Thyme Garden, a must-stop nursery on the highway between Philomath and Waldport.

Want a taste? Territorial: <https://territorialseed.com> online, or P.O. Box 158, Cottage Grove, OR 97424. Nichols Garden Nursery: <https://www.nicholsgardennursery.com> or 1190 Old Salem Road NE, Albany, OR 97321. The Thyme Garden: <https://www.thymegarden.com> online, or 20546 Alsea Highway, Alsea, OR 97324.

OLDIE, MOLDY FISHING JOKE: Non-angler perusing a display of lures: “Do fish really go for those?”

Tackle department clerk: “We’ve never had a fish come in and buy one.”

Contact Henry Miller at HenryMillerSJ@gmail.com



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