

Worth the Trip: Historic Columbia River Highway *continued from page 9*

of Oregon waterfalls, Multnomah Falls. At 620 feet, this is the second highest year-round waterfall in the U.S. and is the most visited tourist destination in Oregon, another reason to visit in the off season. The trail to the viewing bridge between the upper and lower falls may be closed in winter due to icy conditions but you can still get a great view of the falls from the easily accessible viewing platform. After snapping the obligatory photo, stop at the visitors center or snack bar, or better yet, head inside the lodge to warm up and have

lunch or a cup of hot chocolate in front of the stone fireplace. There is also a small lounge, with multiple northwest beers on tap and local wines, that makes for a nice break on your waterfall tour.

At this point you could turn around and head home, easily accessing I-84, or you can keep going. Continuing down the Columbia River Highway you come across a couple more falls that require hikes (if you aren't waterfalled-out yet), Oneota Falls and Horsetail Falls.

There are numerous other options that don't involve waterfalls if you are considering continuing your Columbia River Gorge adventure. One option is Bonneville Dam, just 15 miles further east on I-84, offering tours of the dam and the fish hatchery that includes a giant sturgeon.

The tiny town of Cascade Locks at the foot of the magically named Bridge of the Gods has a great brewery, Thunder Island. Cross the toll bridge to the Washington side of the Gorge and visit the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center and then the quaint town of Stevenson where there are many options for food and drink, including one of my personal favorites, Walkingman

Brewery. The Bridge of the Gods is named for the natural geologic formation of the same name, a natural dam created by a major landslide several centuries ago. The man-made bridge is a steel structure spanning 1,856 feet; the Pacific Crest Trail crosses the bridge at its lowest elevation on the entire length of the trail.

If you continue east on I-84 you will eventually reach the town of Hood River, home to wind surfers and kite boarders, and also plenty of restaurants and bars, and several wineries and breweries.

Just outside Hood River on Highway 35, turn left onto Eastside Road and wind all the way up to Panorama Point Vista House for a spectacular view of the surrounding countryside and orchards.

Continue on Highway 35 all the way up to Mt. Hood and visit the historic Timberline Lodge or play in the snow at one of several snow parks. Make sure you pick up a Sno*Park Permit and check weather reports and road conditions, or carry traction devices; the weather can be unpredictable and you will most likely encounter snowy conditions.

While the Columbia River Gorge can be treacherous to travel in the winter, it can also be quiet and rather enchanting and... worth the trip.



Above left: Multnomah Falls, Oregon's most visited tourist attraction. Above right: The view of the orchards around Mt. Hood from Panorama Point.

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