Worth the Trip: Historic Columbia River Highway

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Vista House at Crown Point for another dramatic view of the Gorge in both directions. Built between 1916 and 1918 by Multnomah County this stone structure sits 733 feet above the river. It was closed in 2000 and underwent a five year, $4 million renovation, re-opening in the summer of 2005.

From Vista House the Columbia River Highway takes you back down towards the Columbia and the water falls where you can access five falls in just eight miles of driving. Depending on how much time and effort you want to spend, you could easily take the rest of your day hiking to several of these waterfalls along the way. Or you can stop and see a few and turn around and head back; this could all be accomplished in a just a few short hours.

Above: 249 foot Latourell Falls
Below: Inside the lodge at Multnomah Falls

The first fall you will come to is Latourell Falls, which is one of the highest at 249 feet, and easily accessible from the highway parking area. While the fall is visible from the parking area, a short path leads to the base of the falls, where a misty spray awaits you. Located within Guy W. Talbot State Park, if you continue on the trail a 2.1 mile loop can take you to the upper falls, a less popular spot that is worth the effort.

Next up is Shepperd's Dell Falls, a small tiered falls with two drops of 35 and 60 feet. You will need to get out of your car and walk the short trail to the beautiful and historic bridge to view this one.

A bridge on the highway crosses directly over Bridal Veil Falls, which requires a one mile, round trip hike to view the two cascading falls, the 160 foot upper falls and the 50 foot lower falls. After viewing the falls, take a short detour drive to the tiny Bridal Veil Post Office, where many couples send their wedding invitations just to have them mailed with the special post mark.

The Post Office at Bridal Veil, Oregon is a popular postmark for wedding invitations.

At 242 feet Wahkeena Falls should not be missed. Easily viewed from the picnic area parking lot, where you will find restrooms and a picnic pavilion with a stone fireplace, this tiered falls is pretty spectacular. A short half mile moderate hike with a bit of a climb to a stone bridge at the base of the falls provides a worthwhile and rewarding view of this beautiful waterfall.

Just a half mile down the road is the holy grail

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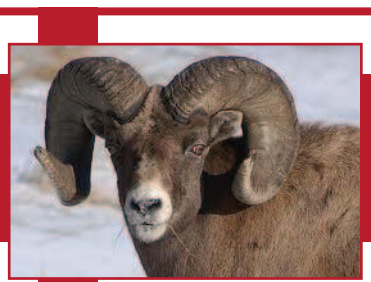

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