

# Worth the Trip: Nehalem River/Coast Loop *continued from front page*

for Henry Rierson Spruce Run Campground. The first five miles of this road to the Spruce Run Campground is nicely paved, but then it turns into a single lane in places and eventually becomes gravel. Spruce Run is a very well maintained Oregon Forest Service campground and offers day-use areas which would make a great spot for a picnic breakfast; there are several other Forest Service picnic sites and camps along Lower Nehalem Road as well.



*Lower Nehalem Road follows the Nehalem River through the Coast Range.*

Most of us think of the Nehalem River as slow and meandering, but through this canyon it picks up speed and descends rather quickly, offering rapids and white water much of the way.

At milepost 9 is Beaver Eddy Campground, a great place to get out and stretch your legs; there is easy access to a rocky beach and the riverfront here. Just past Beaver Eddy at mile 10 the name of the road changes to Foss Road as you cross the Clatsop/Tillamook County line. The Salmonberry River Bridge marks about the halfway mark on this 25 mile route and from here you can get a great view of the old Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad bridge crossing the Nehalem. Farther down the road, around mile post 15 at the Nehalem Falls Campground, is a flat and easy, one-mile loop hike that takes you past the small (eight foot and covered during higher water in winter and spring) Nehalem

Falls, but also winds through a rare stand of old growth Sitka spruce and western hemlock.

When you leave the canyon you'll find yourself in Tillamook dairy pastureland. At the first T intersection turn right onto Miami Foley Road. At the next T turn left onto Highway 53, then turn right onto Highway 101 and head north into Nehalem.

Because the road is rugged and rough, plan on at least one hour to make this part of the drive, more if you plan to stop and explore a bit.

### Time to Play

Once you've reached the coast there are numerous recreation opportunities in this region of the Oregon Coast. You can kayak on Nehalem Bay or pick your favorite spot from the numerous beaches to visit and explore – there's Nehalem Bay State Park just south of Manzanita, and the beach in Manzanita

is long and easily accessible.

My favorite beach is at Oswald West State Park, between Manzanita and Cannon Beach. To access it, park at the Short Sands North parking lot and take the trail under the highway for a short one mile stroll through the coastal forest to Short Sand Beach at Smuggler's Cove. This fairly short beach is protected, offering respite from the constant coastal winds, and offers rocks and tide pools at either end to explore at low tide. It's also a popular surfing spot, so either bring your board or just enjoy watching from the shoreline. Another attraction here is Blumenthal Falls

at the far north end, a scenic 45 foot horsetail fall that drops directly into the ocean.

If you're looking for a longer hike, look no further than the Cape Falcon Trail. You can pick up this trail right at the beach at Smuggler's Cove, or park just north from the Short Sands trailhead on the opposite side of Highway 101. This easy five mile, round-trip trail, part of the Oregon Coast Trail, winds through the coastal forest before opening up for views of the ocean and has minimal elevation gain, but can be muddy in winter and spring.

Looking for something a bit more challenging? Neahkahnie Mountain Trail offers access to one of the highest spots on the Oregon Coast Trail and is also located in Oswald West State Park. You can access the trail at either the South Trailhead, located just north of Manzanita before you enter Oswald West Park, or from the North Trailhead located south of the Short Sands Parking area. Both these steep trails will take you to the Neahkahnie Mountain Viewpoint. The trail from the south is three miles to the summit and gains 840 feet in elevation; the trail from the north is five miles one way and gains 1,450 feet.

### Don't Forget About Lunch

After playing on the beach or hiking up Neahkahnie Mountain, you've probably earned yourself a nice meal and maybe even a tasty beverage. You have plenty of choices in either Manzanita or Cannon Beach, or even back down the road in Nehalem. In Nehalem, my favorite spot is Garden Pizza, offering all



*Blumenthal Falls at Smuggler's Cove*

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