

THROUGH *the* WOODS

by Maddy Kays

I am an asthmatic, and it would really benefit me to remember that when I agree to participate in physical activity with other people. Of course this didn't occur to me when I agreed to go hiking in the Columbia River Gorge with some friends on Sunday, Jan. 25. If you, like me, do not venture into the great outdoors on a regular basis, here are the key things you need to know about hiking in Oregon. Or anywhere in general really.

Always check the weather the day before and the morning of. Always always always. And if you're hiking in Oregon, assume that it will rain.

Dress accordingly. I am a fan of two pairs of socks, one long and one short, jeans, and many layers on top. By which I mean I was wearing a tank top, a T-shirt, a sweater and a fleece-lined jacket. Bring gloves, but not the nice leather ones your mother got you over the holidays. Rather the thick ones that are meant for being worn when you plan on grabbing at trees to steady yourself with, when you trip on a root that you didn't notice.

Wear sturdy shoes. If you don't already own a pair of hiking boots and no one has a pair that you can borrow, settle for your sturdiest shoes. Sneakers are good, just make sure you won't be heartbroken when they get wet and dirty because they will.

Sturdy shoes are really important because hiking can be dangerous. You can trip, slip, slide, tumble, stumble, crash, plunge, plummet and fall at any given moment. Tree roots are everywhere,

and moss is nature's camouflage. I was trying to climb on top of a log for a picture but the ground, which turned out to be a mound of moss covered rocks, went tumbling away and I ever so gracefully went sliding with it. So heed my warning and do not walk on moss.

I would highly recommend the Columbia River Gorge for a day trip. There are 26 waterfalls total, and it overlooks the Columbia River. Wave to Washington on the other side as you make your way up and down the Gorge. We went to the Wakeena and Latourell Falls, both fairly simple hikes. Each hike was less than a mile long and both were breathtakingly beautiful.

The Gorge is home to a long history as well. On July 27, 1915, the Secretary of Agriculture created the nation's first "recreation reserve" in the Gorge. It spans 14 thousand acres and includes waterfalls, cliffs and portions of the Historic Columbia River Highway. In 1915 a man named George Sheppard donated a waterfall and 11 acres as a memorial to his wife. The land is now called Sheppard's Dell. In 1929 Guy and Geraldine Talbot donated the land surrounding Latourell Falls to the state of Oregon in order to preserve the land.

Interested in your own outdoor adventure? You can learn more about the Columbia River Gorge and all it has to offer at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/crgnsa>. Don't forget your extra socks, a bottle of water, a spare tire and of course, your inhaler.



Photo by Becca Moreno



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Photo by Blake Thomason

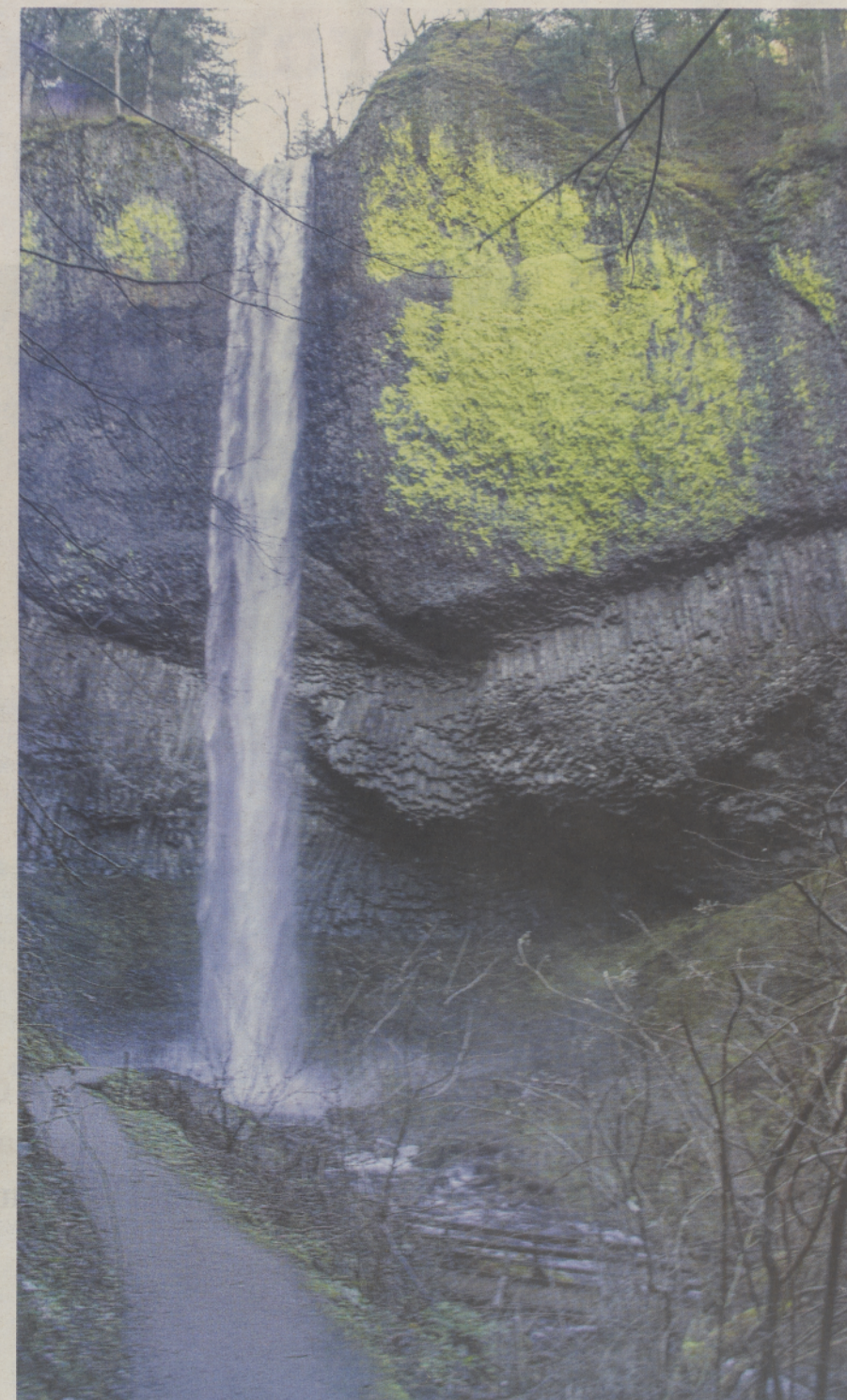


Photo by Becca Moreno

Far left: A hiking trail bridges over Wakeena Falls in the Columbia River Gorge.
Left: The trail leading to Latourell Falls winds through lush forest.
Center: The Columbia River is framed by the foliage from the trail leading to Latourell Falls.
Above: A vibrantly green moss decorates Latourell Falls.