



GOOGLE EARTH

Long Beach

Take a long walk on Oregon's premier wilderness beach

One hundred years ago there were only 25 miles of paved road in the entire state. The longest road in those days wasn't a road at all — in 1913 Gov. Oswald West convinced the Legislature

to declare every beach in Oregon a public right of way open to vehicle, horse and foot traffic, one of the crowning achievements of our state's brief progressive period.

That same year, the Legislature created

Oregon's highway commission, and four years later they were given \$6 million and instructed to "lift Oregon out of the mud." Two years later, Oregon became the first state to tax gasoline, with the revenues dedicated to road construction.

It's been pretty much downhill from there. Today, an astonishing 36,800 miles of paved roads have turned Oregon from a vast wilderness into the odd little joke known as civilization.

Undoubtedly the most scenic drive in Oregon is the Oregon Coast Highway, or Highway 101, initially conceived as a means to augment Oregon's military preparedness, with construction completed on the eve of WWII. Drivers can see the Pacific Ocean from almost all of the 350-mile-long highway.

One exception is the segment between Bandon and Port Orford, where 101 is located approximately 5 miles inland. This stretch of the coast features a very long, very isolated and lovely beach. It is a quintessential Oregon backpacking adventure, which can be done at any time of the year. There can be strong winds in any season, and hiking with the wind at your back makes for far easier going. In the wintertime, the prevailing winds are from south to north, and you'll want to start at Port Orford. In the summer,

the wind's coming from the north, and you'll want to start at Bandon.

You can begin, if you choose, from downtown Port Orford (your vehicle will be safer parked in town than along the side of the highway). You may, however want to begin north of Cape Blanco to avoid having to ford the Elk and Sixes rivers. Both rivers, as well as Fourmile Creek to the north, can be impassable at high flows during the winter and spring (and the consequences of being swept out to sea range from serious to extreme). This area is even more remote than it looks like on the map, and all the normal precautions one takes when traveling in the wilderness should be observed.

The coast north of Port Orford is characterized by high cliffs. Approximately 6.5 miles north of Cape Blanco, there are several trails that take you inland to Floras Lake, a worthwhile side trip. Continuing north, the terrain flattens out into nothing but a long, lonely beach. Inland are interesting marshes with lots of wildlife, including black bears (be careful with your food). North of Two Mile Creek you'll start to encounter crowds admiring the "Bandon Pinnacles," hundreds of sea stacks and spires north and south of Bandon. You're back within a stone's throw of the highway.

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