

Winter Getaways

Just because there's a recession doesn't mean we don't need a break. If the Halloween spending forecast is any indication – the National Retail Federation has predicted people will spend 10 percent more this year on spooky fun than they did last year – then Eugeneans and fellow 99 percenters across the country are looking for a good time for not much money this cold season.

Whether by choice or by accident, if you live in Eugene then you live where it rains. But you also live in a spot conveniently located between the coast and mountains. And if snow and waves aren't your thing, no worries; Eugene has an airport, train station and bus station. If you're not in the mood for a trendy staycation then head out of town this winter and get away. – Camilla Mortensen

Aquarium!

Sleep with scary sea critters

BY SHANNON FINNELL

For every parent who's wanted to throw their kid to the fishes, now there's a chance for them to "Sleep with the Sharks" — but legally, and most definitely not as a punishment. The Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport hosts many sleepovers in its shark tunnel every month, as well as other special events.

Kids sleeping with the sharks do it in a transparent acrylic tunnel that goes through the shark tank, which holds different species of sharks and fish. The bottom even has panes of acrylic material, so the sharks swimming below are visible, too. Public Relations Manager Cindy Hanson says it is something both children and adults can appreciate. "The smaller fish create a sparkly effect because they move together

and their bodies reflect light, so it's really dazzling to see," she says.

Before the children sleep, they learn about life under the sea, including facts about the physiology and behavior of sharks. In the tanks around them, there are seven gills, broadnose, spiny dogfish and leopard sharks, plus different kinds of fish. Hanson says that participants interact with each other in a lot of the activities. "What they really enjoy more than anything is the camaraderie of being there with their friends."

On top of Sleep with the Sharks, the Oregon Coast Aquarium offers holiday-related events, many benefits for other nonprofits, like Creatures of the Day and Creatures of the Night on Oct. 29. The daytime and nighttime event will dial down the "scary" during the day with events for kids 9 and under, then ramp it back up at night with a creepshow cinema and a ghoulish graveyard, all for the benefit of the Central Coast Humane Society, Food Share of Lincoln County and Newport Food Pantry.

Also on the agenda this season are Giant Pacific Octopus Encounters, Sea Lion Encounters and the Holiday Sea of



SHANNON FINNELL

Oregon Coast Aquarium tidepool

Lights. At the octopus event, spectators can even pet the one of the soft creatures. "They're amazing creatures, quite intelligent," Hanson says. "They're said to be as intelligent as a cat." Spectators have until January to check out the rotating exhibit "Swampland."

Of course, even while spending the day at the aquarium, Newport is a busy little city that demands at the very least a wander on Nye or Agate Beach. The city's

active and retired lighthouses are beautiful against a coastal sunset, and the city has some neat bridges, too. The Chowder Bowl has a collection of vintage surfing and tourism photos, while Savory Café is the odd combination of Hawaiian-ish sports bar and vegetarian/vegan-friendly. All this less than three hours from Eugene. **EW**

The Oregon Coast Aquarium is open 10 am to 5 pm daily and is located at 2820 S.E. Ferry Slip Rd., Newport; \$15.95 adult, \$13.95 seniors and ages 13-17, \$9.95 ages 3-12, under age 3 FREE.

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