

COASTAL CAMPING

This is what the rain fly is for
BY ANDY VALENTINE



PHOTO COURTESY KRISTINA VASSILEVA

Well, the rainy weather and inevitable gloom has finally caught up with us, and there's a good chance you now feel it's appropriate to sit on your couch with a blanket and cocoa and never go outside again. I'll let you in on a secret: We're not bears, so start acting Oregonian and get the hell out of town already.

If you follow West 11th and just keep driving past city limits, you'll eventually come to a hard-left, T-junction turn. That's right, the Oregon Coast — and a world of beautiful camping you never even knew existed — is literally *one* turn away. For those with little time — perhaps

you set out late? — Florence is the clear destination of choice for coastal camping. Drive south out of Florence, only an extra five or 10 miles, and you'll reach the Siltcoos and Carter Lake (not to be mistaken for Crater Lake) campgrounds, personal favorites of mine that sit nestled in some of the smaller, northern dunes. Here, the beach, cold ocean air and, if you really *can't* take the rain, then, I guess, Mo's Seafood, are all at your fingertips.

Farther south, your winter camping adventure will get a lot sandier if you pull off just past Reedsport and pitch a tent in the heart of the Oregon Dunes. After only a short, half-mile hike you'll be greeted with an astounding view

of the dunes that stretches as far as the eye can see. Before you start looking for the Cave of Wonders, though, please remember that you're still in Oregon. This is one part of our state that is often forgotten, but it is an absolutely incredible natural phenomenon that every resident must see. In the area, there are several campgrounds and trailheads that lead farther beyond the sand, and a two mile hike through said eroded rocks will leave you, once more, with cold ocean spray hitting your face.

So let's flip this rain the bird (specifically the duck) and hit the coast. First one there gets the best smallow-toasting spot. ■

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