

"MINI-MARCHERS" AT A CANNON BEACH TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR MEASURE 6 IN 1968. THE EVENT DREW MORE THAN 200 SUPPORTERS.



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BEACHES FOREVER!

Why are Oregon Beaches Public, and Where Can You Enjoy One?

BY RACHAEL CARNES

One of the things that makes Oregon so livable is our miles of unspoiled public beaches. More than a century ago, Oregon Gov. Oswald West engineered the first major protection of public access to the state's beaches by convincing the 1913 Oregon

Legislature to declare all the state's tidelands to be a state highway. Wait, what?

If you could teleport yourself to the local beach in 1899, you'd find wagons using the wide expanses of packed sand as the only public roads north and south.

West's workaround held for more than 50 years.

But in 1966, a local hotel owner challenged the public easement, instructing his resort's "cabana boys" to tell beachgoers who were not staying at the motel to leave the dry sand "private beach" in front of the motel.

The effort drew public complaint and exposed a flaw

in the 1913 bill, which technically protected only the wet sands.

The 1967 Legislature attempted to fix the loophole with House Bill 1601. Dubbed the "Beach Bill," it declared all wet sand lying within 16 vertical feet of the low-tide line to be the property of the state. The law also required that property owners seek state permits for building and other uses of the ocean shore and declared that the public would have free and uninterrupted use of the beaches.

Fifty years later, we enjoy the Beach Bill's success.

Here are just a few local beaches on and off the beaten path worth celebrating:

HECETA HEAD LIGHTHOUSE STATE SCENIC VIEWPOINT

Located 13 miles north of Florence. At low tide, tide pools to the north reveal themselves, and a pleasant 10-minute walk leads to a fully restored lighthouse. Built in 1894, the 56-foot lighthouse shines a beam visible for 21 nautical miles, making it the strongest light on the Oregon Coast.

HOBBIT TRAIL

The parking pullout for Hobbit Trail is easy to miss, just a mile north of Heceta Head, on the east side of Highway 101. Be careful as you cross the road — then plunge into the deep cool of Sitka spruce and rhodies. Follow the Hobbit Trail as it winds down towards the ocean. Get your Bilbo Baggins on as the soft sandstone beneath you squishes under your feet. Go barefoot. Seriously, this is the best part. The trail getting down to the beach is *magical*.

SEAL ROCK STATE PARK

Seal Rock State Wayside, a few miles north of Waldport, has large off-shore rock formations which provide year-round habitats for seals, sea lions, sea birds and other marine life. Terrific tide pooling can be found here.

BRIAN BOOTH STATE PARK

Brian Booth State Park is a coastal recreational area just north of Seal Rock, consisting of two major portions: Ona Beach State Park and Beaver Creek Natural Area. The park has beach access, kayaking and hiking trails — and fewer people.

NAMELESS SPOT SOUTH OF NEWPORT

About eight miles south of Newport, look for milepost 145, and about three quarters of a mile north of that, you'll see an unmarked beach access with a gravel patch by the side of the road. Once on this unnamed beach, you'll find a pleasant stream and a lot of striking sandstone cliffs. But head maybe a quarter of a mile to the south and there's a couple of enchanting rounded-out areas in the cliffs, one of which has a tiny waterfall.

Whose beaches? Our beaches!