

Readers' Choice Awards

BEST BIRDWATCHING SITE, BEST PLACE TO WALK & BEST PLACE TO WATCH FIREWORKS

Astoria Riverwalk

Astoria, Oregon

By DWIGHT CASWELL

The Astoria Riverwalk is the readers' choice in three categories, and deservedly so.

Let's take the obvious one first: Best Place to Walk. The Riverwalk is six miles of paved path from Smith Point almost to Tongue Point. It's a flat, easy walk through a lot of Astoria, past and present.

At the western end, you'll first see the holdouts of industrial Astoria: log yard, boat yard, Port of Astoria. A short stroll off the main path takes you to piers where fishing boats offload catches for processors. Next you pass the West Mooring Basin, Maritime Memorial Park under the Astoria Bridge, and eventually leave warehouses behind and climb the steps of the Sixth Street Viewing Platform, with its splendid vista of land, sea and ships. Along the way you pass breweries and the river and bar pilot buildings (with a pilot boat tugging at its mooring), and then on to the Columbia River Maritime Museum. After

that it's a straight shot upriver, past the old "Big Red" net shed and the sea lions and boats at the East Mooring Basin, and finally to the Alderbrook Lagoon before returning to Pier 39 for a well-earned rest. If you're tuckered out you can ride the Astoria Trolley back to your car.

The Riverwalk was also voted as Best Birdwatching Site, and the Alderbrook Lagoon may be avian central. There you'll see shorebirds, and seabirds love the marshy verges of the water. Unusual migratory species like the Eurasian wigeon have been



Photo by Alex Pajunas

The Astoria Riverwalk runs parallel to the former Burlington Northern Railroad tracks. In the 1980s, the city converted the train tracks into a recreational trail thanks to the federal Rails to Trails program, preserving the riverfront as a public space.

spotted there, and occasionally you may spot a rare "vagrant" species. The tufted duck has been seen, and last year a snow bunting was spotted, far from its home in the high Arctic, as well as a tropical kingbird, usually found no farther north than southern Arizona. Less unusual but not common are mountain chickadees, known as the "cheeseburger bird" because its call sounds like "cheese-bur-ger."

The Riverwalk also was voted Best Place to Watch Fireworks, which is hard to argue with. They seem right on top of you, and with people spread out along the tracks, it's not crowded. So what are you waiting for? Put on your walking



Photo by Dwight Caswell

The Astoria Riverwalk was voted Best Place to Watch Fireworks this year.

shoes, grab your binoculars, and spend a few hours experiencing Astoria from the Riverwalk.

BEST BIRDWATCHING SITE
Runner-up: Fort Stevens State Park
Honorable Mention: The Beach

BEST PLACE TO WALK
Runner-up: The Beach
Honorable Mention: Discovery Trail, Long Beach Peninsula

BEST PLACE TO WATCH FIREWORKS
Runner-up: My House
Honorable Mention: Long Beach Boardwalk

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

Tapiola Park

Astoria, Oregon

Runner-up: Shively Park, Astoria

Honorable Mention: Fred Lindstrom Memorial Park, Astoria



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Located at 900 W. Marine Drive in Astoria, Tapiola Park holds four baseball fields, a basketball court, two sets of public restrooms, a skate park, a picnic area and a large playground.

BEST GYM

Astoria Aquatic Center

Astoria, Oregon

Runner-up: Astoria Full Fitness, Astoria

Honorable Mention: Snap Fitness, Long Beach, Washington



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Located at 1997 Marine Drive and run by Astoria Parks & Recreation, the Astoria Aquatic Center has four pools and a large fitness area with weights, treadmills and more.

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