

WELCOME TO THE DISCOVERY COAST

There are nearly as many kinds of vacations in Pacific County and the Long Beach Peninsula as there are different people and families. Just to name a few: Beach fun, Pacific Northwest cuisine, Western history, fishing, wildlife watching, gallery and antique shopping, hiking and bicycling, kayaking, sailing and other outdoor adventures.

This publication is a user's guide for those who have made the choice to come to this special corner of Washington state, and now are looking for the most fun and fulfilling ways to spend precious days in this remarkable place. Frequent visitors and seasonal residents already have their routines worked out, but here are some "insider" suggestions for South Pacific County novices:

- If you're introducing your children to the traditional fun of the seashore, Waikiki in Cape Disappointment State Park probably is the safest and most scenic of the ocean beaches. If parking a car you'll need a Discover Pass, now conveniently available from vending machines scattered around the park. Bring picnic supplies from town. As always when near the ocean, know where your kids are at all times and keep them within easy reach. (tinyurl.com/CapeDfacts)

- For most visitors, there's no substitute for the wide sands of the Peninsula. Popular activities include kite flying, surf perch fishing, beachcombing, birdwatching, long walks along the water's edge or on the world-class Discovery Trail in the dunes, clam digging (when in season), horseback riding and picnicking. Some enjoy driving on the beach, but there also are well-marked pedestrian-only areas. When you're ready for a change of scene, the well-stocked towns of Seaview, Long Beach, Ilwaco and Ocean Park all are within a few minutes' walk or drive. (DiscoverOurCoast.com and FunBeach.com)

- A great alternative to the ocean beaches are the small, sandy coves at Fort Columbia State Park on the Columbia

River near Chinook. What they lack in terms of oceanic drama, they more than make up for in comfort and safety. (tinyurl.com/FortColumbia-Facts)

- Other popular outdoor options include visiting the Willapa Bay shore, which is best accessed via the 15,000-plus acre Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, the Port of Peninsula and neighboring Morehead County Park in Nahcotta, or Leadbetter Point State Park on the Peninsula's far northern tip. The bay is a place of astounding natural beauty, with elk herds, uncountable numbers of birds, playful otters and endless open space.

BESIDES THE NATURAL BEAUTY, ONE OF THIS AREA'S MOST APPEALING ASPECTS IS ITS DEPTH OF HISTORY. THIS WAS THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION'S DESTINATION IN 1805, AND YOU WILL LITERALLY WALK IN THEIR PATHS.

A careful visit to Long Island by personal watercraft may be a highlight of your life, a chance to touch gargantuan Western red cedars more than 900 years old. (Take bug spray, your cell phone and be aware of tide cycles and fast-changing water conditions.) (www.fws.gov/refuge/willapa)

- Besides sublime natural beauty, one of this area's most appealing aspects is its depth of history. This was the Lewis and Clark Expedition's destination in 1805, and you will literally walk in their paths. The Middle Village/Station Camp Unit of Lewis and Clark National Historical Park just east of the Chinook tunnel is a fine place to let the kids run around, play on models of Chinook Indian canoes and soak up the ambiance of a site that once was the epicenter of Pacific Rim trade.

The forest trails of the park's Cape Disappointment Unit are like a time warp back to the era of explorers, fur traders and mighty Chinookan traders. (www.nps.gov/lewi/index.htm) Other historical themes include the route of the legendary Clamshell Railroad, Army coastal artillery forts, lighthouses, and the Oysterville National Historical District.)

- Food is one of our favorite things. It's hard to imagine a set of picturesque coastal villages anywhere with more opportunities to enjoy amazing seafood, organic produce, creative baked goods, craft breweries and traditional seashore treats including burgers and ice cream. Everyone here has their own favorite places — don't be shy; describe what you like to anyone who lives here and we'll be happy to recommend a restaurant to suit your taste. Saturday Market at the Port of Ilwaco is a perfect way to sample many delicious treats. The Northwest Garlic Festival and Jazz and Oysters, both in Ocean Park, are yummy festivals. Try the cranberry/peach pies at the Cranberrian Fair in Ilwaco in October, where Blues and Seafood also takes the stage in September. Going on a charter trip and catching your own salmon for dinner is an amazing time — a morning out on the river and ocean will alter your perspective of the world forever.

There are lots of other ways to enjoy your time here: Vibrant visual and performing arts communities, nearly magically packed "general stores," antique/junk shops, souvenirs and clothing. There are impressive museums and interpretive centers devoted to Columbia-Pacific history, kites, the cranberry and oyster businesses, lifesaving. Festivals devoted to everything from classic cars to small-town patriotism enliven most of the year.

We're delighted you've come to see us. Everyone here looks forward to being your host and showing you our own favorite things to do. Make yourself at home and start making amazing memories!

