

# Surviving Christmas Visitors: A North Coast Guide



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 FOR COAST WEEKEND

No matter how I prepare myself for Christmas, it always catches me by surprise. Wasn't it just yesterday that I was wrapped tightly in the warm embrace of summer?

Now the specter of family gatherings looms.

That means kith and kin descending on my safe little North Coast bubble from such exotic Midwestern locales

as  
 Fargo,  
 Minneapolis,  
 Madison and Green  
 Bay.

It also means hours of extended, close-quarters, full-contact Christmas fun and repeatedly answering the question "Does it always rain this much here?"

Because I'm not smart enough to plan ahead, there's no escaping to Hawaii or Cabo.

But I've survived this before, thanks to my three-step plan of attack.

## Step 1: Get outside

Because I live at the beach, this is the place folks from my native Midwest often want to be during the holidays.

If your house is small like mine, you'll quickly realize that setting up alternate lodging for your guests is the top priority. Nothing tests holiday spirit

or the bonds of marriage faster than twenty people under one roof sharing one functioning bathroom.

There are plenty of options, including a variety of vacation rentals. Just don't wait until the last minute to try and find a vacancy. The only thing you'll accomplish by calling the week before Christmas is giving the rental agency a good laugh.

Because it's December, rain poses a problem. Year-round coastal residents often tune it out. Not so with many out-of-state visitors. Rain bothers them, even when I try to explain the

virtues of not having to shovel it.

After about an hour of looking out the window for any sign of a break in the weather they become irritable. That's when they start breaking out fun facts like how you could buy a small town in Minnesota for what you paid for your house.

Before you go full Clark Griswold on them, you must get them out of the house.

A lot.

I cannot emphasize this enough.

This isn't a challenge in the Midwest where everyone can pile in the car and drive to the nearest mall. There, they would be set free to wander for hours on end.

Here, many merchants are understandably closed or on limited hours around the holidays, undoubtedly dealing with their own home invaders.

So that means getting outside, whether it's strolling the Astoria Riverwalk, staring at Haystack Rock or gazing out over the Neahkahnie Overlooks.

I keep umbrellas on hand for my visitors. Because Oregonians don't use them, they serve as a courtesy signal to locals that I'm hosting out-of-towners and they should steer clear.

Even soaked, it's hard for my guests to stay too grumpy when they're taking in some of our most famous, beautiful scenery.

Plus, the fresh air will wear them

