



Photos by Skyler Archibald
The Cape Disappointment Lighthouse.



Looking down at the water from a hike
in Cape Disappointment State Park.

Free entry at Cape Disappointment

DITCH THE LINES AND GET OUTSIDE

BY SKYLER ARCHIBALD

With daylight saving time casting a cloak of darkness over our evenings and the chaos of the holidays in full swing, getting outside this time of year often takes intention and effort.

The good news is that state parks across the country are providing a bit of incentive this season as they waive day-use fees in celebration of “Green Friday,” Black Friday’s counterpart. Green Friday is the last of Washington State Park’s 12 days this year when no fees were collected. The first fee-free day in 2020 will happen Jan. 1.

Wander through Cape Disappointment

Cape Disappointment State Park was mostly empty on my recent trip, compared to heavy traffic that permeated my previous visits over the years. There are many things to see and places to go in the park, but I recommend wandering to the Interpretive Center from the McKenzie Lagoon, one of the best and most scenic short hikes in the region.

After parking in the center of the park near the lagoon, take the trail that quickly ascends to the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. Panoramic views are plenty, as is a bird’s-eye view of the work being

done on the North Jetty. Over the course of several years, around 140,000 tons of rock will be placed on the North Jetty, the “A” jetty and the South Jetty. This is a fascinating development that only adds to the wonder and rugged beauty of Cape Disappointment.

The Interpretive Center is one of the jewels of the park and the region. Exhibits focus mostly on the Lewis and Clark exhibition, and there is a tremendous view of the Columbia River and the coastal area.

Take in the lighthouse

Following some time exploring at the Interpretive Center, I strongly recommend continuing your hike to the Cape Disappointment Lighthouse. Whether you catch it on a stormy or sunny day, the scenic and strategic positioning of the Lighthouse and subsequent views are spectacular.

Spend a fair amount of time at the lighthouse, take in the scenery and watch boats make their way into the mouth of the Columbia. The historical mind can’t help but reflect on the many ships and sailors that found this access point so uninviting decades earlier, earning its nickname as the “Graveyard of the Pacific.”

Embrace the day

Despite the shorter-than-ideal days and sometimes wet weather, we live in a beautiful place, and that is something to be thankful for as we celebrate the holiday. A visit to Cape Disappointment State Park on Green Friday with loved ones may just be the perfect way to remember the reason for the season.

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