

FOOTSTEPS IN HISTORY

Exploring the past at Fort Clatsop

BY LINDA K. HOARD

The rich history of the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Astoria draws people in to learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific Ocean, and about the native Clatsop tribes who helped them.

The park offers a wide range of hiking and activity options. Those looking for an easy stroll can travel from the visitor center to the replica of Fort Clatsop to watch a ranger demonstration. Others who desire an ambitious trek can walk the 6.5 mile one-way trail along the same forest, fields and dunes that the Corps of Discovery traveled on the Fort to Sea Trail. There are also several hikes in-between, including the Kwis Kwis, South Slough, Netul Landing and Clay Pit Pond Trail.

All of the trails intertwine and are walkable. The Fort to Sea Trail will take travelers up through the forest, down into the valley, across the highway and through gentle pastures and grassland to the Pacific Ocean at Sunset Beach. There's also the option to walk just parts of the Fort to Sea Trail connecting with the other, shorter trails closer to the visitor center and make a nice loop to return.

Intermediate trails at the park traverse the wooded hills across the highway, starting with a hemlock and alder forest full of huckleberries, salal and elderberry bushes. They climb up through a large skunk cabbage marsh, and into a forest of sitka spruce, western red cedars and more hemlocks. A viewpoint rewards hikers with a glimpse of the ocean.

In early June the woods are full of singing swainson's thrushes and Pacific wrens in the marshland near the river. In August, it's quieter with just some chickadees, stellar jays, crows and the occasional raven. By September, some of the fall migrating ducks and shorebirds may return.

Brandon and his daughter, Genevieve, hikers from Washington, made their way through several miles of forested trails at Fort Clatsop in late August. Genevieve shared that she likes eating huckleberries. "We enjoy the trails here," said Brandon. "Very kid friendly."

Hikers Mary and Dave Ruth, from California, discovered Fort Clatsop through the National Park Service app. They have visited 70 National Parks during their cross country travels, using the stamps in their National Parks Passport books as a record of their journeys.

People will find more than hikers in the park. The visitor center includes films, exhibits



Photos by Linda K. Hoard

Sharon Rhoads welcomes travelers at the visitor center.

If You Go

Lewis and Clark National Historical Park
92343 Fort Clatsop Road, Astoria

Open daily

Summer hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

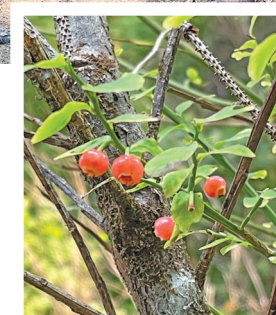
Entrance fee is \$10 per person for those 16 and older, ages 15 and younger are free



Volunteer Doug Packard in a period costume at Fort Clatsop.



ABOVE: Hiker on the Clay Pit trail. LEFT: Brandon and his daughter, Genevieve, on the Fort to Sea Trail. RIGHT: Ripe huckleberries on the Fort to Sea Trail.



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