

SCRATCHPAD

Petroglyphs of the Columbia River

By **LISSA BREWER**
COAST WEEKEND EDITOR

Look closely at rock formations along the banks of the Columbia River and you just might find a work of art. Many Indigenous tribes of the Northwest once carved images into stone along river banks and tide lines, called petroglyphs, as a way to communicate with one another and celebrate connections with the land and spirit world. Some of these artworks have survived for centuries and many can still be found along the Columbia, as well as along the outer Oregon and Washington state coasts.

Anthropologists have found evidence of petroglyph carvings across the globe, but note that artworks of the Northwest region possess a unique style. These images tell stories of the region, from celebrations of

annual salmon migrations to local bird species. Petroglyphs are truly artworks of place, most remaining in the exact spot they were carved.

While many of the best known petroglyphs on the Columbia River lie farther east, such as “Tsagaglalal,” or “She who watches,” found near Horsethief Lake at Columbia Hills Historical State Park, many petroglyph sites are unmarked, and traces of the past can be found just about anywhere.

Do note that petroglyphs are protected by state laws in both Oregon and Washington. They should be treated just as artifacts in indoor museums would be. While subject to the elements of change, these artworks tell stories from the region’s past and present. Observe and consider them a part of the landscape and its people.

Coast Weekend editor



Lissa Brewer

Petroglyphs can be found between the high and low tides along the Oregon and Washington state coasts.

our coast weekend

ON THE COVER

Spring whale watching season returns this month.

PHOTO BY
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