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WEEKEND BREAK



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A magnetic pull

Writer reflects on calm felt at the coast



Photos by Katherine Lacaze

ABOVE: A path leads to the beach in Gearhart. **BELOW:** A view of the Necanicum Estuary from the Gearhart Ridge Path Loop.

By **RALPH BEAUMONT**
For The Astorian

As my gaze shifts from the Portland cityscape outside of my ninth floor Pearl District condo's wall-sized window, to the writing pad in front of me, I reflect on the two modes of transport that have prevailed in my recent travels from town to country: the "daddy bus" and the family SUV.

Before the pandemic and the shift of work from office to home, the daddy bus, a contemporary variation on the old daddy train, which brought fathers to their families on the coast in the old days, frequently conveyed me west after work on Friday afternoons. From the Portland train station, surrounded as it tends to be by some of the city's less upstanding citizens, I rode through downtown streets to U.S. Highway 26 west, over the coastal range, to a stop on U.S. Highway 101 across from the short and walkable road to Gearhart.

That ride was a memorable one. This was so both in a global way, and in relation to various details. The ride occurred while I was reading the Friday New York Times and listened to

TELL US YOUR COAST MEMORIES

Have you had a transformative or especially memorable time on the North Coast? What sets the region apart? Maybe you visited the area or are a local. Tell us about it. In no more than 250 words, describe your experience and include your name and a possible photo. Submissions will be published in a future issue of Weekend Break and should be emailed to jwilliams@dailyastorian.com

an audiobook. It was accompanied by an inner transformation. The disquiet of the work world and its multiple demands faded, and a very particular kind of peace and ease would seem to be promised by the dense tall forests of the coastal range.

Scenic wonders

The details of the daddy bus ride included many notable points. An early one was the Jerky Shop, an establishment seen just as you

exit the farmland west of Portland, begin to enter the woods, and start to ascend the coastal range hills. It features, among other delicacies, wild boar and alligator jerky, as well as a variety of dried mushrooms. Up the hill and further into the woods, blue signs on both sides of the road announce, "Drinking Water," and point to a decades-old fountain flowing from a natural spring that provides cold water for people often waiting in line with numerous gallon jugs. A little further on we would pass the Elderberry Inn, offering accommodations and libations. This was soon followed by crossings of both the east and the west Humbug Creeks and traveling over the David Douglas summit at 1,309 feet. From there the bus descended past the Saddle Mountain turn-off, past Camp 18, the restaurant memorializing local logging, and then down to the coastal highway, Highway 101. Once you enter the coastal range, much of the road is surrounded by beautiful tall trees, which can evoke in a responsive daddy bus passenger a feeling of being in a large, mobile natural cathedral.

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