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Beneath the canopy of an old growth forest, the swells of Pacific waves can be heard in the distance while exploring along the 6.8 mile North Head Trail. Crisp, salty ocean breezes compliment the near sounds of waves. With dew still on the grass, the aroma of a morning forest floor lingers as the tide advances in.

On the North Head Lighthouse Loop Trail, explore stories of those who have lived and explored this park through the centuries. Venture out on the 1.9 mile Cape Disappointment Trail to visit the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. The interpretive center, located atop a 200 foot cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, lets visitors dive a bit deeper into the area's rich history. In the center, find stories of the coast's Indigenous tribes and chronicles of the intense journeys of early European explorers.

Learn, too, about the park's curious name. English Capt. John Meares, also the namesake of Oregon's Cape Meares, named the location after his own disappointment in 1788. Meares unsuccessfully crossed the Columbia River Bar entrance, and as a result, the headland became known as Cape Disappointment. The Columbia River soon gained its name from Capt. Robert Gray, who successfully crossed the cape in 1792. Gray then named the Columbia River after his own ship, the Columbia Rediviva. In 1805, the famed Lewis and Clark Expedition arrived at Cape Disappointment, establishing a historic site of colonial expedition.

The park's headland, perched along the maritime intersection of the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean, led it to feature two lighthouses. Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, completed in 1856, is the oldest operating lighthouse in the Pacific Northwest. Constructed to warn ships of the dangerous Columbia River Bar that was the source of Meares' disappointment, the lighthouse helped ships to avoid the pitfalls of the so called Graveyard of the Pacific, known for thousands of shipwrecks.

While the first light served its purpose, its visibility was limited. Ships approaching from the north often didn't catch sight of the light until a close approach. To supplement this issue, North Head Lighthouse was completed in 1898.

Other historic remnants, such as



Photos by Lissa Brewer

ABOVE: Headland view from the North Head Lighthouse Loop Trail. LEFT: The North Head Lighthouse.

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wartime bunkers and military installations can be seen and explored throughout the park, from shelters that once held smoothbore cannons to protect the mouth of the Columbia to gun batteries and other structures used during World War II.

But above the park's intriguing historical sites, Cape Disappointment's coastal beauty is on full dis-

play. Misty blue ocean hues can be seen between tall strands of beach grass on the Beards Hollow Trail, where branches of small trees gently sway in the wind. Hiking boots trudge through the mud after a squall, as the Cape Disappointment trail collects the light tracks of hikers and pets.

Cape Disappointment is the perfect North Coast park to explore by trail, tent or shore. From hiking along beautiful overlooks to a relaxing walk along the park's sandy beach, bringing a picnic lunch or setting up camp, this expansive state park has something for everyone. It's the perfect local getaway for those looking to relax between tall trees and the ocean.