

Summer day trips for youngsters and grown-ups

By REBECCA CASWELL

Some people consider Eastern Oregon the middle of nowhere, but it doesn't take long to get to somewhere from here! There is a wide range of day trips the whole family will enjoy just two or three hours away. Here are a few that are worth the car ride:

Palouse Falls State Park, near Starbuck, Washington

Drive time: 2 hours

Highlights: Waterfall, picnic areas

Hiking, breathtaking scenery and a bit of history come together at Palouse Falls State Park in Washington. Less than two hours from Umatilla County, the 105-acre park provides picnic tables and grass lawns perfect for a summer picnic and a half-mile ADA-accessible hiking trail overlooking the falls, which drop nearly 200 feet. Interpretive panels throughout the park provide a bit of history about the native tribes, Ice Age floods, glaciers and creation of the canyon — and make the trip both educational and enjoyable.

Fossil, Oregon

Drive time: 2 hours

Highlights: Fossil hunting, scenic landscape

The only public fossil field in the United States is just a day trip away from Umatilla County. Discovered in 1949, the field is behind Wheeler High School; admission is \$15 for a family of four. Fossil also hosts the Oregon Paleolands Institute head-



In SE Washington, just north of the Snake River, Palouse Falls tumbles 198 feet into a wide gorge. It makes nice family getaway, just a couple hours drive from Pendleton.

quarters and exhibition hall, offering tours, hikes and workshops. Fossil is only 20 miles from the incredible landscape of John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. At the monument, the Thomas Condon Paleontology center features fossils from all three units of the park as well as the opportunity to watch researchers at work.

Baker City, Oregon

Drive time: 2 hours

Highlight: Oregon Trail Interpre-

tive Center

Like Pendleton, Baker City sits right on the Oregon Trail and offers plenty of history worthy of a day trip. In addition to a historic downtown and views of the Eagle Cap mountains, the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center sits just five miles outside of town. With living history demonstrations, interpretive programs, exhibits and more than four miles of interpretive trails, the center has a bit of history for everyone in the family.

Multnomah Falls, near Corbett, Oregon

Drive time: 3 hours

Highlight: Waterfalls, hiking

For some, Multnomah Falls is a stop on the drive

to Portland, but you could make Oregon's most famous waterfalls a full-day excursion. The falls drop 620 feet straight down within sight of Interstate 84 — but for a better view, climb the trail to the Simon Benson Bridge across the lower cascade or hike to the top of the falls, about 1.2 miles total. For an extended workout, the six-mile Wahkeena Loop Trail passes creeks and small waterfalls. At the base of the trail is Multnomah Falls Lodge,

where a restaurant, gift shop, and coffee kiosks provide a break before or after a hike. To extend your trip if hiking isn't quite your speed, follow I-84 into Portland.

Portland, Oregon

Drive time: 3½ hours

Highlight: OMSI Space Exhibit

From shopping to shows, Oregon's metropolis offers activities for all ages. For family fun, it's hard to go wrong with a visit to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, better known as OMSI. In June, OMSI opened its newest exhibit, developed with NASA. "Journey to Space: The Exhibition" features 10,000 square feet of hands-on activities on the challenge and future of living and working in space, including a full scale, climb-aboard replica of the Destiny Lab, the research facility on the international space station.

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Drive time: 3½ hours

Highlight: Silverwood Theme Park

About 220 miles from Umatilla County, Coeur d'Alene offers outdoor recreation from downhill skiing to watersports. The lakeside city boasts trails and outdoor recreation as well as an active arts and culture alliance. But for many children and teens, Coeur d'Alene is best known for having the nearest roller coasters, bumper cars and thrill rides at Silverwood Theme Park. Coeur d'Alene also boasts multiple water parks, a family fun park and zipline tours.

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