



An assortment of glass floats and other glass art is hidden by Float Fairies along a seven-mile stretch of beach at Lincoln City. The Finders Keepers program runs each year from mid-October through the end of May. Photo contributed by Lincoln City Visitor & Convention Bureau

# FINDERS KEEPERS

Treasure hunters scour Lincoln City beach for hidden glass floats

By TAMMY MALGESINI  
East Oregonian

Imagine a treasure hunt that encompasses seven miles of sandy beaches in Lincoln City — and if you find one of the coveted prizes, you get to keep it.

As part of the Finders Keepers program, Float Fairies place more than 3,000 glass art items along the beach between Roads End and Siletz Bay. The special promotion runs from mid-October through Memorial Day during the coastal town's off-season, said Janet Hunter, marketing administrative technician with the Lincoln City Visitor & Convention Bureau.

A group of Hermiston woman headed to the beach this past spring to celebrate career and education successes. Carol Greene, her daughter Cassie Greene, and Deana Cordell stayed in a beach-front condominium, which provided easy access to scour the beach in search of glass floats and other glass art items.

"It was like a big Easter egg hunt," Carol said.

Other than strolling along the beach looking for the colorful treasures, the ladies didn't have any set itinerary. With a focus on relaxing, Carol, Deana and Cassie unwound and enjoyed each other's company.

In addition to looking in the vicinity of D River State Recreation Site, the women talked to shopkeepers to learn about other prime beach access points. Although the group came home empty-handed, the consensus was they had a great time.

"We had a blast ... we laughed so hard we cried, walked so much we hurt, ate so much we had to roll home, talked for hours about random things and shopped more than we should have," Deana said in summing up the trip.

## Finding floats

According to the Finders Keepers history, Japanese fishing crews used to attach glass floats to provide buoyancy to their nets. Typically made in shades of green and blue, the glass spheres ranged in size from two inches to two feet in diameter. Due to natural wear and tear on the nets and stormy weather, some floats broke free — eventually washing ashore on beaches.

Beachcombers flocked to the shores in hopes of finding the glass spheres. As more fishing vessels began using buoyant plastic on nets, finding glass floats on the beach became a rarity.

In 1997, an Oregon glass artist pitched the idea behind Finders Keepers as a unique and fun way to kick off the new millennium, Hunter said. He had approached several coastal communities, but none were interested.

"Then he came to Lincoln City and we thought it was a great project," she said. "We



Cassie Greene, Carol Greene and Deana Cordell take a group selfie while hunting for glass floats along the beach during the 2017 Finders Keepers program. The 2018 season kicks off this weekend in Lincoln City. Contributed photo

thought, 'How cool would it be to put 2,000 floats on the beach as a way to celebrate the new millennium.'"

The initial thought, Hunter said, was to just do it that one year. However, the program proved to be extremely popular with both artists and tourists — continuing since the inaugural 1999-2000 season.

Each year, there are numbered floats corresponding to the year. This season, visitors have an opportunity to find 2,018 glass floats. Those who find numbered floats can register them to receive a certificate of authenticity and biographical

information about the artist who created it.

In addition, Float Fairies will drop upwards of 1,000 additional pieces of glass art, including sand dollars, starfish, shells, crabs and coins. Also, during the opening and closing weekends of the season, a jumbo float is hidden. In addition to keeping the oversized piece of glass art, the finder wins a weekend getaway package.

Hunter said potential artists with the program must submit examples of their work to ensure a variety of colors and unique patterns. The pieces are screened for quality and durability. The artisans are



A beach-goer flies a kite while some tourists scour the beach in search of glass floats and glass art created by local artisans for the Finders Keepers program in Lincoln City. Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini



Crushed glass is added to molten glass that was heated to 2,100 degrees while creating a glass float at Jennifer Sears Glass Art Studio in Lincoln City. Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini

paid for their participation.

"What's great about the program is I feel like we're supporting the arts community," Hunter said. "Also, the tourists love to find them so they come to Lincoln City. It's a win-win situation."

While in Lincoln City, the Hermiston visitors enjoyed a visit to Jennifer Sears Glass Art Studio — one of many glass art businesses and galleries on the Oregon coast. They watched artists work

with customers to create their own glass art.

"Seeing the different colors and how it is actually done right there was fascinating to me," Carol said.

"Watching the glass blowing was pretty amazing," Cassie added. "But I'd definitely like to find my own special ball to keep."

The prices, Deana said, seemed reasonable. In a future Finders Keepers trip, she's hoping to schedule time to create a large vase.

Also, with all the searching for glass art, the ladies required sustenance. Each of them agreed that trying out new restaurants was great fun. And they found some gems, including Kylo's Seafood & Grill, Wildflower Grill and the Otis Cafe.

"We got lots of walking in that worked up a good appetite for some delicious seafood and bread," Carol said.

Hunter said that's exactly the purpose behind Finders Keepers — to bring people to Lincoln City to discover all it has to offer.

"We don't really need an excuse to go to the beach but it was a good one," Deana said about planning a trip during Finders Keepers.

For more information, contact 541-996-1274, visitors@lincolncity.org or visit www.oregoncoast.org/glass-floats. Or, better yet, head to Lincoln City to search for yourself.

Contact Community Editor Tammy Malgesini at [tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com](mailto:tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4539



Daniel Hogan, glass blowing artist at Jennifer Sears Glass Art Studio in Lincoln City, shapes a glass float while Ken Tuttle of Spokane blows air through a tube connected to it. Staff photo by Tammy Malgesini