

Views from the Rock



EVE MARX

Blueberries from the garden. Nothing better!

Some berries with your CoYo?

Can I say how spoiled it feels to stroll out into our garden in pajamas to collect breakfast? Our blueberry bushes are in full production now and I couldn't be happier.

Ever since I discovered the joy of breakfast for dinner, eggs, my go-to breakfast choice for decades, are off the morning menu. That leaves a hole in my diet. I've never been a big scone person, and muffins aren't really my thing, a heretical statement in Cannon Beach where everyone raves about the Almond Poppy Seed and Chocolate Cream Cheese muffins at the Cannon Beach Bakery. When I was young and not completely obsessed with cholesterol or calories, I thought a McDonald's Egg McMuffin was a perfectly great breakfast.

Ten years ago I jumped on the granola train. (Sea Level, by the way, makes killer granola.) I've gone through several phases of how to best eat it. For a long time I had it with a little milk. After awhile I began mixing it up with runny yogurt before my heart was won over by the super thick Greek-styles. Lately I've been smitten with nondairy yogurt. My current favorite is CoYo coconut yogurt-alternative, which, unlike other coconut milk yogurts, is super rich and creamy. Fair warning, it's very rich. Each serving has 38 grams of fat and 360 calories. That's why I only use a little, like a tablespoon at a time. It's perfect as a topping on fresh fruit, or on top of a quarter cup of granola, served parfait style. Look for it at Fresh Foods in Cannon Beach alongside the other yogurts.

Now back to that fresh fruit.

Blueberries are my favorite fruit ordinary gardeners can grow in Oregon. The blueberry growing season runs June through September. Our house came with four blueberry bushes planted by previous owners. Two out of four plants regularly produce large, dark, blue berries from mid-July through September. (Two of the bushes are weak and spindly. I have to work on why.) Last summer we got in the habit of collecting berries in a bowl every evening, although I soon realized that by that hour the birds were gorging themselves on what was mine. Now we collect the berries in the morning. I toss a handful on top of my granola and coconut milk yogurt, along with some organic walnuts for a breakfast of champions.

Blueberries, it's been reported, might be the healthiest of all fruits. Research has shown that elderly rats fed a diet of blueberries became better at balancing and showed memory improvement. When researchers cut open their heads, they discovered blueberry pigment in the rats' brains. Blue anthocyanins—a plant chemical widely attributed with antioxidant benefits—were scattered throughout the rats' cortex, hippocampus, striatum and cerebellum. Elderly rat research aside, blueberries have been reported to lower blood pressure; improve cognitive skills, reduce depressive symptoms and improve blood-sugar levels.

So as long as they keep growing on our bushes, I'm going to keep eating blueberries.

It doesn't hurt that blue is my favorite color.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



A day in the life of the Visitor Information Center Questions and answers

What questions are on the minds of first-time visitors?

As Oregon Coast residents, we hold certain truths to be self-evident. In Cannon Beach, these can include – but are not limited to – knowing about Haystack Rock, traffic gridlock in the summer and always being skeptical of a weather report.

But what truths are evident – and not so evident – to the tourists who walk into the Cannon Beach Visitor Information Center at the height of summer?

Last year, more than 42,000 people made a trip into the center, which averages to about 90 to 120 people a day.

In the age of apps, Yelp reviews and social media, I couldn't help but wonder what questions were left on the minds of those 42,000 people by the time they entered city limits. What questions does the first-time visitor have, and what does it take for the staff to field them?

To find out, I shadowed center supervisor Laura Kaim and spent a day in the life at the Visitor Information Center. Here are some observations:

'Where's Haystack Rock?'

This is by far one of the most popular questions asked, only coming second place to "Where's the beach?" By 1 p.m. on a recent Friday, both of these questions were asked almost 20 times.

Known as one of the most recognizable landmarks on the Oregon Coast, it seems odd for someone to lose track of 235-foot rock.

"If you're driving south and take the first exit, you can see the rock poking up above the trees," Kaim said. "But once you get into downtown, it disappears."

Given the fact the Visitor Information Center is only two blocks from the beach, on the surface it may seem peculiar how often Kaim has to give directions to the iconic rock. Part of the confusion may be that there aren't signs anywhere pointing to the beach in downtown.

"They would probably still come in and ask, but some signage pointing west would probably help," she added.

Other questions Kaim didn't expect to answer as often as she does are mostly related Cannon Beach's natural wonders. Many ask the difference between low and high tide, how to find a tide pool and about how to find the area's notorious elk population.

"I usually tell them they weren't kind enough to give me their schedule for the day," Kaim said. "But I did have one person ask me if the elk in the city park were wild. I think she thought they were the city's."

'We have no idea what we're doing'

In the age of the internet, it would be easy to assume that visitors have Googled near everything they need to know about the town before even arriving.

This is rarely the case. "People will come in saying someone told them they just had to come to Cannon Beach, but told them nothing else about it," Kaim said.



BRENNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

By midafternoon, more than 160 people had strolled into the Visitor Information Center to ask questions about Cannon Beach.

CANNON SHOTS BRENNA VISSER



In visitor center-land, there are two types of vacationers: those who plan, and those don't.

For the latter, the information center does its best to accommodate by keeping a constantly updated list of available rooms and campsites for those strolling into town, thinking a reservation is not necessary in the summer.

On Friday, there were fewer than 30 rooms left in town for the weekend. Most were taken by the end of the day. Often, Kaim has to be the bearer of bad news for families that had the misconception they could camp on the beach or in town.

"To assume is vacation doom, as I say," Kaim said.

For the planners, the center serves a different purpose: to offer local perspective.

"Most people are wanting the first-hand, local knowledge, not something you could easily find with a search online," Kaim said. "It's not just 'Where should I go to get fish and chips?' It's 'Where would YOU go to get fish and chips?'"

Unfortunately, this is probably the most difficult question Kaim faces.

"Because I don't eat fish and chips or clam chowder," Kaim said. "But I tell them everywhere in town (that) sells it, and food for people like me who don't eat it."

Keeping it light

Fielding the wide array of questions that comes their way takes a balance of humor, patience, and every so often, some creative communication techniques.

With international tourism on the rise, it's increasingly common to see tourists whose first language is French, German or Japanese.

"I really wish I would have taken some German or French in school," Kaim laughed. "But between hand gestures and maps we get by."

No matter what language the question is formed in, finding a way to creatively answer similar questions



BRENNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Laura Kaim, the supervisor of the Cannon Beach Visitor Information Center, helps a tourist find her way through town.

'SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I'M PRACTICING A STANDUP COMEDY ROUTINE, BUT NO MATTER WHAT, I LIKE TO KEEP IT LIGHT.'

Laura Kaim

dozens of times a day is a challenge – but one Kaim looks forward to taking on daily.

"We like it to feel like we're telling you this information for the very first time," Kaim said.

Sometimes that means instead of describing how far Tillamook Head Lighthouse is from the shore, Kaim just tells people you can only get to it with wings, fins or a friend in the U.S. Coast Guard – a line she uses multiple times a day.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm practicing a standup comedy routine, but no matter what, I like to keep it light," she said.

Almost 240 visitors later, Kaim called it a day. No matter how repetitive questions may be, getting the chance to help and share the stories of the North Coast with new people every day makes this the most fun job she's ever had.

"If at least one person says 'That was helpful, then the day was successful.'"

LETTERS

Paying it forward

I am writing to express my gratitude to a kind citizen of Cannon Beach. This person chooses to remain anonymous, even to me, but he or she performed a kindness that I will never forget.

I have had a home in Cannon Beach for more than 50 years. One of my home's pleasures is its outdoor shower. A few months ago, when I was not at my cabin, someone went into my yard, turned on the shower and left. By the time someone dis-

covered it, enough water had been wasted to run my bill into hundreds of dollars.

I attended a meeting of the Cannon Beach City Council asking if, as a show of good will, the council could lower my bill. I explained that I have taken steps to ensure that this sort of mischief won't happen again.

While the council declined my offer, another citizen in the audience decided to show me goodwill. I received a letter the following week explaining how this kind

person would pay my bill and asked only that I "pay it forward."

I am gladly paying this kindness forward, helping others in greater need than I am in honor of my anonymous friend. Since I didn't know how to thank this person directly, I am doing so now.

Thank you for your kindness. I am so glad to know that there is still goodwill in this world.

Louis Barker
Lake Oswego

MEETINGS

TUESDAY, Aug. 7

Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

MONDAY, Aug. 13

Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District, 6 p.m., 188 Sunset, Cannon Beach.

TUESDAY, Aug. 14

Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., work session, City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

THURSDAY, Aug. 16

Parks and Community Services Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163

E. Gower St.

Cannon Beach Design Review Board Meeting, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

TUESDAY, Aug. 21

Cannon Beach Public Works Committee, 9 a.m., City Hall, 163

E. Gower St.

THURSDAY, Aug. 23

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

TUESDAY, Sept. 4

Cannon Beach City Council, 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

'Garden Flix' screens five family films

Cannon Beach's Garden Flix returns for the second year and runs Thursday nights through Thursday, Aug., 16.

The films are shown at Cannon Beach's Haystack Gardens located at 148 E. Gower Ave. Doors open at 7 p.m.; movies begin at 8 p.m.

The weekly "Garden Flix" series will take place all summer long. The events will be open to the public, with recommended \$1 donations accepted at the door for

alternating local organizations each week.

Five films will be featured over the course of the season. Haystack Gardens will serve beer and a picnic-style dinner for purchase from Public Coast Brewing. All beer profits will benefit the local charitable cause of the evening. Seating will not be provided, so bringing blankets and low-back chairs is encouraged.

For more information, call 800-547-6100.

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THE NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING

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