



AUTO TOUR

AAA Washington Travel Services

Southern Oregon Coast

Oregon presents a spectacular Pacific face, where the forces of nature create a stunning montage of landscapes. Miles of sandy beach alternate with bold headlands. Copious rains feed the myriad streams that wind down from forested heights, through green valleys where dairy herds graze on luxuriant pastures. Approaching the sea, the rivers broaden into estuaries and bays. Dozens of small cities and towns dot the coastline. In these hard-working fishing ports, lumber towns and resort communities the visitor is always welcome. Virtually all Oregon's 400-mile littoral is public domain, thanks to the landmark 1912 legislation that preserved the state's beaches for the people.



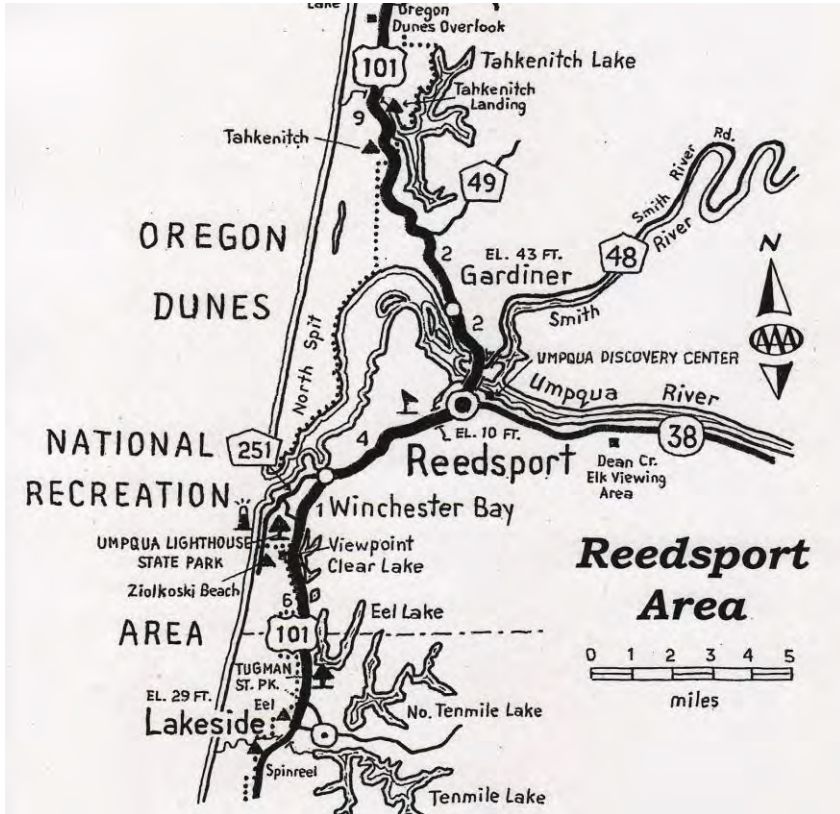
Simpson Cove, located in Shore Acres State Park southwest of Coos Bay, is a hidden gem. The ramparts guarding its golden sands reveal the steeply inclined sedimentary rock formations typical of the area.

AAA Washington's **Southern Oregon Coast Auto Tour** covers the 150-mile section of US-101 from Reedsport to the California border. This highway can be driven in less than four hours, although the numerous en route attractions beckon a much more leisurely pace.

1. Reedsport to Coos Bay

REEDSPORT (pop. 4,150, alt. 10 ft.), busy trading center of the lower Umpqua, sprawls along the south bank of the river and its tributary sloughs. Reedsport, named for late 19th-century pioneer homesteader Alfred W. Reed, is headquarters of the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. The park's **Visitor Center**, on US-101 at the junction with SR-38, has

exhibits and information about the dunes. The **Umpqua Discovery Center**, on the riverfront east of Highway 101, features displays of the area's natural and human history. A riverside boardwalk and observation tower are adjacent to the center. The Umpqua River is a storied steelhead stream. Author Zane Grey reportedly lauded the Rogue River, rather than the Umpqua, in order to preserve its fishery secrets from crowds. Three miles east of Reedsport on SR-38, the **Dean Creek Elk Viewing Area** offers roadside pullouts. The local herd of Roosevelt elk, largest of the world's elk species, numbers more than fifty. The historic rhododendron garden across the highway is being restored.



Highway 101 leads west from Reedsport, crossing a low ridge it skirts **WINCHESTER BAY** (pop. 382, alt. 17 ft.), a busy commercial and charter fishing port just inside the entrance to the Umpqua River estuary. **Salmon Harbor**, just west of the highway has a large marina, home to a commercial and sport fishing fleet. Crab is the main catch and the local merchant association brands Winchester Bay the “Crab Capital of the World.” At **Umpqua Aquaculture** you can watch oyster shuckers at work and see a video on oyster cultivation. The town’s major annual event is *Dune Fest*, held over five days in late July/early August.

County Road 251 follows the river to its mouth, then turns south to **Umpqua Lighthouse State Park**. The park offers picnic sites, a campground and Lake Marie, a small freshwater lake encircled by a 1.3-mile trail. **Umpqua Lighthouse**, located on an eminence overlooking the mouth of the river just north of the park, was erected in 1894.

Its beacon, at an elevation of 165 feet, can be seen for 19 nautical miles at sea. The original Umpqua Lighthouse, built in 1857, was much closer to the sea and succumbed to erosion in 1861. From May through September visitors can tour the lighthouse and the adjacent **Coastal History Museum**. The museum is located in a historic U.S. Coast Guard station and features exhibits on the lighthouse, local history and the U.S. Coast Guard history on the Umpqua River.

The county road continues south to Zioukoski Beach (campground) and an off-road vehicle site in the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. The dunes along this stretch of coast are among the tallest coastal dunes in the U.S., upwards of 250 feet. The forest is noted for its spring displays of rhododendron and wildflowers.

Return to US-101. Just south of the road winding up from Umpqua Lighthouse State Park (Discovery Drive) is a **Viewpoint** overlooking the coastline. This is another good vantage for spotting whales. The highway runs along the shore of Clear Lake, one of dozens of freshwater lakes on this stretch of coast. West of the highway is the southern portion of the **Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area** – the northern portion stretches from Reedsport to just south of Florence. The National Recreation Area, administered by the U.S. Forest Service, is a 32,000-acre reserve of shoreline, shifting sand, forest and freshwater lakes.

William H. Tugman State Park, named for a newspaper editor who chaired the state's first State Park's Advisory Committee, offers camping and boating on freshwater Eel Lake. Across the highway are several campgrounds. From North Eel Campground the 2-mile **Umpqua Dunes Trail** leads through this mini-Sahara to the Pacific shore. A long the route you'll see islands of trees amid the dunes and rare wetland plant communities. Remember, it's easy to get disoriented in the dunes, so try to keep a landmark as a sight reference.

East of the highway the town of **LAKESIDE** (pop. 1,705, alt. 29 ft.) sprawls along the shore of Tenmile Lake. The town has a collection of modest resorts catering to fishers and summer recreationists. Highway 101 crosses the lake's eponymous

outlet, Tenmile Creek, supposedly named for its distance from the pioneer settlement at Winchester Bay, and continues south, skirting the eastern flank of the dunes. For a number of miles we parallel a railroad, one of the few along the Oregon Coast. Built in the early 1900s as a branch line of the Southern Pacific, it continues today as Coos Bay Rail Link, providing an important rail connection between industries on Coos Bay and the Union Pacific mainline at Eugene. Passenger service on this line ended in the late 1950s.



South of the hamlet of **HAUSER** (pop. 700, alt. 8 ft.) the highway approaches the northern arm of Coos Bay, the largest natural harbor between San Francisco Bay and the Columbia River. A causeway crosses Haynes Inlet – near its southern end a road branches west, leading to Horsefall Lake and recreation sites at the southern extreme of the Oregon Dunes. This road also forks south to several industrial sites on the north shore of the bay.

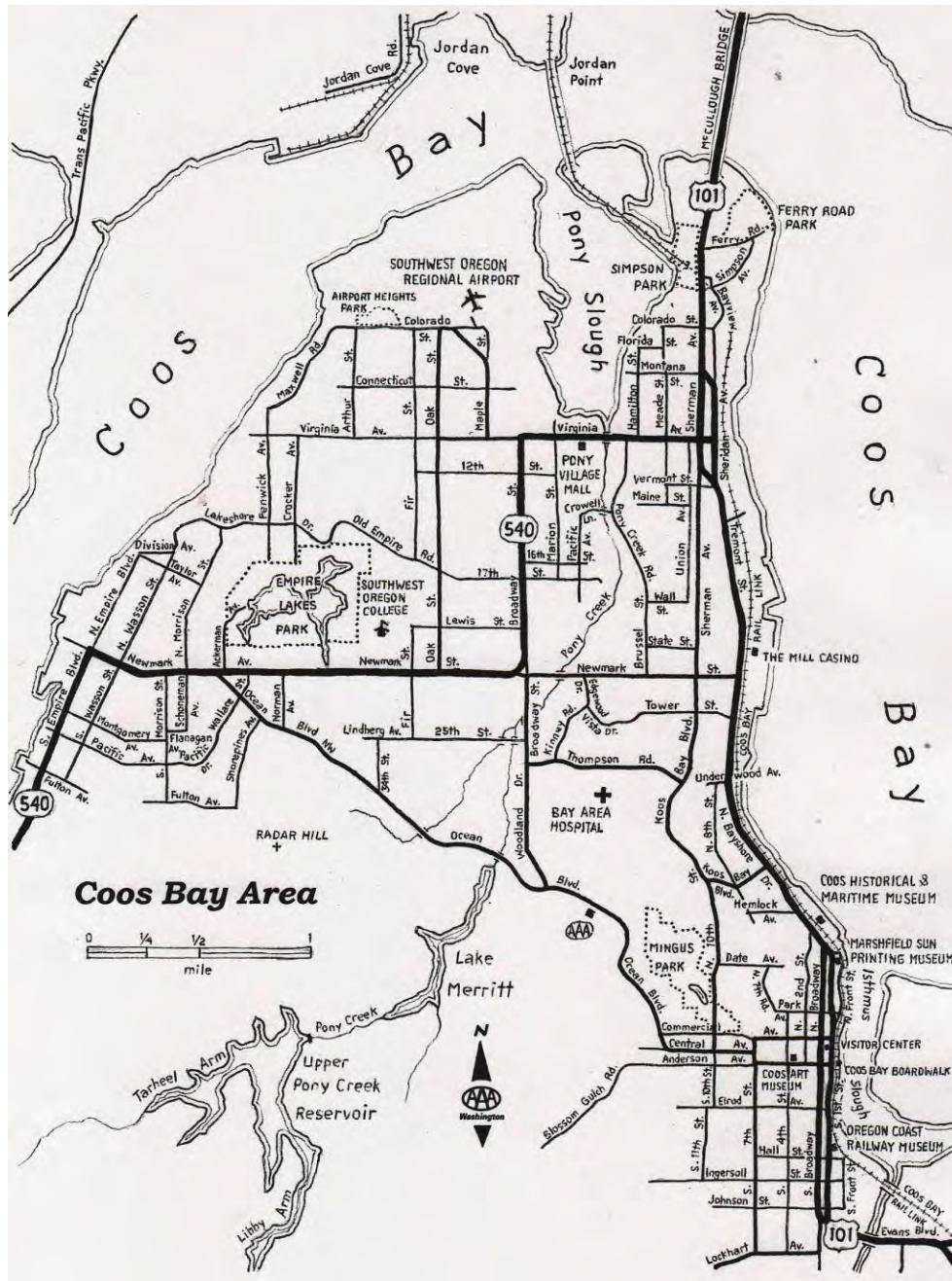
The graceful arch of the **McCulloch Bridge** carries US-101 over the main shipping channel of Coos Bay. This mile-long cantilever span, built in 1936, is named for Conde McCulloch, an engineer who designed most of the major bridges over the coastal bays and rivers. The view from the bridge is superb.

COOS BAY-NORTH BEND (area pop. 35,000, alt. sea level to 400 ft.) forms the largest urban area on the Oregon Coast, sprawling over the hilly peninsula between the curving arms of Coos Bay. This has been a timber port since the late 1800s. By the middle of the 20th century it boasted as being the "World's Largest Lumber Port." A string of tidewater mills and warehouses, some disused and derelict, dot the bay's 15-mile shore. While the forest products industry has declined in recent decades, Coos Bay docks still ship logs and wood chips overseas, mostly to the Far East.

Though basically hardworking industrial cities, Coos Bay-North Bend are not without their charms. Gardens thrive in the mild climate – you'll even see windmill palms. Pleasant residential neighborhoods climb the hills, offering harbor and city views. Several streets in downtown Coos Bay form a shopping district reserved for pedestrians. Shoppers will also enjoy **Pony Village**, the regional mall on North Bend's Virginia Avenue.

Waterfront activities are interesting to watch – you can tour a Coast Guard cutter at the **Coast Guard Dock** on Highway 101. **Coos Bay Boardwalk**, along Bayshore Drive on the downtown waterfront, is a wooden walkway overlooking the public boat docks.

Front Street at the north end of the downtown waterfront is a historic district with several museums: the **Coos Historical & Maritime Museum** and the nearby **Marshfield Sun Printing Museum**. The **Coos Art Museum**, west of downtown at 235 Anderson Avenue, occupies the Art Deco-style former post office building. The Coquille Indian Tribe operates the **Mill Casino**, a gaming center and hotel overlooking the bay on the sprawling site of the former Weyerhaeuser plant.



At the south end of the waterfront the **Oregon Coast Historical Railway Museum** has a collection of old railroad rolling stock and railway memorabilia.



Towboat Koos No. 2 displays on the Coos Bar Boardwalk

All along the southern Oregon Coast you'll hear about myrtlewood. This broadleaf evergreen tree, also known as the California laurel or bay laurel, grows in coastal valleys from the Umpqua south into northern California. Artisans craft its lovely whorled wood into attractive bowls and souvenirs available in shops throughout the region. The **Oregon Connection**, at the south end of central Coos Bay at 1125 S. Front Street, produces various items from this beautiful native hardwood.



A myrtlewood "lazy susan"

Side Trip to Cape Arago & Seven Devils

The coastline southwest of Coos Bay is among the most spectacular in North America. From the Empire district on the west side of the city, the **Cape Arago Highway** (designated SR-540) leads along the south shore of the bay, through the suburban community of **BARVIEW** (pop. 1,850, alt. 54 ft.), then crosses South Slough, the southern arm of Coos Bay.

CHARLESTON (pop. 700, alt. 9 ft.) is an unpretentious commercial and sport fishing port just inside the entrance to Coos Bay. Its packing plants process crab, oysters, shrimp, tuna, salmon, and other kinds of fish. This is the place for fresh

seafood and the port's charter boats offer harbor tours, deep sea fishing trips and whale watching excursions. The **Oregon Institute of Marine Biology**, operated by the University of Oregon occupies a 100-acre campus on the site of the former Coos Head Military Reservation just west of town. The institute's **Marine Life Center** (opening in 2015) on Boat Basin Road features five galleries showcasing South Coast marine environments, including seagrass meadows, sub-tidal boulder fields, kelp forests and rocky tidepools.

West of Charleston the road winds over a forested ridge then approaches the Pacific at **Bastendorf Beach**, a great stretch of sand extending south from the bay's entrance. The county park offers campsites and beach combing opportunities. It's tempting to climb the jetty rocks and watch the crashing surf. If you're lucky, you may observe a giant cargo ship navigate the channel entrance. The mouth of the bay marks a dramatic change in the coastal landscape. To the north, a rectilinear beach of hard packed sand backed by high dunes extends for dozens of miles. South of the harbor entrance the ragged remnants of ancient lava flows mix with sandstone formations. Rugged ramparts alternate with isolated coves hosting short stretches of golden sands. Off shore reefs, rocks and stacks mark the ancient shoreline and give testament to the erosive power of the sea. Access to this area from the south is available via the Seven Devils Road, 5 miles north of Bandon.

Cape Arago Lighthouse stands on Cape Gregory, guiding shipping approaching Coos Bay. First commissioned in 1866, it was supposed to have been erected on its namesake cape, four miles further south. Erosion has separated the cape from the mainland and a picturesque wooden bridge now spans the gap.

The highway continues to **Sunset Bay State Park**, a picture post card scene with a crescent of sand framed by sandstone cliffs. The shallows here make the water warmer than more open beaches, and the small waves make Sunset Bay popular with families. The park has a popular campground and a small golf course is nearby.



Cape Arago Lighthouse is actually on Cape Gregory



During high surf conditions waves explode against offshore rocks at Shore Acres sending spray 100+ feet into the air. A glass enclosed pavilion overlooks the site and affords protection in stormy weather [Photo: Oregon State Parks]

Just down the road is **Shore Acres State Park**, one of the gems of the Oregon coast. The park occupies the former estate of Louis J. Simpson, an early 20th-century timber entrepreneur, acquired by the state in 1942. The overlook, perched on the edge of seaside cliffs, stands on the site of the Simpson mansion. This vantage offers some of the world's most spectacular storm watching. During strong winter storms giant Pacific waves crash against the steeply-inclined coastal rock formations, sending spray over a hundred feet into the air – a truly awesome spectacle. At other times the trails along the precipice offer incredible views of this craggy shore. A formal botanical garden, south of the overlook, contains palms and other exotic plants gathered from around the world by Simpson's clipper ships. Flowers bloom year round in the mild climate. From the back side of the garden a trail winds down to the isolated beach at Simpson Cove (*see photo on front page*).

Just past the bay the narrow highway winds along the upper edge of cliffs overlooking the Pacific. There are several

roadside pullouts. **Simpson Reef and Sea Island Overlook** provides an excellent vantage of a popular marine mammal haul out. Steller and California sea lions, harbor seals and the Northern elephant seal frequent the site. Field glasses will greatly enhance your viewing and if the wind is right, you'll hear their raucous calls



The Seven Devils stretch south from road's end at Cape Arago State Park

The road ends at **Cape Arago State Park**, occupying this ragged headland 15 miles southwest of Coos Bay. Captain James Cook sighted the headlands here on 12 March, 1778, first naming it for St. Gregory. There is also speculation that Francis Drake landed here in 1578. An 1850 mapping expedition renamed the cape for French botanist and geographer Dominique Francois Jean Arago (1786-1853). The scenery is dramatic, especially looking south along a stretch of coastline called the Seven Devils. The name was applied in the mid-1800s, describing the difficulties of blazing a coastal trail through the seven deep ravines cut into the oceanfront cliffs. You can follow the trail down to South Cove and hike for miles along the rocky and driftwood-strewn beach at the base of the Seven Devils.

To continue south, drive back to Charleston, then turn right (south) on the Seven Devils Road. This leads through second- and third-growth woodland to the visitor center for the **South Slough National Estuarine Preserve**. The center has displays on the bay's natural history and trails lead out into the wetlands.

Seven Devils Road swings west toward the coast. Narrow lanes branch west to several isolated beaches – Sacchi, Agate, Merchants and Whisky Run. The later was the scene of an early 1850s gold rush. From 1853-1855 this was the original site of the town of Randolph (presently located four miles southeast of here on the Coquille River). Upwards of 2,000 people mined the creek and beach until a storm destroyed the site in 1855.

The Seven Devils Road continues south, joining US-101 five miles north of Bandon. The next section describes Highway 101 south from Coos Bay.

2. Coos Bay to the California Border

Multi-lane US-101 heads south from Coos Bay, following Isthmus Slough. Derelict mills line its banks and the entire area looks like it's seen better days. Magnificent stands of Douglas-fir, the greatest of the lumber trees, made Coos Bay a timber capital. The Coast Range east of here still contains hidden groves of Doug-fir that have escaped the logger's axe. The Coos Bay Bureau of Land Management office can give directions to the Doerner Fir, the world's tallest know Douglas-fir, 11.5 feet in diameter reaching 329 feet in height. Only the coast redwood grows taller. It's located near the hamlet of **FAIRVIEW**, about 15 miles southeast of Coos Bay.



The highway turns southwest, climbing into the heavily-logged coastal hills -- watch for cranberry bogs off to the east. This alignment opened in the early 1960s, trimming nearly a dozen miles off the original route of US-101, which continued south to Coquille, then followed its namesake river west to Bandon. The Seven Devils Road (described in "Side Trip" above) joins on the right.

West of the US-101/Seven Devils Toad junction is **Bandon Dunes**, a destination golf resort with five courses. The setting recalls the links of Scotland and is described as among the finest coastal golf course complex in the country.

← *The oceanfront links at Bandon Dunes are a golfers dream*

Just north of the Coquille River Bridge a side road branches west to **Bullards Beach State Park**, a tract of coastal dunes and marshland north of the mouth of the Coquille River. The **Coquille River (Bandon) Lighthouse** stands at the end of the park's road, overlooking the river's mouth. Erected in 1896, it was abandoned by the Coast Guard in 1939, and has been restored as a historic attraction.

Highway 101 spans the Coquille River, French for 'shell,' although its name is more likely derived from a Native American word. The bustling little city of **BANDON-BY-THE-SEA** (pop. 3,110, alt. 76 ft.) spreads along the south bank of the Coquille River and onto terraces overlooking the Pacific. Pioneer settler George Bennett named the site for Bandon in County Cork, Ireland. The **Old Town** business district parallels the riverfront. Here you'll find an eclectic collection of shops, boutiques and cafes. The **Bandon Historical Society Museum**, on Hwy. 101 at Fillmore, occupies the former city hall. Its exhibits describe Native Americans, pioneer settlement, farming, coastal shipwrecks and the wildfires that devastated the area in 1914 and 1936. The city was almost completely destroyed by a wildfire on 28 September, 1936.

The **Bandon Scenic Loop** leads west from US-101 in Old Town, then south along the shore where sea stacks, rocks and needles form a spectacular seascape. The cliffs along the loop are a popular spot for storm watching and photographing sunsets. A local group, the "Bandon Stormwatchers," rallies at the cliff's edge to watch Pacific combers crash against the rock-girt coast during fierce winter gales. The beaches attract rockhounds searching out agates and semi-precious stones. **Bandon Ocean Wayside** offers a panorama of legendary Face Rock. Other scenic pullouts along the loop include Devil's Kitchen and China Creek.



Boats add color to Bandon's harbor



Sea stacks pepper the photogenic Bandon shore

Bandon is known as "Oregon's Cranberry Capital." Cranberry bogs dot the coastal plain from southern Coos County into northern Curry County. The diked and carefully tended fields are harvested in the fall. Bandon celebrates a Cranberry Festival in September.



Pretty but invasive, gorse is a common site along the south coast

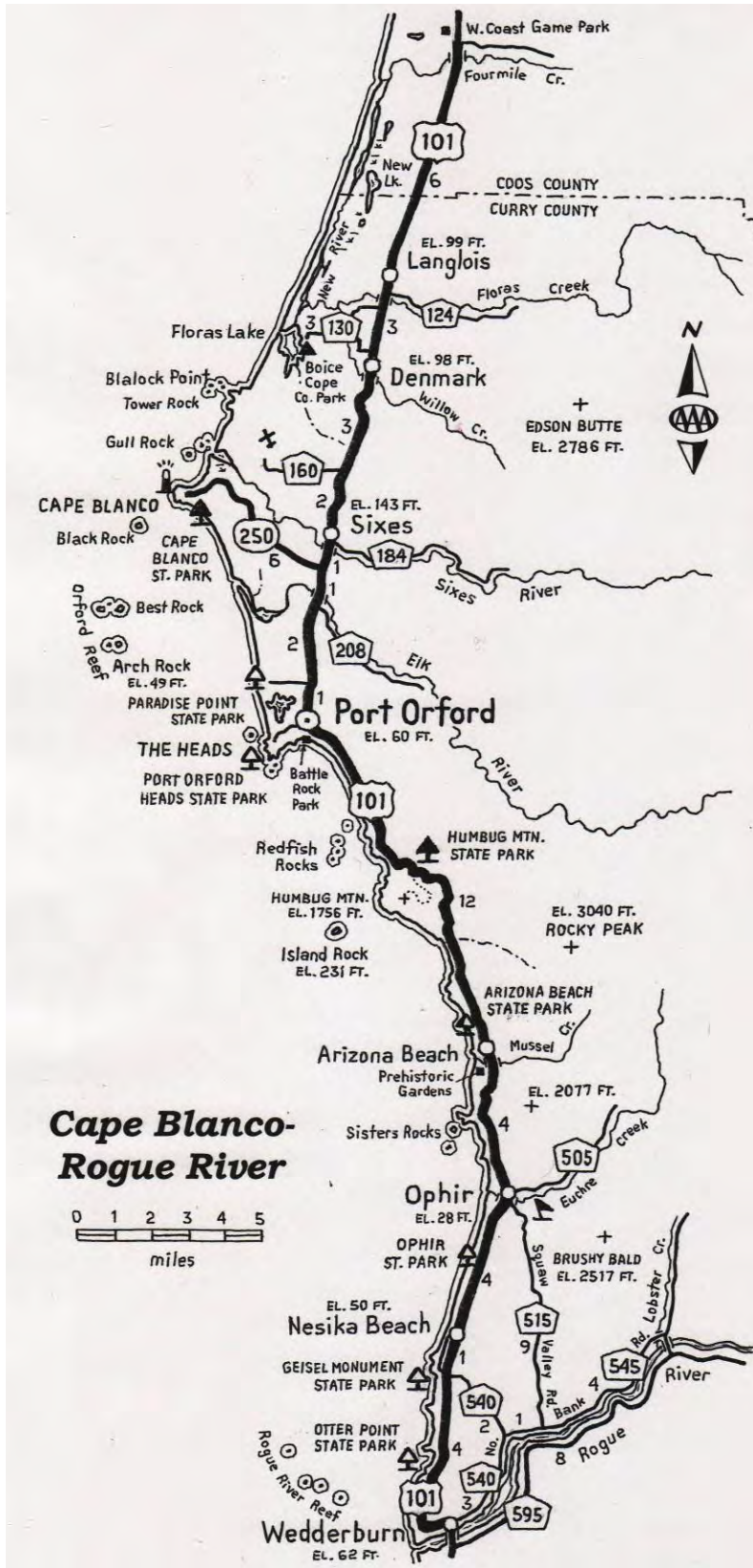
From Bandon south to Port Orford US-101 traverses a flat to rolling plain, an ancient terrace long ago lifted above sea level. The shoreline lies two to six miles off to the west and is only occasionally glimpsed. A dense tangle of trees covers the plain, here and there cleared for ranching, dairying and specialized agriculture. In spring the bloom of wild rhododendron and azaleas add color to the landscape. South of Bandon you'll see outcrops of a spiny dark evergreen plant covered with small yellow flowers – this is gorse (*Ulex europaeus*). Native to central and western Europe and the British Isles, where it is an important component of native heathland vegetation, gorse was introduced as an ornamental in the Bandon area in the late 19th century and has since spread widely in coastal areas from California to British Columbia. Gorse forms thickets too dense to traverse afoot. Its natural oils make it a fire hazard.

Four miles south of Bandon is the **West Coast Game Park**. Here visitors can feed and walk among hundreds of exotic birds and animals representing more than 70 species. The village of **LANGLOIS** (pop. 180, alt. 99 ft.), a center for the surrounding dairy and sheep farms, bears the surname of pioneer William Langlois who settled here in 1854. West of here a ridge of dunes backs the rectilinear shoreline. These dunes have blocked the small coastal streams, forming a string of lagoons. Floras Lake, southwest of Langlois, is popular with windsurfers due to the persistent winds.

DENMARK (pop. 15, alt. 98 ft.) is a miniscule settlement whose name reflects the country of origin of local pioneer farmers in the 1870s. **SIXES** (pop. 220, alt. 143 ft.) is another farming village on its eponymous river; its name is probably derived from a Native American word meaning 'people by the far north country.'

A mile south of Sixes a narrow road leads half a dozen miles west to **Cape Blanco**, Oregon's westernmost point, also described as the westernmost point accessible by paved road in the Lower 48.

In 1604 Spanish Captain Martín de Aguilar sighted the headland's chalk-colored cliffs and bestowed on it the Spanish word for 'white.' The **Cape Blanco Lighthouse**, the westernmost mainland light in the 48 states, dates back to 1870. It's also Oregon's oldest continuously-active lighthouse.



From this land's-end promontory views stretch both north and south along the rock-bound coast – look for sea otters on the beaches. The area is part of **Cape Blanco State Park**, which offers camping, hiking and bridle trails. Also within the park is the **Hughes House**, an 1898 farmhouse, a mile east of the lighthouse. The house is open to the public and offers a glimpse at Victorian-era life on this remote coast.

Two miles south of Sixes Highway 101 crosses the Elk River. Rare brown pelicans congregate at its mouth from July to October to feed on salmon.

PORT ORFORD (pop. 1,135, alt. 52 ft.) is the oldest town on the South Coast, settled in the 1850s. Its name dates back to the 1792 visit by the English Captain George Vancouver, who named its bay for the Earl of Orford. It's billed as the westernmost incorporated city in the contiguous states. The town is also one of the rainiest in Oregon, receiving an average 72 inches a year. The setting is stupendous, with sweeping views south along the increasingly mountainous coast.

The small port is unique – one of only two "dolly docks" in the U.S. (the other one is in Los Angeles). Because the harbor area is too shallow for safe mooring, large hoists lift the vessels in and out of the water each day. When not at sea the boats are parked in rows on the dock, cradled in custom-made trailers that can be easily moved by pickup trucks. A **Fishermen's Memorial** honors those lost at sea.



Port Orford's unique "dolly port"

Port Orford Heads State Park, a mile west of town is a must-see attraction. The park's

Lifeboat Station Museum is housed in a former Coast Guard facility that provided search and rescue assistance from 1934-1970. A steep trail leads down to the launch site. Other park trails pass through the woods to hillside vantage points where

grand panoramas stretch north across the rock-pierced sea to Cape Blanco and south along the mountainous shoreline curving off toward California. Local legend relates that in 1864 a huge meteorite fell to earth in the remote Coast Range country some 40 miles east of Port Orford. Despite frequent searches, no remains have ever been found of the so-called **Port Orford Meteorite**. Just west of US-101 a sign indicates the **Port Orford Wetlands Interpretive Walkway**, a boardwalk path through a freshwater marsh.



Looking north for the end of the trail at Port Orford Heads



Trails lead to the upper slopes of Humbug Mountain and sweeping views

long abandoned lumber port. A wooden bridge once linked the mainland with the rocks, the only suitable spot to land vessels along this rugged coast.

OPHIR (pop. 275, alt. 28 ft.), a Biblical name referring to a region of fine gold, is a scattered settlement near the mouth of Euchre Creek. Wildflowers, including yellow verbena and lupine, thrive on the grassy slopes facing the Pacific. The highway hugs the shore, passing a series of beaches and the cottage community of **NESIKA BEACH** (pop. 465, alt. 50 ft.). Rounding a bend, the mouth of the Rogue River comes into view. The storied Rogue rises on the distant flanks of Mount Mazama (the caldera containing Crater Lake). It flows 200 miles through sunny agricultural valleys and wild canyons, emptying into the Pacific at Gold Beach. The Rogue is a renowned fishing stream for salmon and steelhead.

On the river's north bank, at the base of grassy hills, lies the village of **WEDDERBURN** (pop. 330, alt. 82 ft.), named for the ancestral Scottish home of a pioneer settler. Formerly a salmon fishing and canning center, Wedderburn today depends on tourism and fishing. Jet boats offer excursions trips from the town to isolated settlements upstream. Seven miles east, via the North Bank Road (CR-540) is Tu-tu-tun Lodge, a luxurious AAA 4-Diamond resort.

GOLD BEACH (pop. 2,275, alt. 60 ft.), just south of the Rogue's mouth, spreads over hillsides overlooking the ocean. Settlement here dates back to the 1850s gold rush. Originally named Ellensburg, it was later known as Sebastopol. The present name recalls the placer gold deposits found in the sands near the mouth of the Rogue. Forest products, fishing, retailing and tourism constitute the economic base and Gold Beach is seat of Curry County. Horticulturalists take note – the northernmost unprotected date palms in North America may be seen along some of the town's residential streets. The **Curry County Historical Museum**, located US-101 on the south side of town, documents area history. Down on the waterfront

The town gives its name to one of the great forest trees of the South Coast, the Port Orford Cedar. Actually a species of cypress (and also known as Lawson cypress), specimens of this giant conifer occasionally tower over 200 feet in height. Its valuable soft wood has many uses, including battery separators, boat building and quality cabinet work.

Just opposite downtown is **Battle Rock Park**, the site of an 1851 skirmish between nine gold prospectors and local Native Americans (this is also the site of the local Visitor Information Center). The view is outstanding. South of Port Orford the coast takes on a wilder character. A few scattered settlements huddle at the base of high mountains that rise abruptly from the sea. The natural vegetation also changes – the forest hosts more broadleaf evergreen trees, species native to more southerly latitudes. In places the woodland is scrubby, or gives way to grassy meadows.

Highway 101 winds around the inland base of **Humbug Mountain**, a bold headland rising over 1,700 feet from the ocean. The road follows a stream around the inland side of the mountain, through a dense copse of myrtle and alder. A 3-mile trail ascends the summit for a sweeping panorama (it's a steep climb). **Humbug Mountain State Park** offers a wide range of recreational activities in its 1,800-acres. There is an unusual beach of black sand near the campground at Humbug's north base.

South of Humbug Mountain US-101 parallels the shore, gradually dropping back to beach level. Near Arizona Beach is **Prehistoric Gardens**, an attraction featuring life-size dinosaur replicas set in a lush, rainforest setting. Just down the road at Sisters Rocks, is the site of **Frankport**, a

look for the *Mary D. Hume*, the last wooden-hulled coastal steamer. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the vessel has slumped into the mudflats along the river.

The stretch of coast from Gold Beach to Brookings is magnificent and all the more enjoyable since the highway was straightened and aligned closer to the shore in the early 1960s. After World War II the area was proposed as a national park – it's now protected as a state scenic corridor and contains some of the grandest coastal scenery in North America



Six miles south of Gold Beach US-101 climbs over the headland of **Cape Sebastian**, named by Sebastián Vizcaíno who explored this stretch of coast in 1603. As it was named to honor a saint, rather than the explorer himself, the cape is occasionally known as San Sebastian. Its cliffs rise sheer from the sea to a height of 700 feet. A narrow lane branches west from the highway to a pair of viewpoints – to the north the panorama stretches 43 miles to Cape Blanco. Cape St. George, near Crescent City, California can be seen 50 miles to the south. Wildflowers dot windswept grassy slopes.

Descending from Cape Sebastian, US-101 drops down to the community of **PISTOL RIVER** (pop. 85, alt. 20 ft.), located on its namesake stream – a pioneer lost a pistol in this river, and the name endured. **Pistol River State Park** protects Myers Beach with its spectacular sea stacks.

The next 15 miles are the most spectacular, as the highway runs along the seaward flank of a series of high ridges, interspersed with deep ravines. The rocks and stacks that pierce the sea are host to multitudes of birds and are part of a federal wildlife refuge. The dozen miles, from Mack Arch to Lone Ranch, are part of the **Samuel H. Boardman State Scenic Corridor**, part of Oregon's state park system. Many rank this among the planet's finest shoreline scenery.



Sheer cliffs enclose a pocket beach at Thunder Rock Cove

Numerous turnouts along this stretch offer magnificent panoramas. From some, hiking trails lead to more intimate views. If time permits, stop at each – Mack Arch, Spruce Island, Natural Bridges, Whaleshead Cove and Hose Rock – you will not be disappointed. **Thomas Creek Bridge Viewpoint** overlooks the 970-foot long span, 350 feet above Thomas Creek. This is the highest bridge in Oregon. A short trail leads to the viewpoint at the south end of the bridge. Near the southern end of

the park, **Cape Ferrelo** bears the name of Bartolomé Ferrelo, who in 1542 may have been the first European to glimpse what is now known as Oregon.



Natural Bridges



Cape Ferrelo is named for a 16th-century Spanish explorer

For a sample of the old, winding Oregon Coast Highway, take the **Carpenterville Road**, a 21-mile section of the original route of US-101, relegated to back-road status when the new coastal alignment opened in 1961. It offers an interesting alternative, climbing in a series of switchbacks from sea level at Pistol River to over 1,700 feet at Burnt Hill.

Just north of the summit is the dispersed settlement of **CARPENTERVILLE** (pop. nil, alt. 1,585 ft.). The hamlet started as a sawmill in the early 1920s and once boasted a post office, store and tourist cabins. It languished after traffic diverted to the new highway. From Burnt Hill the road runs along the crest of the ridge through forest and chaparral scrub. Majestic panoramas alternate: westward down to the Pacific, far below, and eastward over the wild terrain of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. At several points, weather conditions permitting, you can glimpse the snowy dome of distant Mount Shasta, peeking over the intervening ridges off to the southeast. The Carpenterville Road drops back down to US-101 just north of Brookings.

Harris Beach State Park, 2 miles north of Brookings, offers an excellent beach, tide pools, hiking trails, a campground and panoramic views of off shore rocks and the dramatic sweep of coastline south into California. Goat Island, a bird refuge, is Oregon's largest coastal island. The offshore rocks are feeding sites for tufted puffins.



Harris Beach north of Brookings

The highway widens and swings into **BROOKINGS** (pop. 6,450, alt. 127 ft.), metropolis of the South Coast and self-styled "Home of Winter Flowers." The city perches on a terrace overlooking the sea. On the eastern edge of town the Chetco River empties into the Pacific, forming an excellent sheltered harbor. Settlement dates back to 1914, when a company town was established for a box mill. Its name recalls Robert S. Brookings, largest stockholder of the box company. Forest products and fishing are still important contributors to the local economy. Brookings also attracts a large number of retirees who enjoy year round gardening and the mild climate.

In the 1910s Brookings hoped to be the northern terminus of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad and noted San Francisco Bay Area architect Bernard Maybeck (1862-1957) was hired to draft the original design for the company town.

The **Central Building**, downtown at 703 Chetco Avenue, is listed on the National Historic Register. Built in 1915 as headquarters for the Oregon & California Lumber Company, it now houses several shops and an entertainment venue. **Azalea Park**, just north of Highway 101 on the eastern edge of town, has more than 1,000 wild azaleas and rhododendrons. The 33-acre park also has Kid Town, a children's play area and an amphitheater for concerts and other presentations. To celebrate its favorite blooms Brookings hosts an annual Azalea Festival Memorial Day weekend.

Just south of the Chetco River Bridge, **HARBOR** (pop. 2,800, alt. 100 ft.) takes its name from the large commercial and sport fishing facilities inside the mouth of the river. There are some eateries and lodgings in the port area. A beach extends south from the harbor entrance along colorful, eroded sandstone cliffs. East of Highway 101 residential districts climb the Harbor Hills.

The **Chetco Valley Historical Museum** on US-101 south of the bridge, occupies a former stage house dating back to the

mid 1800s. On the museum grounds stands Oregon's largest Monterey cypress, a 99-foot tall specimen with a circumference of 27 feet.

The stretch of coast from Port Orford south to the California border enjoys the Pacific Northwest's mildest climate. Although annual rainfall is heavy, averaging 70 to 90 inches, it concentrates in the six months from November through April. Temperatures are remarkably mild year round. Frost is rare and snowfall at sea level is almost unknown. Brookings, with its southern exposure and backdrop of mountains, experiences periods of warmth unusual for a coastal location. In winter temperatures of 70° or even 80° are not uncommon, while summer readings occasionally top out in the 90's and can exceed 100° (the record is 108°). These warm spells, known as the "Brookings Effect," occur under certain atmospheric conditions when strong offshore winds heat up as they descend from the coastal mountains to sea level.



Canary Island date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) thrive in the Brookings climate



Well-tended lily fields dot the bench along the coast south of Brookings-Harbor

In the mild coastal climate camellias bloom at Christmas and flowering plum add their color in January. Magnolia, some early azaleas and rhododendron also bloom in late winter. Daffodils, grown commercially on the narrow coastal plain south of the city, bloom from late January into February. Other floral manifestations of the benign climate include date palms and towering eucalyptus trees.

This plain, which extends south to Smith River, California, is renowned for its crop of Croft lilies – approximately 95 percent of the world's commercially raised Easter lilies grow in these carefully tended fields. From Harbor take Oceanview Drive for a closer look at this horticultural district. The road runs parallel to US-101 close to the shoreline. It rejoins US-101 just north of the California border.

Southern Curry County marks the northern extent of the natural range of the Coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*). Several groves occur along the lower Chetco and Winchuck rivers and in isolated mountain pockets. The Coast redwood is earth's tallest living thing – patriarchs regularly exceed 300 feet.

At the south end of Brookings, just north of the Chetco River Bridge, the **North Bank Road** (CR-784) follows the Chetco River east into the forested mountains. **Loeb State Park**, 10 miles upstream, contains Oregon's largest grove of old growth myrtle. The leaves of these beautiful evergreen trees have a scent of camphor and eucalyptus. The park has several nature trails, campsites and cabins. A quarter mile north of the park on CR-784, the **Redwood Nature Trail** winds a mile through the northernmost stand of redwood. The trailhead is also accessible from the park by following a path along the river.



Redwood Nature Trail loops through the world's northernmost natural groves of redwood



On the Oregon Redwoods Trail

The grove is a mixed forest of redwoods interspersed with Douglas-fir, with an understory of tanoak and huckleberry. Along the trail you will see Redwood trees up to 250 feet tall and 10 feet in diameter. The oldest were seedlings in the 13th-century. A trail guide describing some of the flora is available at the trailhead and at Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest Offices.

Another accessible stand of redwood is east of US-101 on Peavine Ridge, just north of the California border. Head east from the highway on the Winchuck River Road (CR-896); turn right on unpaved Forest Road 1101. The **Oregon Redwoods Trail** begins at the end of the road. The first section of the trail is barrier free. These trails lead through groves of old-growth redwood. Interpretive panels describe the forest habitat.

Five miles south of Brookings US-101 crosses the Winchuck River. Just beyond a paved road branches west to the **Oregon Welcome Center**, stocked with brochures and staffed with knowledgeable travel consultants. The center employs green technology. Its solar panels send power – as much as 20,000 kilowatt hours per year – back to the local utility co-op, as well as heating the water. The Earth itself warms the building in the winter and cools it in the summer. Water and lights are precisely timed to provide for needed services with minimal waste. The center is located in **Crissey Field State Park**, the former site of a landing strip. A path leads to a sandy beach.

Just south of the Winchuck River US-101 crosses the 42nd parallel and enters the Golden State of California.

**KEEPING
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Here is a listing of South Coast radio stations . . .

BANDON
KBDN - 96.5FM

BROOKINGS
KURY - 910AM
KURY - 95.3FM

**COOS BAY-
NORTH BEND**
KHSN - 1230AM
KBBR - 1340AM
KSBA - 88.5FM (NPR)
KZBY - 90.5FM (NPR)
KDCQ - 93.5FM

KOOS- 94.9FM
KYTT - 98.7FM
KYSJ - 105.9FM
KACW - 107.3FM

COQUILLE
KWRO - 97.3AM
KSHR - 97.3FM

GOLD BEACH
KGBR - 100.3FM

PORT ORFORD
KPOZ 88.1FM

REEDSPORT
KDUN - 1030AM
KLFR - 89.1FM (NPR)
KSYD - 92.1FM (NPR)
KJMX - 99.5FM