



Larry Geddis

THE
*Charleston
 to Bandon*
 TOUR ROUTE

A short spur off the Pacific Coast Scenic Byway, this Route showcases a glorious stretch of coastline that includes six state parks, two National Wildlife Refuges, and America's first National Estuarine Research Reserve.

To Coos Head

From North Bend, take Cape Arago Highway to Charleston, a working fishing port, and a great point of departure for a charter fishing trip. Soon you'll pass the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, a teaching and research extension of the University of Oregon, and Coos Head, which offers a breathtaking glimpse of this awesome coastline. Driving south, you'll reach Bastendorf Beach County Park, a popular surfing spot.

Out to Cape Arago

A series of beautiful parks awaits you on this stretch of the Route. First stop is Sunset Bay State Park, which features a beach surrounded by sandstone cliffs that warm the water to swimmer-friendly temperatures—a rare treat along the Oregon coast! Three miles farther on you'll reach Shore Acres State Park, which rests upon a bluff that

offers sweeping views of the Pacific. The Park was once the site of a grand estate built by lumber baron, Louis B. Simpson; the five acre gardens of the Simpson estate, filled with exotic plants from around the world, are now open to the public. The road ends at Cape Arago State Park, poised 200 feet above the Pacific. Watch for seals and sea lions in the surf near Simpson Reef, and for migrating whales farther off the coast in the winter. To reach the last leg of the Route, retrace your route for six miles, and turn right on Seven Devils Road.

Down to the Lighthouse

Driving south, you'll come to the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve, home to many important species including bald eagles, great blue herons, elk, and Dungeness crab, and offers a number of good hiking and pedaling trails. A little farther along, you'll pass some of Bandon's celebrated cranberry bogs; Bandon is the unofficial cranberry capital of the Pacific Northwest. Anchoring the southern end of the Route is the Coquille River Lighthouse, one of Oregon's most photographed landmarks. Before ending in Bandon's Old Town section, the Route skirts the Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, part of the Oregon coast's largest waterfowl wintering grounds. Bandon is a popular getaway spot on the southern coast (see page 19).



Trip Tips

Distance: 41 miles. Best Time: Spring-fall, winter for whale watching. Minimum Driving Time: 2-3 hours. Medical Services/Hospitals: Coos Bay.

Rest Areas: Facilities are available in Charleston, Bandon and in parks along the way.

Photo: crashing surf near Cape Arago State Park.