

Oregon Coast Paddling Destinations



Beaver Creek ★★★★★

Beaver Creek is a popular creek for paddler, especially for those who prefer a gentle paddling experience. The creek meanders for two miles through Sitka spruce, alder forested hills, and wetlands and into the Beaver Creek State Natural Area. The creek starts at Brian Booth State Park (formally Ona Beach State Park). There is a boat ramp on the east side of Highway 101. The creek is home to bald eagles, osprey, belted kingfishers, numerous songbirds, beaver, nutria, otter, steelhead, salmon, and cutthroat trout. There are several little side channels that can be explored in smaller paddlecraft.

Oregon State Parks and Recreation at South Beach State Park operate daily kayak tours of the creek starting July 1 and running through Labor Day weekend. The cost of the tours, which include kayak rental and PFD are \$25.

The best time to paddle the creek is in the morning while the winds are light and the water placid. Toward the afternoon, winds from the west begin to pick up and can cause heavy ripples on the water.

[Click here](#) for more information.



Cleawox Lake ★★★

Cleawox Lake is a lovely little lake on the central Oregon coast just south of Florence, Oregon. You can paddle the entire lake in two hours. The lake is situated in the Jessie M. Honeyman Memorial State Park. The lake is also at the start of the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area. There is a store at the lake that rents kayaks, canoes, and paddleboats. The lake is actually divided in two: a main body where the store is located and a northern arm. The main body is relatively U shaped and shallow; the north arm is narrow and deeper and bordered at the northern tip by homes. The sand dunes border the western shore of the lake. ATVs can sometimes disturb the peacefulness of the lake. For that reason, paddling is recommended in the early morning and late afternoon.

The lake is stocked in early spring and summer with rainbow trout. There is also bass in the lake.

Jessie M. Honeyman Memorial State Park has one of the best and largest campgrounds in Oregon, though the campground doesn't border the lake.

If you tire of paddling Cleawox Lake Woahink is just across Highway 101 and provides plenty of paddling opportunities. Be advised that unlike Cleawox Lake, which is only open to non-motorized boats, Woahink Lake allows motorized boats, and waterskiing is a common activity on the lake.

Both lakes can get rather windy in the afternoon, though the winds tend to be worse on Woahink Lake because it is a much larger lake.

[Click here](#) for more information. [Click here](#) to view a video of Cleawox Lake.

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Cullaby Lake ★★☆☆

Five miles north of Gearhart, Oregon, just off Highway 101 lies Cullaby Lake, a two-mile-long lake on the Clatsop Plain. The lake is fed solely by groundwater and has a murky appearance that makes it appear muddy, but it is actually quite clean.

The circumference of the lake can easily be paddled in a couple of hours. Leave extra time to explore the boat canal north of Cullaby Lake County Park. The boat canal (pictured) is the highlight of paddling the lake and especially fun to paddle in the fall as the leaves change color and fall. The treelined canal, lined on both banks by homes, snakes its way through the neighborhood

The major drawback to the lake and one reason it only rates three stars is that powerboats and water skiing are allowed on the lake. For that reason, it is best to paddle the lake in the fall, winter, and early spring. Early morning is the best time if you want to paddle the lake in the summer.

Fishing for bass and trout is allowed on the lake.

The lake is within an easy drive of the campground at Ft. Stevens State Park.

There are two county parks on the lake: [Cullaby Lake County Park](#) and Carnahan County Park. Cullaby Lake County Park is the largest of the two and features two boat ramps, restrooms, picnic tables near the water's edge, a swim beach, and a playground. The park also has sandy beaches with grassy banks, making it an ideal landing for canoes and kayaks. There are no facilities at Carnahan other than picnic tables, a dock, and unimproved boat ramp. Directions to the parks can be a little difficult to read once you turn off Highway 101. There is a small, brown sign just after you turn onto Cullaby Lake Lane directing you to the parks.



Drift Creek ★★★★★

Drift Creek flows out of the Coastal Range near Waldport, Oregon, and empties into the Alsea River. The lower section of Drift Creek is easily paddled. Drift Creek is affected by tides, so consult tide tables and use the tides to your advantage.

Paddlers on Drift Creek can often spot river otters, elk, deer, bald eagles, great blue herons, and other wildlife. The best time to view wildlife on the creek is either early in the morning or later in the afternoon as the temperature begins to cool.

The lower section of Drift Creek begins in meadows and grasslands. As you paddle upstream, openness gives way to heavily wooded areas, and the creek narrows considerably and gets shallow.

You have to launch across the Alsea River from Drift Creek. Put in at either the Alsea River RV and Marina or Drift Creek Landing RV and Marina. There is a sandbar at the mouth of Drift Creek, so stay to the left bank of the river until you reach the first blue boat shed, then paddle directly across the river and head up into the creek.

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Because the winds can be rather strong in the summer, plan on paddling the creek in the early morning. It isn't uncommon to encounter two-foot swells on the river when the winds come up, so kayakers are encouraged to use a spray skirt.

[Click here](#) to view a video of paddling Drift Creek.



Lewis and Clark NWR ★★★★★

Only accessible by boat, the Lewis and Clark NWR is located just 20 miles south of Astoria. The refuge consists of approximately 20 islands that provide paddlers with plenty of exploration possibilities.

The refuge is home to a large variety of birds, including cormorants, bald eagles, great blue herons, numerous species of waterfowl, belted kingfishers, terns, pied-billed and western grebes, and song birds. Keep an eye out for river otters, sea lions, and Columbia River white-tailed deer that call the river and islands home.

The refuge is subject to tidal conditions. Sandbars and mud flats around the islands can appear and disappear depending on the tides. At high tide some of the islands may completely disappear. Winds can also be a problem and are often unpredictable. The winds have been known to create dangerous waves with whitecaps, so consider your paddling experience level before venturing over to the islands from the Washington side. The islands tend to protect paddlers from the wind and waves on the Oregon side.

There are two ideal ways to reach the islands. Paddlers can launch from Vista Park in Skamokawa, Washington, and paddle across the Columbia River to the refuge. There is \$1 launch fee and a \$5 parking fee at the Vista Park boat ramp. A closer access point is to launch from Aldrich Point on the Oregon side. The paddle across the Columbia River is about one mile, but there are fewer boats to contend with than launching from Aldrich Point where paddlers often have to deal with a large number of fishing boats. If the day is windy, launch from Aldrich Point.

Waterfowl hunting is allowed in the fall, so portions of the refuge may be closed at times during hunting season.

[View a map and brochure of the Lewis and Clark NWR.](#)



Neawanna Creek ★★

Located within Seaside city limits is a creek probably unfamiliar to many paddlers. Approximately 2.5 miles of the creek can be paddled depending on the height of the tide. There are a couple of shallow, rocky spots near the last home on the creek upstream of the ADA boat dock, so it is recommended that if you're going to paddle upstream of the dock you do so when the tide is high. Most of the creek downstream of the dock is fairly deep. However, the water gets a little shallow near the first bridge spanning the creek, so stay near the east bank.

During your paddle trip, keep an eye out for the osprey nest. Other wildlife you're likely to see on the creek while paddling through

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Seaside includes great egrets, great blue herons, belted kingfishers, cormorants, sandpipers, and red-tailed hawks.

There is an ADA-accessible boat launch located in Broadway Park.

Once finished with paddling, stop in downtown Seaside and stroll along the boardwalk. There are lots of things to do and stores to visit near the boardwalk, including an aquarium. There are plenty of lodging choices in and around Seaside.

Consult the tide tables to make sure you are paddling when the tide is high.

[Click here](#) to view a video of Neawanna Creek.



Nehalem River ★★★★★

Located about 23 miles north of Tillamook and 86 miles west of Portland, the Nehalem River extends 119 miles from the Coast Range to the north Oregon Coast. The upper half of the river has some great whitewater runs, but it's the lower half that provides serene, peaceful paddling for those looking for a much easier and less intense paddle.

There are many species of birds you can spot, and elk have often been observed on the island just offshore from Nehalem. There is also good fishing on the Nehalem River if you enjoy fishing from your canoe or kayak.

[Nehalem Bay State Park](#) provides great camping close by. You can launch from a nice sandy beach next to the boat ramp at the state park. The beach also provides a great stopping point for lunch if you're paddling from Wheeler or Nehalem to the mouth of the river. The state park is open year round.

Besides launching from Nehalem Bay State Park, you can also launch from the boats ramp at [Wheeler City Park](#) or the boat ramp just south of the bridge where Highway 101 crosses the river. The boat ramp at Wheeler City Park is the best choice as it provides a longer dock. There is a small gravel beach at Wheeler City Park you can launch from or launch from the dock if you feel comfortable.

Don't have a kayak? [Wheeler Marina](#) in downtown Wheeler rents kayaks.

In the fall you may have to contend with a large number of motorized fishing boats during the fall Chinook salmon fishing season.

It's advised that you pay close attention to the tides and use them to your advantage.

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Siletz Bay NWR ★★★★★

Siletz Bay NWR is just south of Lincoln City, Oregon, directly adjacent to Hwy 101. During the summer, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducts guided tours by canoe and kayak of the refuge. The tours are extremely popular and tend to fill up quickly, so early reservations are recommended. You don't have to sign up to take a tour of the refuge, however. Paddlers are welcome in the refuge year round.

You're likely to spot red-tailed hawks, bald eagles, great blue herons, belted kingfishers, marsh wrens, and song sparrows. If you're fortunate, you might even spot river otters along the stretch of the marsh that parallels Hwy 101. Deer also inhabit the marsh.

Launch from [Coyote Rock RV Resort and Marina](#). Afternoon winds can be very blustery, so paddling in the morning is advised. Start your journey one of two ways depending on the winds. Paddle up the Siletz River until you come to the house used in the movie *Sometimes a Great Notion*. The entrance to the marsh is a narrow channel between the house and the remnants of pillars used for tying off rafts of logs. The other option is to paddle across the river from the moorage and turn right into the first channel you come to. The channel that parallels Hwy 101 is the most scenic, but you'll also hear more road noise from the vehicles rushing by on the nearby highway.

Siletz Bay NWR is highly susceptible to tidal fluctuations, so plan your paddle trip accordingly. It is best to put in one hour before high tide and ride the tidal surge up the river, letting the outflowing tide help carry you back to the moorage at the conclusion of your paddle.

Waterfowl hunting is also allowed in the refuge in the fall, so take that into consideration when planning your paddle trip.

[Click here](#) to view a paddling video of the refuge. For more information about the refuge, [click here](#).



Siuslaw Water Trail ★★★★★

The 30-mile Siuslaw Water Trail begins in Mapleton, Oregon, and flows west through the city of Florence before reaching the ocean. Paddlers pass by estuarine salt marshes that support eelgrass, great egrets, osprey, muskrats, bald eagles, hawks, and other wildlife. One of the highlights of the water trail is Cox Island, a Nature Conservancy site. There are numerous little channels on the island to explore. Harbor seals use the beach on Cox Island as a haul-out to rest.

The river is greatly affected by tides, so confer with the tide tables before setting out. Also, winds in the afternoon can be quite strong, prompting sometimes for the Coast Guard to fly the small craft advisory flag. It's not uncommon to encounter three-foot waves in the river west of Florence.

Florence is a great little city with fantastic galleries, clothing stores, shops to tempt your sweet tooth and credit cards, and an all-around charm. A campground right in the heart of Florence and next to the boat ramp makes it convenient for extended paddle trips. You can even paddle up to Mo's for some launch.

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While there are some beautiful sandy beaches on the jetty from which to launch your boat, launching from the boat ramp in Florence is advised because of the strong winds possible. It is 3.8 miles from the beach on the jetty to the Siuslaw River Historic Bridge. There is a \$5 day-use fee on the jetty and a \$2 day-use fee at the marina.

[More information](#) about the Siuslaw Water Trail is available, including a printable map.

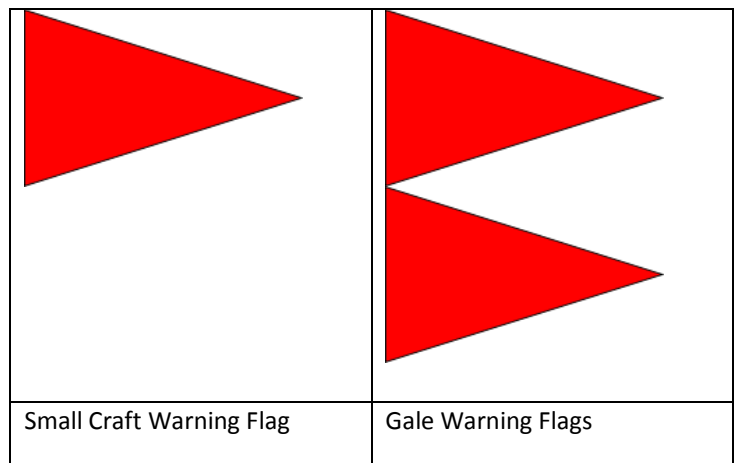


Yaquina Bay ★★★★★

Yaquina Bay provides the perfect opportunity for those with sea kayaks to get close to California sea lions and harbor seals while also exploring the busy harbor—home to a large commercial fishing and crabbing fleet—NOAA’s West Coast headquarters, and the Hatfield Marine Science Center’s oceanographic fleet.

The sea lions lie around on several of the docks and on the rock jetty protecting the fishing docks. In fact, the concentration of sea lions is so large on some of the docks that the docks are now partially submerged. Curious harbor seals will often pop up in front of your kayak.

The harbor can be very busy with both personal and commercial fishing boats, not to mention the large research vessels, coming and going. All this boat traffic can cause bounce-back waves from all different directions. Therefore, it is highly recommended that your boat be fitted with a spray skirt. Caution in the bay needs to be exercised. Keep to the shoreline and out of the main channel except to cross. Also pay close attention to the flag warnings (pictured below) at the Newport Coast Guard Station.



There is a boat ramp near Rogue Ale Brewery where you can launch. The cost is \$8. A better launch for kayaks is at the Hatfield Marine Science Center parking lot. There is a nice sandy beach at the west end of the parking lot.

After paddling, stop by the historic bay front for clam chowder at Moe’s, or eat at any one of the fine seafood restaurants. A favorite of is the Saffron Salmon right on the bay next to the Coast Guard

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station.