

The Central Oregon Coast

A self-drive itinerary down Highway 101 — from Lincoln City's beaches to the largest coastal sand dunes in North America.
oregoncoastjourney.com · Planned with Melinda

This route follows Highway 101 south along the central coast, roughly a 90-mile stretch you can savor over 2–3 days. Distances are short — the joy is in stopping often. Times and access can change seasonally, so check current hours before you go.

1 Lincoln City

START · MILES OF OPEN BEACH

A relaxed beach town with seven miles of sand, kite-flying at the D River Wayside, and glass-float treasure hunts hidden along the shore in the cooler months. A gentle place to begin before the drive south.

Don't miss: Walking the beach at low tide and browsing the outlet shops if the weather turns.

2 Depoe Bay & Newport

WHALE WATCHING · HISTORIC BAYFRONT

Depoe Bay bills itself as the whale-watching capital of the Oregon Coast, with gray whales visible offshore much of the year. Continue to Newport, home to the Oregon Coast Aquarium, the working Historic Bayfront, and the Yaquina Head Lighthouse.

Don't miss: Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area for tidepools and the tallest lighthouse on the Oregon Coast.

3 Yachats & Cape Perpetua

DRAMATIC ROCKY SHORELINE

The small village of Yachats sits where the mountains meet the sea. Just south, the Cape Perpetua Scenic Area offers some of the most dramatic shoreline on the coast — including Thor's Well and the Spouting Horn, where surf surges through the volcanic rock. The overlook is one of the highest viewpoints you can drive to on the Oregon Coast.

Timing matters: Thor's Well is most dramatic around high tide — but stay well back from the wet rock and never turn your back on the ocean.

4 Heceta Head & the Sea Lion Caves

ICONIC LIGHTHOUSE · WILDLIFE

Heceta Head Lighthouse is one of the most photographed lighthouses in the country, framed by a cove and forested headland. A few minutes south, the Sea Lion Caves is a privately operated sea cave and wildlife area where Steller sea lions gather.

Don't miss: The pullout just north of the Sea Lion Caves for the classic Heceta Head Lighthouse photo.

5 Florence & the Oregon Dunes

FINISH · LARGEST COASTAL DUNES IN NORTH AMERICA

Florence's Old Town lines the Siuslaw River with shops and seafood. Just south begins the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area — the largest expanse of coastal sand dunes in North America, stretching roughly 40 miles from Florence to Coos Bay. Some dunes rise hundreds of feet, and you can hike them, ride a dune buggy, or simply watch the sand meet the sea.

Don't miss: The Oregon Dunes Overlook off Highway 101 for an easy, sweeping view of the dunes.

Ready to see it for yourself?

Free, personalized planning — no planning or booking fees. Oregon Coast & Lincoln City

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