

Beach Parks along the Columbia River beckon

Story and photos
by Tracy Beard

Summer is not over, and a full season of fall awaits. Get outside and savor some of the Pacific Northwest's best weather while enjoying one or more of the diverse parks that line both sides of the Columbia River. Below you will find a roundup of parks in both Oregon and Washington with accompanying information about their inviting features. Pack a picnic, get your feet wet, finish that summer read, or inspire your exercise routine by learning a new watersport at one of these awesome parks along the river.

St. Helens Waterfront Parks

St. Helens Marina park is located just south of the St. Helens Marina. The grounds boast a small outdoor amphitheater, a covered area, several picnic tables and a few benches to enjoy outdoor dining along the Columbia River. Children and adults can cool down from the heat at the park's water feature. Multiple sprinklers embedded into a cement pad shoot water into the sky creating a place for the youthful to romp in the "rain." The play structure, complete with a spiral slide, will keep the kids engaged for hours.

An RV park, located near the marina, is available for those desiring to camp overnight. The Marina offers boat rentals. Try out an 18-foot ski boat for \$100 per hour or \$300 per day, or take a stab at sailing in a 14-foot Hobie trimaran, a small stable sailboat, for \$50 per hour or \$200 for the day. Sailing lessons are available at the Marina.

Grey Cliffs Waterfront Park is just north of the St. Helens Marina. Bring your dog and roam the beach, or enjoy a bite at one of the picnic tables while you watch the boats enter and exit the Marina. Quiet and secluded, this lesser-known beach is the perfect spot to read a book or dip your toes into the water on a sweltering day.



Prescott Beach

If fishing and windsurfing are your thing, Prescott Beach is your next destination. This large park requires a fee of \$5 per day, or you can obtain an annual parking pass at the main office. This park is excellent for large group gatherings, extraordinary events or a walk on the beach. Features include a horseshoe pit, volleyball courts, playground equipment, a covered picnic shelter and a gazebo. The park is located five miles south of Rainier and is open from sunrise until just after sunset.

Scappoose Bay Marine Park

Warren, Oregon, is home to Scappoose Bay Marine Park. Take a walk through the wooded nature trails along the water, picnic in the shelter, or visit Next Adventure Scappoose Bay Paddling Center next to the park. The Center offers classes teaching you how to maneuver a stand-up paddleboard or how to navigate the waterways in a kayak. Rentals are available for the equipment if you are already proficient or you can expand your knowledge and take a kayak fishing class or a stand-up paddleboard yoga class.



RIVERFRONT PARKS

- St. Helens Marina Park
134 N River St. Helens, OR 97051
- Greys Cliffs Waterfront Park
River St. St. Helens, OR 97051
- Prescott Beach
73125 Prescott Beach Dr., Rainier, Ore
- Scappoose Bay Marine Park
57420 Old Portland Road, Warren, Ore
- Kalama Marine Park
246 Hendrickson Drive, Kalama Wash
- Louis Rasmussen Day Use Park
268 Hendrickson Drive, Kalama, WA
- Willow Grove Park
From Longview, travel west on Ocean Beach Hwy (WA-4) to stop light (Coal Creek Road to the right, and Willow Grove Connection to the left), turn left and go almost 1 mile to Willow Grove Road, turn right onto Willow Grove Road, drive approx 3 miles to the park. Launch/park fee \$5.



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PROVISIONS ALONG THE TRAIL OR AT THE PARK

Tracy's Potato Salad

- 3-3.5 lbs. red potatoes, scrubbed clean
- 1 cup sour cream
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tbl. prepared creamed horseradish
- 3/4 Tbl. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 cups cooked green beans, cut into bite-size pieces
- 6 slices cooked bacon

Boil the potatoes until fork tender. Let them cool and cut into large chunks. Steam the green beans until crisp-tender, approximately 2-3 minutes. Put into an ice bath. Cut bacon into small pieces and fry until crisp. Mix sour cream, mayonnaise, horseradish, and salt and pepper in the bottom of a large bowl. Add the potatoes, green beans, and bacon. Coat with the dressing and refrigerate until picnic time.

Tracy's Herbaceous Grilled Chicken

- 4 pieces chicken thighs or breasts – washed and trimmed of excess fat
- 2 Tbl. olive oil
- 2 Tbl. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 3/4 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp. dry mustard powder
- 1/2 tsp. dried oregano
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp. fresh thyme
- 1/4 tsp. fresh chives

Combine all ingredients beginning with rosemary in a spice mill; do not use the same one you use for grinding coffee. Grind to a coarse powder. Wash and trim chicken. Pat dry. Brush chicken with olive oil. Coat both sides of the chicken with the herb powder. Grill or broil away from the flame until juices run clear.

Port of Kalama Day Use Parks

Construction projects to improve the waterfront parks are underway. Orange tape lines many of the walkways, but the parks are still buzzing with guests.

My favorite thing about Kalama Marine Park is the long riverfront path. With the wind in your hair and a warm hand to hold, it is a delightful place for a sunrise or sunset walk. Bicycling on this flat pathway is easy for both children and adults. The footpath is adjacent to the five-acre grassy park on one side and the mighty Columbia River on the other. A highlight along the way is one of the tallest one-piece totem pole in the world (*Editor's note: this pole is set to be lowered due to deterioration but will be on display in the Park after Sept. 19.*) Windsurfers, fishermen and sunbathers favor the public beaches on this section of the river.

Louis Rasmussen Park has it all: horseshoe pits, basketball and tennis courts, large grass areas to lounge and several covered picnic shelters. This park with all its amenities is a sure winner for both large and small group events.

Pick your favorite park and plan the date. Don't let the season's pleasant weather pass you by without savoring the great outdoors. Below you will find some of my family's favorite picnic dishes to bring along to one of these fabulous parks.



Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, outdoor activities, spas, fine dining, and traditional and trendy libations for regional, national and international magazines and about local "Out & About" topics for Columbia River Reader. Formerly of Longview, she now lives in Vancouver, Wash.