

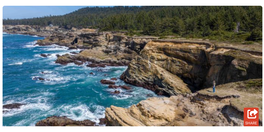
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10 Reasons Why Shore Acres State Park is the "Jewel of the South Coast"



Tue, Jul 18, 2023 | Categories:

The Oregon Coast is known for its outstanding selection of state parks , but there is one park that stands out from the rest. Shore Acres State Park, just 13 miles southwest of Coos Bay, is considered among the best of coastal state parks by many visitors. The 745-acre park is often called the "jewel of the South Coast" and has unique features visitors will not see anywhere else: a spectacular botanical garden with year-round displays of flora, multiple hiking trails linking to other state parks, rare plants and trees, a "secret beach", majestic views of the Pacific Ocean, and yes, the annual Holiday Lights at Shore Acres each night from Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve.



Video credit: Allan Ledesma & Francisco Rojas of EPUERTO.

No matter what season you visit Shore Acres State Park, you will have a different experience every time. Here are some comments made by recent visitors on Google:

"Wow, such an amazingly beautiful park! Stunning views of the rock formations. Great trails to view the ocean. The botanical garden is wonderful to wander and take in all the plant life. The Japanese garden area is so serene." - Suzanne H. June 2023

"Oh my goodness. This place is absolutely stunning. So fragrant. Damp. Mystical. Beautiful flowers and trees from all over the world. I felt like a princess in a royal garden. I adore this place. The gift shop was full of geodes and rocks, crystals, local jewelry. Lots of treasures." ❤❤❤ Michelle H. July 2022

"An incredible place to see massive waves or wake watch. Beautiful botanical gardens too. Make sure to take the hike down the hidden beach.❤️ Ian M. March 2023

"Shore Acres is an Oregon state park treasure. It's a must see if you're in the Coos Bay Area especially for gardeners or flower lovers. The best time to visit is in the late spring or summer when flowers are in bloom. It's also worth a visit around Christmas to see the lights. There is a lot of history to the grounds and you can learn from the sign posts or the staff giving presentations." - Ryan E. August 2022

If these testimonials aren't enough to convince you to visit, here are ten reasons why we think you should:

#1- IT'S STEEPED IN OREGON COAST HISTORY

Shore Acres State Park was once the sprawling estate of timber and shipping tycoon Louis J. Simpson . The grounds feature luxurious gardens with trees, shrubs, flowering plants brought in from around the world, and a Japanese-style garden built around a 100-foot lily pond. When a fire destroyed Simpson's beloved mansion in 1921, there were attempts to rebuild it, but financial setbacks eventually caused it to be abandoned. In 1942, Simpson's land was purchased by Oregon State Parks and converted into a state park for the public to enjoy. The mansion was eventually demolished after falling into disrepair, but the formal gardens were restored to their original glory and continue to attract thousands of visitors each year. Visitors can learn more about the history of Shore Acres and Simpson on various markers throughout the park, as well as in the Information and Gift Center (IGC) , designed to resemble the original Simpson Mansion.

#2- AN "ALL-SEASONS" BOTANICAL GARDEN

One of the most well-known attractions in Shore Acres is a beautiful 7-acre botanical garden and Japanese style zen garden surrounding a lily pond. Many of the plants and flowers on display today were inspired by the original garden Simpson created to complement his grand estate. Thousands of carefully curated flowering annuals and perennials from all over the world, including roses, rhododendrons, azaleas, dahlias, lily pads, and many unique plant varieties, continue to dazzle Oregon Coast visitors more than 100 years later. When visiting, be sure to look for the 95 foot tall Monterey Pine dating back to the historic Louis J. Simpson estate (it is estimated it was planted around 1910). For a schedule of what's in bloom, download this Garden Map – Best Times at Shore Acres .

#3- UNOBSTRUCTED VIEWS OF THE OCEAN (PERFECT FOR WINTER STORM WATCHING)

Perched on top of an 80-foot cliff, Shore Acres State Park offers majestic views of the sea and is an ideal destination to watch for migrating whales and winter storm waves. Photographers and visitors come out in droves for winter storm watching each fall and winter, to witness the massive waves, some reaching up to 300 feet high, crashing into the sandstone bluffs. During the summer, we recommend taking advantage of the picnic area, where you can enjoy a lunch-on-the-go while basking in the sun and looking out at the relatively calm Pacific Ocean on a clear day. It's also the perfect place to catch an evening sunset after a fun day of hiking and exploring!

#4- AN OUTSTANDING INFORMATION AND GIFT CENTER (IGC)

If possible, we recommend a visit to the Information and Gift Center (IGC) , operated by volunteers from the Friends of Shore Acres . Not only is the IGC a great asset to curious visitors who wish to learn more, but the gift shop also offers a robust selection of items relating to the park's history and natural features. Depending on the season, visitors can find everything from gardening resources to toys, souvenirs, fashion apparel, walking sticks, snacks and more. Proceeds go toward educational and physical enrichment programs for the park.

#5- A "SECRET BEACH"

While strolling through the formal gardens at Shore Acres, you may stumble across a trail leading to Simpson Beach (sometimes referred to as a "secret beach" or "pocket beach" for its location in a secluded ocean cove). Simpson Beach is only accessible through a short, yet steep, hike, which keeps it relatively quiet. The beach itself is protected from the elements, making the water calmer than what one may expect to find on the Oregon Coast. Visitors say that it's a great place to have a picnic, do some tide-pooling, watch seals and sea lions resting on the beach (under no circumstances should you touch or disturb these mighty creatures), or just take in the beautiful views and quiet your mind.

Please do not bother the seal pups you may find on the beach. They are not lost, only waiting for mom to return. Also, the bleeding, hurt looking elephant seals are not dying. This is only a molting process they go through while resting before continuing their journey.

#6- INCREDIBLE WILDLIFE VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES

Shore Acres State Park offers amazing views of the ocean and excellent opportunities to see marine wildlife like seals, sea lions and migrating whales. Simpson Reef and Shell Island , located just a couple of miles south of Shore Acres State Park, are home to thousands of marine mammals and is considered by many to be one of the best destinations on the entire Oregon Coast to view seals, sea lions, elephant seals and other marine life. It is also not uncommon to spot spectacular shorebirds, so be sure to bring a pair of binoculars!

#7 SHORE ACRES OBSERVATION BUILDING

Some visitors say the Shore Acres Observation Building is a MUST while visiting. The structure is a fully enclosed building with large glass windows overlooking the Pacific Ocean, where visitors can safely view the beautiful winter storms, rocky landscapes and sightings of migrating whales - whales migrate in from December through June. The observation building now occupies the very site where Simpson's elaborate mansion once stood, and features interpretive panels describing the history of the Simpson estate. It's the perfect spot to take in the wonderful views while being protected from the weather.

#8 INCREDIBLE HIKING OPPORTUNITIES

Many visitors to Shore Acres enjoy accessing the multiple hiking trails, including the Oregon Coast Trail – which connects to the Sunset Bay and Cape Arago State Parks to Shore Acres and walking along the trail offers views that are unparalleled and spectacular! Don't forget to look for the many spots to view the Cape Arago Lighthouse. Here are some of the highlights:

- Shore Acres Loop hike - Distance: 1.8 miles. Difficulty: Easy
- Hike to Sunset Bay - Distance: 4 miles. Difficulty: Easy
- Hike to Cape Arago State Park - Distance: 4 miles. Difficulty: Easy
- Sunset Bay State Park to Cape Arago State Park Trail Distance: 8.5 miles. Difficulty: Moderate

#9 IT'S RELATIVELY EASY TO GET TO

Shore Acres State Park is located on the Cape Arago Highway, 13 miles southwest of Coos Bay/North Bend and U. S. Highway 101. From Oregon's major cities, Shore Acres State Park is located:

- 2.5 hours from Eugene
- 3 hours from Medford
- 3.5 hours from Salem
- 4 hours from Portland

#10 SHORE ACRES HOLIDAY LIGHTS

From Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve (Nov. 23-Dec. 31, 2023), Shore Acres State Park sparkles with 325,000 LED lights and seasonal holiday displays. Dubbed "a holiday tradition for the whole family", the Annual Holiday Lights at Shore Acres event has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors from all over the world for the last 36 years. To see the holiday lights, visitors will need to reserve a Parking Pass for their preferred date and time in advance. Here's how to do it!

1. Pick your day/time to visit - note that half of the parking tickets will be sold in advance with the rest available within 7 days of entry.
2. Visit the OPRD website or click the Book Now Button below to book your time
3. Pay the $5 fee **per vehicle (Remember you are only booking a parking spot*****, not getting tickets for everyone in your party! If you all fit in one vehicle, you only need one pass.)**
4. Print your pass - you must bring the pass with you to enter the park
5. Have more questions? Call 541-888-3778, the local State Parks office.

Visit Timed Entry Reservations – 2023 Information to learn more and make your reservations today.

Other Things You Should Know

- Shore Acres State Park is open every day from 8 a.m. to dusk. Please check posted times at the park entrance for exact closing times.
- The park charges a $5 parking fee. There are no additional fees to visit the garden, beach or hiking trails. You can also purchase your day pass online in advance. Entrance to Shore Acres State Park is also covered by the annual Oregon State Parks Pass . Your camping receipt from Sunset Bay State Park or any other state park campground is accepted as a daily permit for those days registered. Display the receipt on the driver side of your dashboard when visiting Shore Acres State Park. If you are coming for the holiday lights display, you will need to reserve your **vehicle parking pass** by visiting the OPRD website
- Some wheelchairs are available, on a first come basis.
- There are clean restrooms available near the gardens.
- Pets are not permitted anywhere in Shore Acres State Park, but service animals are welcome in the park and formal gardens. All other animals must remain in vehicles or, better yet, do not bring them with you when visiting Shore Acres. Even in our temperate climate, it can get too hot inside a vehicle for your pets.

Be sure to add a visit to Shore Acres State Park to your bucket list to experience this jewel of a park for yourself! Visit our Adventures page and our Trip Ideas page to see all there is to do on Oregon's Adventure Coast. Be sure to book your accommodations in Coos Bay, North Bend, Charleston early. For more information, please contact the Coos Bay ~ North Bend Visitor & Convention Bureau .

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