



AUTO TOUR

AAA Washington Travel Services

South Washington Coast

The South Washington Coast offers a variety of landscapes – quiet bays, rolling green hillsides, herds of dairy cattle grazing on lush pastures, broad sandy beaches, bold headlands and busy fishing ports and resort communities. Those drawn by an appreciation of nature and history will also find interest here.



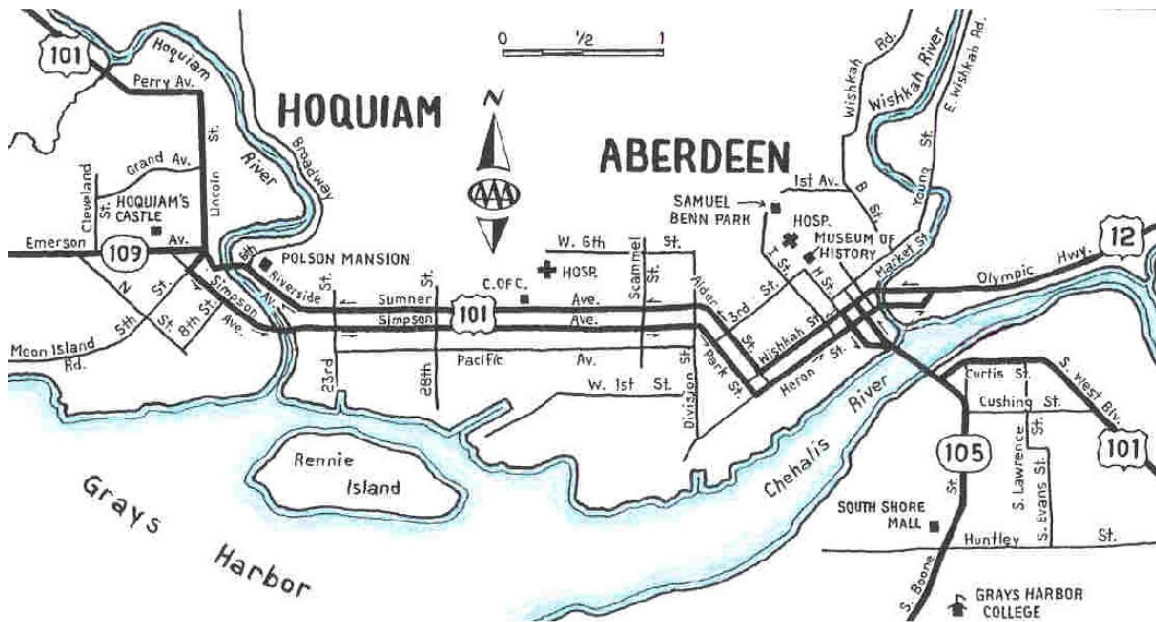
North Head Lighthouse, just north of the mouth of the Columbia River (courtesy Wikipedia)

Our **South Washington Coast Auto Tour** traces a 170-mile path hugging the south coast of the Evergreen State. From the Aberdeen-Hoquiam urban area we follow the southern shore of Grays Harbor to the fishing town of Westport. The route then runs along the Pacific and the eastern reach of Willapa Bay to the lumbering and oyster towns of Raymond and South Bend. From here, US-101 leads along the eastern shore of Willapa Bay to Ilwaco on the estuary of the mighty Columbia River. Finally we trace the length of the Long Beach Peninsula with its string of communities, north to historic Oysterville. Allow four hours' drive time without stops.

Motorists can enjoy the scenic and historic sights along Washington's south coast at any time of year. Typical weather is overcast. Although sunny days can occur at any time of year, they are most likely to occur from June through September. Summer high temperatures average in the upper 60s with overnight lows in the lower 50s, while winter readings generally fall between 35 and 45. Rainfall is heavy, averaging 70 to 80 inches per year. May through September comprise the dry season, normally receiving less than a quarter of the total annual precipitation. Snowfall is rare.

1. Aberdeen-Hoquiam to Raymond (via Westport)

Our tour begins in the Aberdeen-Hoquiam urban area, which stretches around the eastern end of Grays Harbor a dozen miles from the open Pacific. The major population and trading center for the Washington coast, these twin cities are important ports. Forest products constitute the prime industry. Sawmills (many now disused) and great stacks of logs line the waterfront. Large ocean-going vessels load logs and woodchips for export, mainly to Asia. Behind the port, the substantial business districts of the twin towns give way to orderly blocks of worker's housing.



ABERDEEN (pop. 16,450, alt. 25 ft.) spreads across the flats on the north side of the bay at the point where the Wishkah and Chehalis rivers empty into Grays Harbor. Although the first settlers arrived in the late 1860s, the town wasn't platted until 1883. First called Wishkah, from *woos-kla*, a Native American phrase loosely meaning 'stinking water,' it was changed in 1884 to honor the Aberdeen Packing Company in Ilwaco, which was in turn named for Aberdeen, Scotland.

From the start, the region's great timber wealth was the city's economic mainstay. In the early 1900s, Aberdeen became one of the West's great timber ports and milling centers. Following a disastrous fire in 1903, the central business district was rebuilt with substantial brick structures, many of which remain. By 1910, dozens of lumber and shingle mills lined the waterfront and Aberdeen's population rose to 17,000. The bars and bawdy houses of the waterfront district gave Aberdeen a reputation as a wide-open town. The Great Depression of the 1930s slowed the city's growth, but employment surged during World War II – Aberdeen's population peaked at 24,000 in the 1940s. Changing economies have left the city with a careworn visage, especially in the boarded up storefronts and abandoned lots in its central core. For a peek into the halcyon days, stop by the **Aberdeen Museum of History**, downtown at 111 E. Third Street. Its displays document the lifestyles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Wooded hills frame Aberdeen's northern flank where pleasant neighborhoods such as Bel Aire command sweeping views of the city and harbor. Here the city's entrepreneurs and elite built substantial homes designed by eastern architects in the Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Mission Revival and Prairie-Style. Giant rhododendrons add brilliant splashes of color at their peak in May. At **Samuel Benn Park**, at E. 9th and 'I' streets, paths lead through landscaped, rolling hills to a formal rose garden. This was part of pioneer Samuel Benn's estate, acquired by the city in 1929.

Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, located at 719 Hagara Street in the Junction City district off US-12 just east of Aberdeen, celebrates the area's maritime legacy. When she's in port here you can tour the state's official tall ship, *Lady Washington*, a full-scale replica of Captain Robert Gray's 18th-century sailing brig. She starred as the *HMS Interceptor* in the first *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie.

Aberdeen holds a special place in the hearts of Generation X music fans as the birthplace of **Kurt Cobain**, lead singer and songwriter for 1990s grunge juggernaut Nirvana. Cobain spent his childhood here and met band co-founder bassist Krist Novoselic in the mid-80s. The two joined forces with drummer Dave Grohl to launch Seattle sound into the mainstream in the early 90s, but Nirvana's meteoric rise cratered after Cobain's death in 1994. In Aberdeen, Cobain is memorialized on the town's welcome sign, which invites visitors to *Come As You Are*.



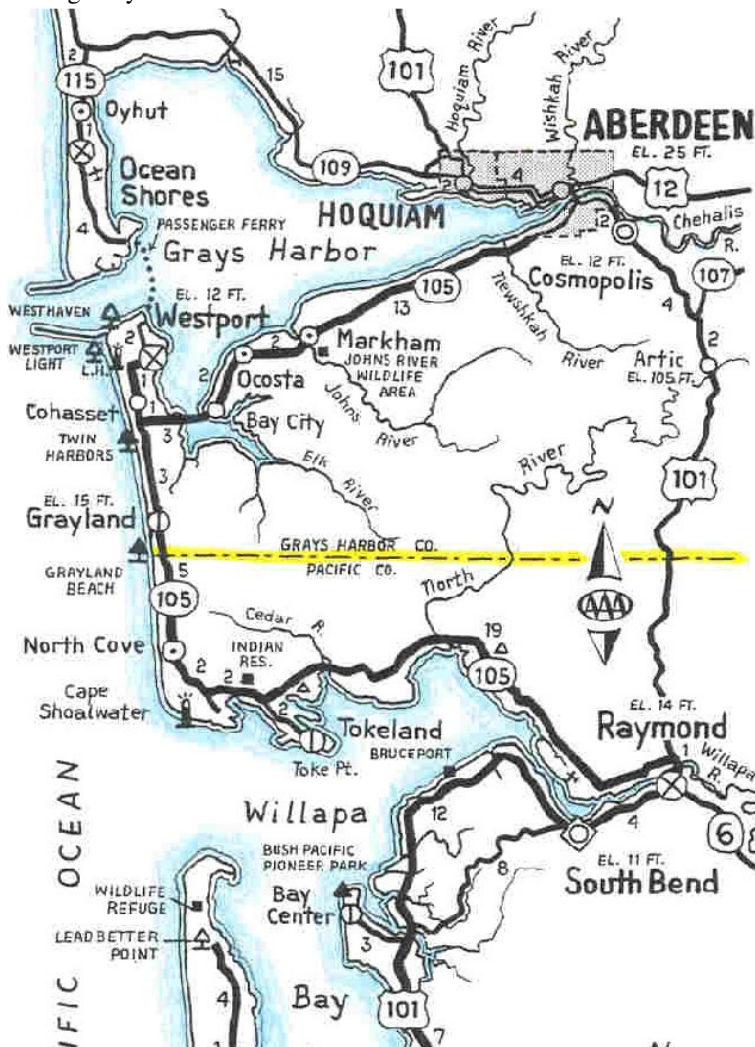
HOQUIAM (pop. 8,845, alt. 20 ft.) borders Aberdeen on the west, straddling its namesake river. Hoquiam is an American Indian word meaning *hungry for wood*, appropriate in view of its role as a forest products processor and exporter. The first European settlers arrived in the 1850s, grazing cattle in lush pastures beside the tide flats. By the late 1860s the settlement boasted a post office; the first school opened in 1873. California lumberman Asa Simpson opened a sawmill at the mouth of the Hoquiam River in 1882. After the arrival of railroads in the late 1880s and early 1890s, the lumber boom brought prosperity to the new city. Originally four miles apart, Hoquiam and Aberdeen have grown together – the boundary runs down the middle of Myrtle Street.

Downtown Hoquiam’s compact business district hugs the west bank of the Hoquiam River. As in Aberdeen, a large number of shops and buildings are boarded up. Built in 1927-28, the **Seventh Street Theatre** (313 7th Street) was the first in the state to show talking motion pictures – today it hosts concerts and plays. At the foot of 8th and 9th streets a walkway leads along the Hoquiam River; an **Observation Tower** offers views of the riverfront. On the opposite bank along Riverside Avenue is the **Grays Harbor Farmer’s Market & Craft Fair**, open year-round.

Several historic homes, former abodes of the city’s timber barons, are worth a stop. **Hoquiam’s Castle**, 515 Chenault Ave., is a 20-room turreted Victorian gem, built in 1897 as the home of Robert Lytle. It is now a private residence. The hilly neighborhood north of here features other substantial residences set amid lush landscaping.

Polson Museum, on the east bank of the Hoquiam River at 1611 Riverside Ave. (US-101), was the home of lumber heir F. Arnold Polson. The 26-room Craftsman-style mansion has historical displays of the Grays Harbor area. Note the floorboards made of Western hemlock – they run knot-free, from wall to wall, indicative of the high quality timber of the original virgin forest. The surrounding park contains a rose garden and many exotic trees.

Just beyond the south end of the span, watch for the junction with SR-105. This highway runs through the residential district of South Aberdeen. There’s a fine view of the area from the campus of **Grays Harbor College**, located on a hillside south of the highway.



A **Port Viewing Tower**, at the foot of 28th Street (south of US-101 in the eastern part of Hoquiam), overlooks the industrial harbor. Here you can watch logs being sorted and loaded onto cargo vessels. Most of the cargo is bound for the Far East.

West of Hoquiam, the **Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge** protects an expanse of tide flats and marsh grass, prime habitat for migratory birds that feed here in great flocks during spring and fall. Peak birdwatching occurs in April and early May, when hundreds of thousands of birds congregate to feed. Prime viewing is from two hours before to two hours after high tide. To reach the refuge follow signs to the airport from SR-109, 1½ miles west of Hoquiam. Drive to the end of the road, walk along the gated hangar access road to the 1,800-foot boardwalk, which leads out into the refuge. The site is open daylight hours daily.

From Aberdeen’s central business district US-101 bridges the Chehalis River. The southern part of Aberdeen occupies the opposite bank of the Chehalis River. Log storage yards line the riverfront upstream to **COSMOPOLIS** (pop. 1,676, alt. 12 ft.), a separate city, settled in the 1860s. In 1855, territorial Governor Isaac Stevens attempted unsuccessfully to negotiate a treaty with coastal Indians beside the Chehalis River here – look for the **Mural of Treaty Negotiations** on a water tower visible from US-101, commemorating the event.

Cosmopolis, whose Greek name means *City of the World*, was also the site of the area's first sawmill established in 1881. Seven years later the sprawling Grays Harbor Mill opened and a company town was built to house workers. The Weyerhaeuser plant stands on the site of the old Grays Harbor Mill.

Highway 105 skirts the wooded southern shore of Grays Harbor. The American captain Robert Gray, searching for the fabled Northwest Passage in 1792, discovered the 90-square-mile bay that today bears his name. Clearings in the forest along the highway mark small dairy farms. Look also for the diked plots of **cranberry bogs**. Finnish immigrants planted the first bogs here in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Grays Harbor bogs are the northernmost on the Pacific coast. The fields bloom in mid-June and are harvested in early October.

The large complex south of the highway about six miles west of Aberdeen is the Stafford Creek State Prison, a medium-security facility opened in 2000.

The hamlet of **OCOSTA** (pop. 369, alt. 46 ft.) billed itself as the *City of Destiny* in the late 1800s. Developers promoted the site as the Grays Harbor terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, envisioning prosperous commerce from docks and trade. Aberdonians, however, sealed the down-bay upstart's fate by attracting traffic with their own rail spur.

West of **BAY CITY** (pop. 187, alt. 36 ft.), a whaling station from 1900 to 1925, Highway 105 crosses South Bay, an arm of Grays Harbor, whose marshy fringes offer waterfowl habitat. At the Westport junction is **TWIN HARBORS STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see below*), with nature trails, picnic sites and campgrounds fronting the Pacific Ocean. Proceed north on SR-105 Spur.

Note: As of July 2011, a **Washington Discover Pass** is required for admission to day-use areas of state parks, as well as areas administered by the state Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources.

The fee is \$10/car for a one-day pass, or \$30 for an annual pass. Purchase the pass from any State Parks regional office or at the park itself when staff is available. Click www.discoverpass.wa.gov for details on other methods of purchase, including over 600 locations where hunting and fishing licenses are sold (transaction fees apply). A \$99 fine can be levied against drivers of street-legal vehicles caught without a Pass.

Overnight campers in state parks need not purchase the Discover Pass for the nights they're camping.



Near the mouth of John's River is **MARKHAM** (pop. 95, alt. 11 ft.), once a port for Grays Harbor ferry traffic. The old dock is now on the John's River Wildlife Area. Here 3½ miles of gravel-topped dikes offer hikers a network of trails lacing the tideland habitat. Markham's **Ocean Spray plant** processes most of the area's cranberry crop.

WESTPORT (pop. 2,523, alt. 12 ft.) stands on a windswept peninsula forming the southern entrance to Grays Harbor. The city nestles in a wooded area adjacent to an expanse of wind-blown dunes, which afford protection from ocean breakers. The **Westport-Grayland Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center** is located on SR-105 near the south entrance to town.

WESTHAVEN, the city's port, lies a mile north of the business district, facing the protected waters of Grays Harbor. This is base for a large commercial and sport fishing fleet. Salmon constitute the coveted species, but crab, tuna, cod, halibut, flounder and other bottom fish are also important. There are a dozen charter-fishing operators (April to October) that attract large crowds to Westport; several of them also offer whale-watching excursions during the annual gray whale migration from March through May.

The **Westport Maritime Museum**, 2201 N. Westhaven, occupies the former Coast Guard station (built in 1939). Its displays chronicle the development of the town once known as the *Salmon Capital of the World*. There are also exhibits of local marine life, including whale skeletons. A separate building houses the giant lens used in the Destruction Island Lighthouse.

The small **Westport Aquarium**, on Harbor Street off Westhaven, exhibits some of the area's marine life. Stroll along the waterfront any afternoon during the fishing season and watch the boats returning with the day's catch. A 1,000-foot walkway atop the breakwater pier offers fine harbor views and is a popular bottom fishing spot. Just north of the port, an **Observation Tower** offers a panorama of the peninsula and harbor entrance. In clear weather you can see the Olympics off to the north and the snowy dome of Mt. Rainier on the eastern horizon.

WESTHAVEN STATE PARK (*Discover pass required, see p.4*) adjoins the jetty. Recreation includes picnicking, fishing, swimming, clamming, beachcombing and bird watching. The 1¾-mile trail along the south jetty offers a base for shore fishing, beachcombing and is a good vantage point for watching ships navigate the entrance to Grays Harbor. The nearby **Grays Harbor Lighthouse** dates from 1898 and is open for tours (check with the Westport Maritime Museum). Its 107-foot tower is the tallest on the Washington coast. The broad, hard-packed sand beach extends south from the harbor entrance.

Two spots at Westhaven and the state park's combine to form the best place in Washington for **surfing** fans! Dry suits are a must in water that runs a chilling 50-55 degrees most of the year. Waves are consistent through most of the year and the town fills with dudes and dolls hangin' ten in the summer. For those who want to dive in for the first time, boards, suits and lessons are available at a number of surf shops near the state park.

Between Westport and Cape Shoalwater, Highway 105 runs along a stretch of coast known as Twin Harbors Beach. This section has also been nicknamed **The Cranberry Coast** due to the prevalence of the bog crop. Dense thickets of shore pine and salal back the broad, sandy beach. Inland, low logged over hills form the horizon.

Finns first settled **GRAYLAND** (pop. 1,000, alt. 12 ft.) in the early 1900s, grubbing out the cranberry bogs that dot the landscape east of the highway. While native cranberries, known to local Indians as *pil-olallies*, thrive on the peaty soils here, the first commercial crop dates back to 1912, when Aberdeen's Samuel Benn imported cranberry bushes from Massachusetts. Today the town is a modest resort community. Its beach supports numerous razor clam beds. Clamming attracts throngs to the coastal beaches. The digging season dates vary, but usually occur in spring and fall. **GRAYLAND BEACH STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see p.4*), occupying the dunes south of town, offers camping, picnicking, swimming, fishing and clam digging.

Passing the beach town of **NORTH COVE** (pop. 50, alt. 10 ft.), the highway reaches Cape Shoalwater, then turns east to follow the north shore of Willapa Bay. The cape area is highly prone to erosion, and since the early 1900s sections of the highway, farms and a number of buildings (including the original lighthouse), have all succumbed to the relentless waves. The present **Willapa Bay Lighthouse** was moved to higher ground in 1952. The first light, guarding the shallow entrance to its namesake bay, now under fathoms of saltwater, was commissioned in 1858. The broad cape marks the entrance to Washington's largest coastal embayment. Discovered by Captain John Meares in 1788, he called it *Shoalwater* for the numerous tide flats and shifting sandbars. Early-day promoters, resenting the negative implications to waterborne commerce, had it changed to Willapa, for its main tributary stream, which was in turn named for the Native Americans who inhabited the area. Land on both sides of the lighthouse constitutes a wildlife refuge.

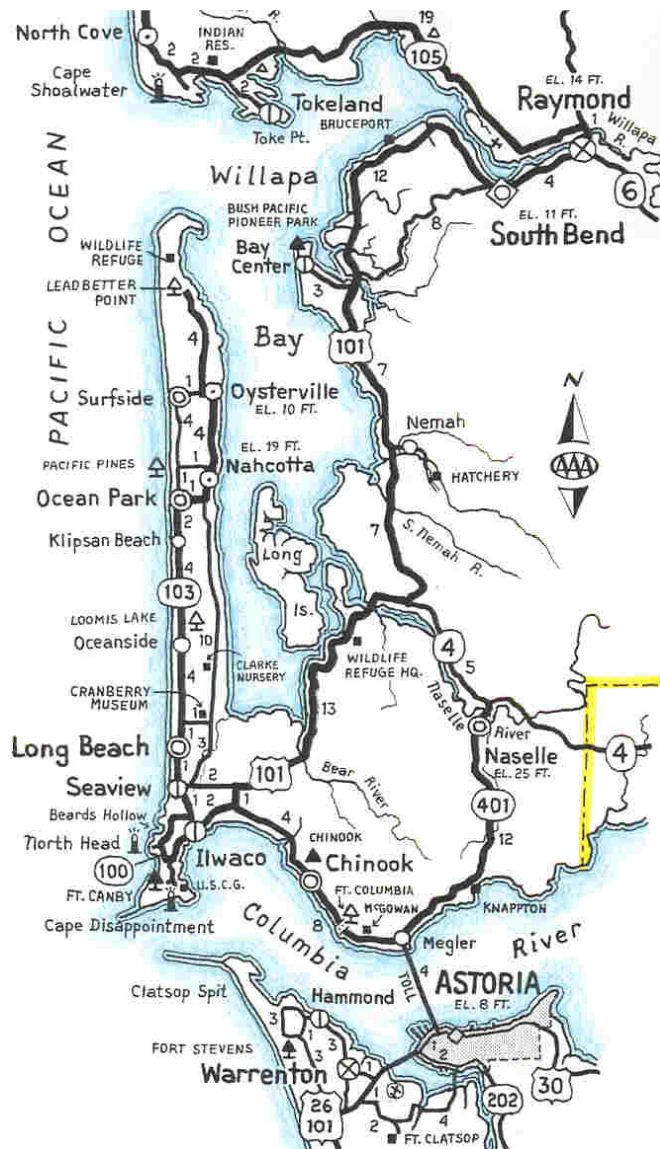
The **Shoalwater Indian Reservation**, established in 1866, lies just east of the lighthouse. Well into the mid-19th century, numerous bands of Chinook Indians inhabited the shores of Willapa Bay and the lower Columbia River. Amid natural abundance, these coastal peoples lived in cedar longhouses and enjoyed a relatively high standard of living.

TOKELAND (pop. 194, alt. 15 ft.), a former fishing community and summer resort with a largely Native American population, sits near the end of Toke Point. The three-mile-long sand spit bears the name of an early-day Indian chief, respected for his skills as a canoeist and guide. The weatherworn **Tokeland Hotel**, listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, dates back to 1885. The small **Shoalwater Bay Casino**, on SR-105, offers games of chance.

The stretch of Highway 105 between Tokeland and Raymond opened in 1960. It traverses second-growth woodland of cedar, hemlock and spruce mixed with alder and maple, offering glimpses of the narrowing bay.

2. Raymond to Long Beach (via US-101)

Highway 105 rejoins US-101 at **RAYMOND** (pop. 2,924, alt. 14 ft.), located at the head of navigation for ocean-going vessels. Founded in 1904, the port attracted two railroads (Northern Pacific and the Milwaukee Road) and soon became a logging industry boomtown. Mills and lumberyards, most now abandoned, lined the banks of the Willapa River. In the years before World War I the city boasted a population of nearly 7,000. Its twenty lumber mills and manufacturing plants worked round the clock. The sprawling Weyerhaeuser mill still dominates the waterfront.



Among the interesting buildings in the central business district is the **Raymond Public Library** on the corner of Fifth and Duryea. The stained-glass windows in the two-story Tudor cottage depict nursery rhyme themes.

On the edge of downtown lie pedestrian trails and two attractions. Transport back to the 19th century at the **Northwest Carriage Museum**, which showcases two dozen horse-drawn carriages. The adjacent **Willapa Seaport Museum** provides a kid-friendly look at the life of mariners.

The **Willapa River Trail** offers a 5-mile paved path, following a former railroad right-of-way from east of Raymond (along SR-6) to South Bend. A series of wildlife sculptures made of cast iron lines the highway approaches to Raymond on US-101 and SR-6.

After skirting central Raymond, US-101 swings west, following the Willapa River to **SOUTH BEND** (pop. 1,806, alt. 11 ft.), seat of Pacific County and the self-styled *Oyster Capital of the West*. Look for piles of the shellfish, an important and reviving area industry, along the waterfront. The town occupies a narrow shelf beside the river and extends back into the nearby wooded hills. The settlement dates back to a sawmill established in 1869.

Of interest are the **Pacific County Historical Museum**, located on US-101 downtown, and the **Pacific County Courthouse**, a domed architectural gem on a landscaped hillside at the southern edge of town (turn left on Memorial Drive). Built in 1911, it was described as a “gilded palace of extravagance.” Other examples of Victorian architecture symbolize South Bend’s early prosperity.

West of South Bend the estuary broadens into Willapa Bay. Highway 101 skirts its eastern shore for over 30 miles, traversing wooded headlands alternating with marshy meadows. Eight miles west of South Bend, a roadside historical marker indicates the site of **Bruceport**, settled in 1851 by the survivors of the scuttled oyster schooner *Bruce*.

Just south of the Palix River bridge a road branches west to **BAY CENTER** (pop. 175, alt. 20 ft.), a bayside village located on a narrow peninsula. The first settlers arrived in 1851 and a townsite was platted in 1873. Oystering remains important and there are several 19th century buildings and a pioneer cemetery. **Bush Pioneer County Park** offers camping and is a pleasant spot for a picnic.

In the valleys of the Palix, Nemah and Naselle, Scandinavian and Finnish immigrants took up dairy farming and lumbering in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The **Nemah Salmon Hatchery**, 2½ miles east of US-101 on N. Nemah Road, maintains area stocks of this important sport and food fish. Salmon migrate upstream to the hatchery from September to November.

South of the Naselle River US-101 skirts the southern reach of the bay. Look for the headquarters of the **Willapa National Wildlife Refuge** on the roadside. The refuge embraces **Long Island** just offshore, which includes miles of trails, primitive campgrounds and a grove of thousand-year-old western red cedar. The island is accessible only by private boat.

3. Long Beach Peninsula (via WA-103 & WA-100)

Separating Willapa Bay from the Pacific, the **LONG BEACH PENINSULA** stretches more than 28 miles from Cape Disappointment at the mouth of the Columbia north to Leadbetter Point. The peninsula has been a popular resort area for over a century and also includes several historic towns and oyster ports. We'll explore the area from south to north.

Fishing charters are big business here during the summer. For more information on fishing and other activities and events up and down the peninsula, visit the **Long Beach Peninsula Visitor Information Center** located at the junction of US-101 and SR-103 in Seaview, open daily.

Follow signage to **ILWACO** (pop. 993, alt. 11 ft.), an important commercial and sport fishing port on Baker Bay, part of the Columbia River. Wooded heights west of town protect the harbor from the worst of the frequent Pacific gales. The vicinity has seen some grand historic events. In 1792 Captain Robert Gray became the first European to discover the Columbia, naming it for his sailing vessel, the *Columbia Rediviva*. Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery explored the area in 1804-05. The first settlers arrived in the 1840s and a town grew up beside the bay. First called Unity, for the Union victory in the Civil War, it was officially named Ilwaco (for Elowahka Jim, a locally important Native American) when the town was platted in 1876. Fixed-net fishing brought prosperity in the 1880s.

By 1888, the Ilwaco Steam Navigation Company began operating a narrow gauge railway north to Nahcotta, serving the resort communities along the peninsula. The area soon became a summer playground for Portland's wealthy Victorian society, who journeyed down the Columbia on steamers. Many of Ilwaco's homes date from the 1880s. One of the oldest, **Colbert House** (corner of Spruce St. and Quaker Ave.), was built in 1871. Colorful murals, depicting local life, decorate the exteriors of many downtown buildings. Rhododendrons are popular ornamental plants in yards and gardens throughout the peninsula and their colorful spring blooms seem especially brilliant, even on cloudy days. The **Discovery Trail** leads from the Port of Ilwaco, through Ilwaco's streets into the forested hills west of Ilwaco to Beards Hollow at the base of North Head.

The **Ilwaco Heritage Museum**, 115 SE Lake St., is a treasure trove, with an extensive collection ranging from Native American artifacts through pioneer settlement to the establishment of the fishing port. Fascinating scale models depict the Columbia River estuary and the narrow gauge line to Nahcotta, including a full-scale restored passenger coach and the former Ilwaco Depot. One display illustrates how fishermen once used horses to operate a seine net fishery in the shallows of the Columbia estuary.

One block west of downtown Ilwaco's main intersection, head south on Second Avenue. State Highway 100 follows the shore of Baker Bay to **CAPE DISAPPOINTMENT**, commanding the northern entrance to the Columbia. Captain Meares named this headland in 1788, describing his feelings upon not discovering the fabled Great River of the West. Thirteen years earlier Spanish Captain Bruno Heceta had hinted at the presence of a large river on his chart of the area, but Meares saw only waves breaking on a shoal. So poor was the visibility, Meares missed sighting the mouth of the Columbia, a feature that eluded European "discovery" for many years. History bestowed the honor of discovery on the aforementioned Captain Gray, whose explorations helped solidify American claims to the heretofore-unexplored Oregon Country.

Recognizing its strategic significance, much of the cape was proclaimed a military installation in 1852, the first in what was to soon become Washington Territory. First called Fort Cape Disappointment, it was renamed in the mid 1870s for Army Major General Edward Canby, killed in the Modoc War in California. The fort's military role ended after World War II and it became Fort Canby State Park in 1957. Its name was changed to **CAPE DISAPPOINTMENT STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see p.4*) in 2004. The park encompasses a diversity of natural and historic sites. The road leads to the cape itself. On the shore of Baker Bay stands the **U.S. Coast Guard Station** which operates a Motor Lifeboat School. This unique facility trains Coast Guard personnel in lifesaving techniques in heavy seas and extreme weather and provides these services to mariners in distress.

Just over the hill to the south is **Cape Disappointment Lighthouse**, oldest in the state. Authorized in 1848, the first on the American Pacific coast, it was not completed until 1856. It would have been built three years earlier, but the first attempt to deliver construction materials to the site failed when the ship foundered in a storm. Before the construction of the jetties in the 1910s, shifting sand bars made the entrance to the Columbia River one of the world's most treacherous. More than 230 shipwrecks in the area bear witness to the sailor's epithet *Graveyard of the Pacific*.

On a hillside just west of the lighthouse, the **Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center** stands on the site where members of the expedition had their first clear view of the Pacific Ocean. Its displays chronicle the epic trek of the Corps of Discovery. The center is open daily. The view extends south across the mouth of the river and west to the open ocean. The Oregon shore curves off to the south – the long tract of sand ends at the dark mass of Tillamook Head. Twin jetties point seaward from both shores of the river's mouth. The half-mile North Jetty is the longer. A broad expanse of sand extends from North Jetty to the rocky eminence of North Head. Roads loop around the sand dunes, which feature a large oceanside campground. The state park also offers miles of hiking trails. Deer sightings are common especially at dusk.

Highway 100 loops back to the north. A narrow lane leads west to **North Head Lighthouse**, commissioned in 1898. A mere two miles separate North Head from its Cape Disappointment companion, making these the closest lighthouses on the U.S. Pacific coast. They emit different signals to help mariners differentiate North Head from Cape Disappointment (and thus, the entrance to the Columbia), features easily confused in poor weather. Lighthouse tours (fee) are offered daily during the summer and weekends only off-season. Views encompass the river's mouth and the Long Beach Peninsula extending off to the north. At the south base of the head is Deadmans Hollow, named for shipwreck victims who have washed ashore here over the years. Below the north flank lays Beards Hollow, commemorating the captain of the ill-fated sailing bark *Vandalia*, which sank with the loss of all hands off the Columbia Bar in 1853.

Highway 100 loops back to Ilwaco. Turn north on US-101, which passes Black Lake, fringed by a lush tangle of vegetation. There's a roadside rest area and in summer you can rent paddleboats to glide across its dark waters.

Less than a mile north, US-101 enters the village of **SEAVIEW** (pop. 650, alt. 15 ft.). While Ilwaco belongs to fishing and the Columbia, Seaview is clearly a resort town, oriented toward vacationers and the beach. It's the southernmost of a string of tourist-oriented communities dotting the Long Beach Peninsula. Quiet lanes extend back from the busy highway. Comfortable frame homes and weatherworn cottages cluster amidst shore pine on well-tended yards. Settled in 1881, it prospered first from area cranberry growers and clam diggers, before finding its niche as a resort. Seaview was the first stop on the narrow gauge railway from Ilwaco, popularly called the Clamshell Line. In the early 1900s, many vacationers came for the entire summer, giving rise to a seasonal community that catered to the needs of wealthy guests. The **Shelburne Inn**, built as a home in 1896, is the last of the early hotels. This National Historic Registry property has been welcoming guests since 1911.

Continue north on SR-103, the main artery of the peninsula. Seaview blends imperceptibly into **LONG BEACH** (pop. 1,377, alt. 12 ft.), four blocks wide and several miles long, the largest of the beach communities. The town takes on a carnival atmosphere, especially on summer weekends, when crowds throng its souvenir shops, cafes, go-cart tracks, garden golf, arcades, moped and bike rentals and stores proffering saltwater taffy. Summer brings a tripling of the population in Long Beach and in most of the other towns up and down the peninsula.

The beach is the peninsula's main attraction and this is indeed a large-scale beach. First, it's about a half-mile west of Highway 103. Several streets lead to the beach – from the center of town head west on Bolstad or S. Tenth streets (both offer parking and restrooms). The sign above the wooden arch over the Bolstad Street entrance bills this as the *World's Longest Beach*. While there are several longer beaches, this is in fact the longest composed of hard-packed sand. It measures over 25 unbroken miles from the rocky base of North Head to its northern tip at Leadbetter Point and at low tide it's up to 300 feet from the beachhead to the water line.

Beachgoers take note – most of this stretch of sand is considered part of Washington's public highways, and is open to motor vehicles (drive on the beach only with great caution and obey all posted signs). A wooden **Boardwalk** extends a half-mile along the beachhead dunes between Bolstad and Sid Snyder Drive. Interpretive panels describe the natural history of the beach and dunes. The paved two-mile path of the **Long Beach Dunes Trail** runs between N. 16th and S. 17th streets. It features more than a dozen display panels, including a 38-foot long gray whale skeleton.

One of the more unusual attractions is **Marsh's Free Museum**, a sprawling souvenir and gift shop, just south of downtown on Highway 103. Look for the kitschy "Jake the Alligator Man" sign atop the façade. It's fun to explore the aisles, browse the colorful trinkets and gaze at the repository of the fabled alligator man (you be the judge).

World Kite Museum and Hall of Fame, three blocks west of SR-103 at 303 Sid Snyder Drive, celebrates the popular hobby and craft. Displays document the history of kites and the collection includes hundreds of colorful and unusual kites from around the world.

Several outfitters offer horseback riding on the beach – these include **Back Country Wilderness Outfitters** (phone 360-642-2576) and **Skipper's Equestrian Center** (phone 360-642-3676), both located on Sid Snyder Drive. Rides run about \$25 an hour. Other equestrian activities are also offered, such as trail rides and pack trips.

Long Beach has a full calendar of annual events. The largest ones are *Sandsations*, a sand castle building competition in early July, and the *Washington State International Kite Festival* in mid-August, a AAA **G**reat **E**xperience for **M**embers.

Head north on Highway 103. The modern road follows the alignment of the narrow gauge railway, which opened in 1888. Before the railroad, horse-drawn stages carried passengers and goods up and down the peninsula, traveling on the beach's hard-packed sand at low tide. The railway operated until 1930, a victim of the Great Depression and the growth of automobile travel.

A mile north of downtown Long Beach, turn east (right) on Pioneer Road, which leads ¾-mile to the **Pacific Coast Cranberry Research Foundation Museum**. Learn how cranberries grow and both historic and contemporary harvest

methods. Stroll through the adjacent 10-acre cranberry bog. Best times to visit are during the June blossom season and October harvest. Guided tours are available on request, open daily.

Back on Pacific Highway, **Peninsula Golf Course** is a 9-hole, par-33 public course located ¼-mile north of Pioneer Road. Highway 103 continues north, passing a series of indistinguishable beachside communities, most starting as stops on the old *Clamshell Railway*. **KLIPSAN BEACH** (pop. 110, alt. 15 ft.), eight miles north of Long Beach, was the site of a Life Saving Station set up in 1889 to assist mariners in distress in the waters off the mid-peninsula. The federal Life Saving Service was a predecessor of the Coast Guard. The Klipsan Beach property closed in 1947 and its buildings, listed on the National Historic Registry, are now private residences.

The sprawling beachside community of **OCEAN PARK** (pop. 1,459, alt. 35 ft.) dates back to the establishment of the Ocean Park Camp by Portland's Methodist Episcopal Church in 1883. To maintain a suitable "family" atmosphere, all taverns in the town were confined to the district south of Bay Avenue – a phenomenon still prevalent to this day. The **Taylor Hotel**, west of SR-103 on Bay Avenue, was built in 1887 – it's now a private residence. Ocean Park is dotted with eclectic architecture: one home was built with logs from a boom that broke apart in a storm and washed up on the beach; another utilized doors salvaged from the 1905 Lewis & Clark Exposition in Portland. **PACIFIC PINES STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see p.4*), west of Vernon Avenue via 274th Place at the north end of town, offers beach access and picnic tables. **Surfside Golf Course** is a public 9-hole, par-36 course located four miles north of Ocean Park.

Highway 103 (Bay Avenue) turns east spanning the peninsula – barely a mile wide at this point – to the bayside settlement of **NAHCOTTA** (pop. 180, alt. 19 ft.). Here, at the northern terminus of the Clamshell Railway line from Ilwaco, a town sprang up in the late 1880s, taking its name from Nahcati, a Chinook Indian chief. The railroad stopped here, rather than at the established town of Oysterville 3½ miles farther up the shore, because the deeper bay waters enabled ships to dock. In the early years of railroading, the peninsular rail schedule reflected the tides – arrivals and departures at Nahcotta were coordinated with high tide, the only time larger ships could dock at the port. A fire destroyed most of the central part of town in 1915, and it was only partially rebuilt. Today, double-ended gillnet boats and mounds of oyster shells mark the harbor. Nahcotta remains a center of the oyster industry, with several shellfish processors. On the south side of the pier (this is where the railway once ran), look for the **Willapa Bay Interpretive Center**. Its displays explain ecology and the history of the bay's oyster industry



Oysterville's Baptist Church was built in 1892
[Photo: Long Beach CVB]

Highway 103, now following the peninsula's Willapa Bay shoreline, leads 3½ miles north to historic **OYSTERVILLE** (pop. 100, alt. 10 ft.). Settlement here dates back to 1854, making Oysterville one of the oldest towns in Washington. Chief Nahcati convinced pioneer settlers R.H. Espy and I.A. Clark this was a good place to set up an oyster business. In those days a plateful of oysters could fetch up to \$50 in gold in San Francisco.

The town prospered as a shipping center for the tasty bivalve. It became the Pacific County seat in 1855. By the 1880s, however, the native oyster beds were in decline due to over harvesting. Its zenith passed, Oysterville slowly stagnated. The final blow came in 1893, when South Bend interests carried the county records off to their more easily accessible town, in effect transferring the county seat.

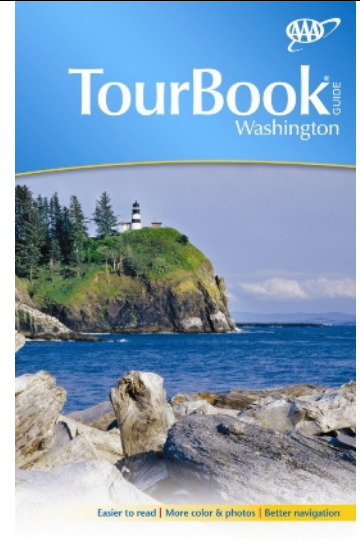



To better appreciate Oysterville, park your vehicle and stroll its tranquil streets. The entire community constitutes a **National Historic District**, featuring over a dozen late 19th-century frame homes set in large yards flanked by picket fences. Plaques on the fences identify the year the home was built and its original owners – the oldest is Red Cottage (1863-64). Also of interest are the 1892 Baptist Church, a 1904 one-room school and the local cemetery dating back to 1858. The Oysterville Post Office, established in 1858, is the oldest in the state operating under the same name.

Oysterville Road heads west to the beachfront community of **SURFSIDE** (pop. about 1,000, alt. 12 ft.). SR-103 branches right (north) on Stackpole Road a third of a mile west of Oysterville. The road ends 4 miles north at **LEADBETTER POINT STATE PARK** (*Discover pass required, see p.4*), an 800-acre reserve stretching across the peninsula. Six miles of nature trail loop through diverse habitats ranging from marshy shore and forest to dunes.

North of the park the peninsula continues a further 2½ miles, tapering to a windswept arc of sand ending at **Leadbetter Point**. This wilderness of salt marsh, brambles and shifting sand, together with the bayside fringe of tide flats and grassy islands, is an important waypoint for migrating birds and forms part of the **Willapa National Wildlife Refuge**. The refuge is a birdwatchers paradise. At various times from fall through spring, you'll see sooty shearwaters, brant, Canada geese, white-fronted geese, canvasbacks, buffleheads, pintails and shovelers. On the beaches great flocks of dunlins and sanderlings congregate. In winter the dunes offer nesting habitat to Lapland longspurs, horned larks and water pipits. Brown pelicans can be spotted from mid-July to October. Snowy plovers nest at the northernmost end of the point from April through August, during which time the far reaches of the refuge are posted closed to public access.

Retrace your route back to Nahcotta then continue south on Sandridge Road, which follows the peninsula's Willapa Bay shoreline.

This completes the South Washington Coast Auto Tour. From here you can return north to Aberdeen via Highway 101 or proceed east on Highways 401 and 4 to Kelso, Longview and Interstate 5 (ask for the *Willapa Loop Auto Tour*).

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Maps drawn by John King

Updated 12/7/11 tm