



Oregon Coast Aquarium  
**Oceanscape Network**

The Teen's Guide  
to Exploring Oregon

# GHOST TOWNS



[oceanscape.aquarium.org](http://oceanscape.aquarium.org)



## What is a ghost town?

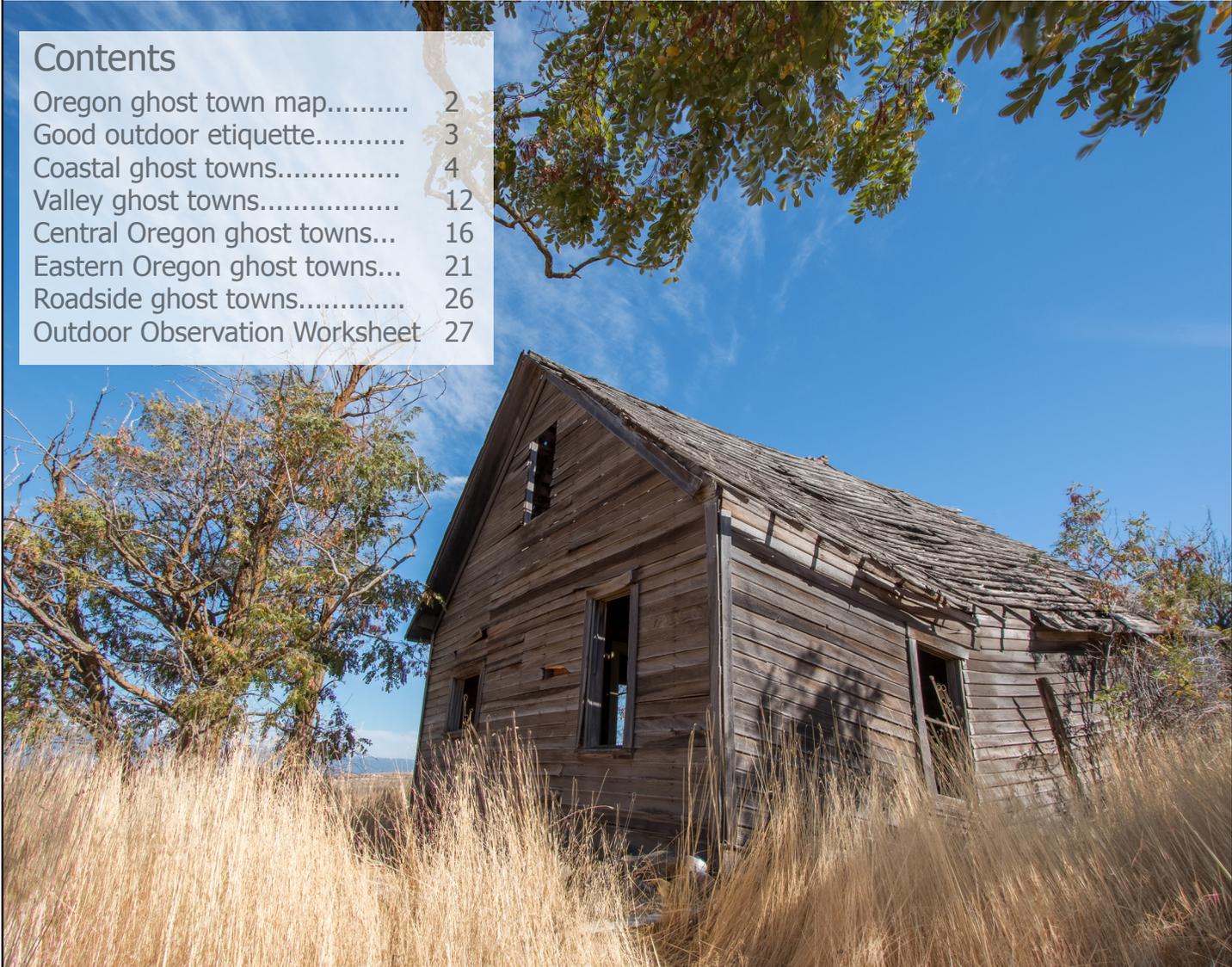
A ghost town is any deserted place with few or no human inhabitants. Such places are plentiful in Oregon; remnants from history when men searched the hills for gold; when much of the state was still unexplored; or when economics and industry were very different from the modern world.

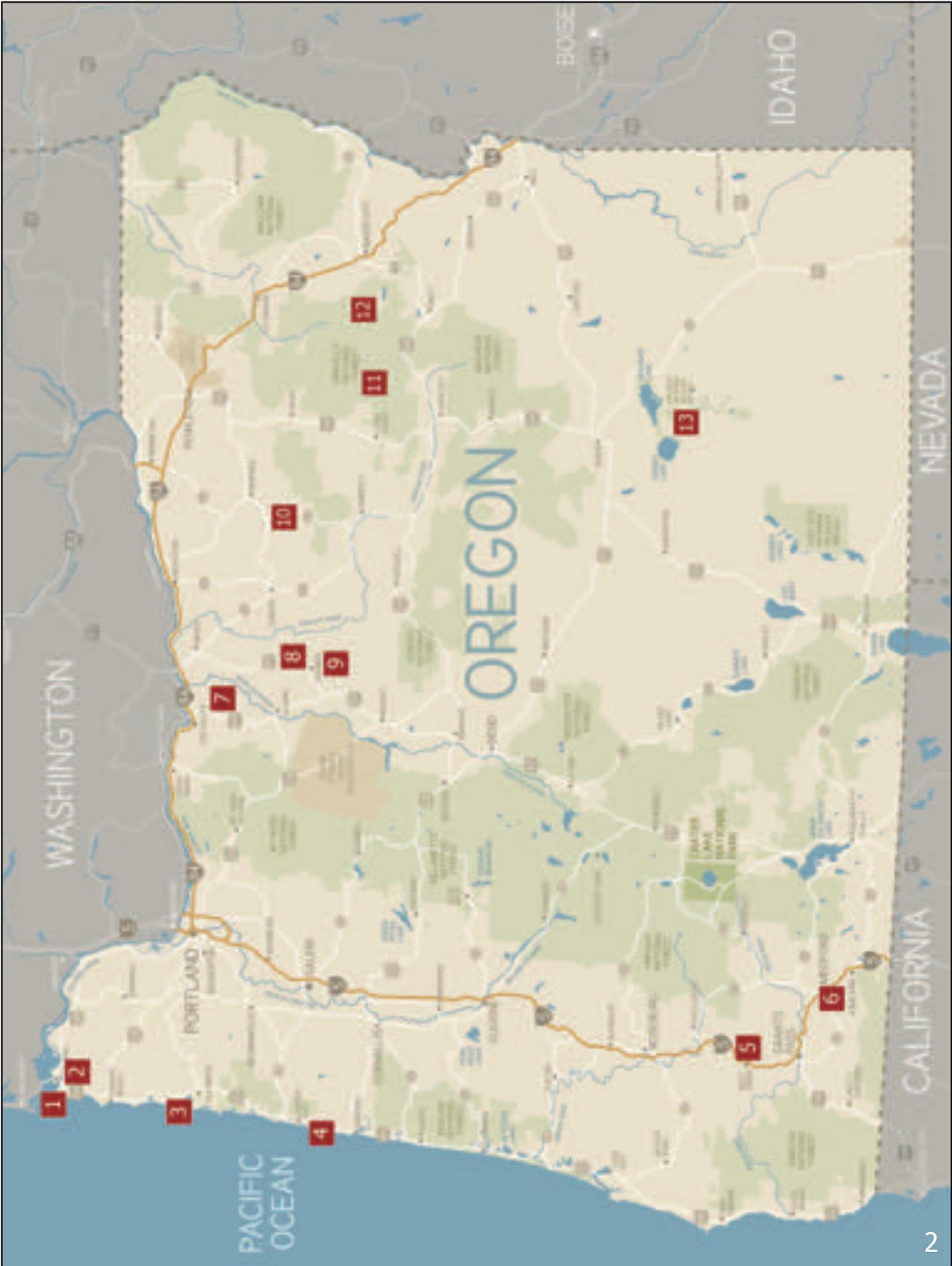
This guide will help you find some of the most interesting and best preserved ghost towns in Oregon and provide with you suggested activities that will let you explore these sites more thoroughly.

To assist with your investigations, these sites are organized by region and there is an *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* at the back of this packet which can be used to catalog your discoveries and share them with others. For more information about exploring the outdoors, visit the Oceanscape Network at [oceanscape.aquarium.org](http://oceanscape.aquarium.org).

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## Good Outdoor Etiquette:

Manners count, even outdoors. We head outdoors because we want to enjoy nature and have fun. But you also need to be safe and make sure you're not harming what you're enjoying or ruining the experience for others.

By following these guidelines, you can enjoy nature while making sure it's preserved for the wildlife that live there and those who come after you.

- **Observe wildlife from a safe distance.** Don't interfere with the natural activities of wild animals, including feeding, nesting, sleeping, rearing their young, etc.
- **Trekking without trespassing.** When you're out exploring, make sure you know where you are and that you have permission to be there. Stay on marked trails. If you come to a fence or locked gate, don't bypass them — they're there for a reason.
- **If you pack it in, pack it out.** Help keep trash and other contaminants out of natural areas by removing all your debris, including organic materials such as food waste. If you see trash and can remove it safely, please do so.
- **Be fire safe.** Build fires only in designated areas and make certain they're completely extinguished before you move on.
- **Take photos, not objects.** Video and photograph as much as you like, but leave rocks, plants, feathers, and other natural objects where you find them. Remember, in some places like national parks, it's illegal for you to remove any item. Plus, removing natural features degrades the ecosystem for the plants and animals who live there.
- **Pets have their place.** Exploring with your dog can be a wonderful experience, but pets may not be appropriate everywhere you go. Make sure dogs are allowed on the trail you're hiking, keep them on leash at all times, and always remove their solid waste.
- **Help preserve the outdoors from indoors.** Even when you're at home or in school, your actions can affect the natural world. Adopting nature-friendly habits — which can be anything from recycling your soda bottles to buying sustainably-harvested seafood — all make a difference to keep our world healthy.





## Coastal Ghost Towns

1

FORT  
STEVENS



*The West Battery*

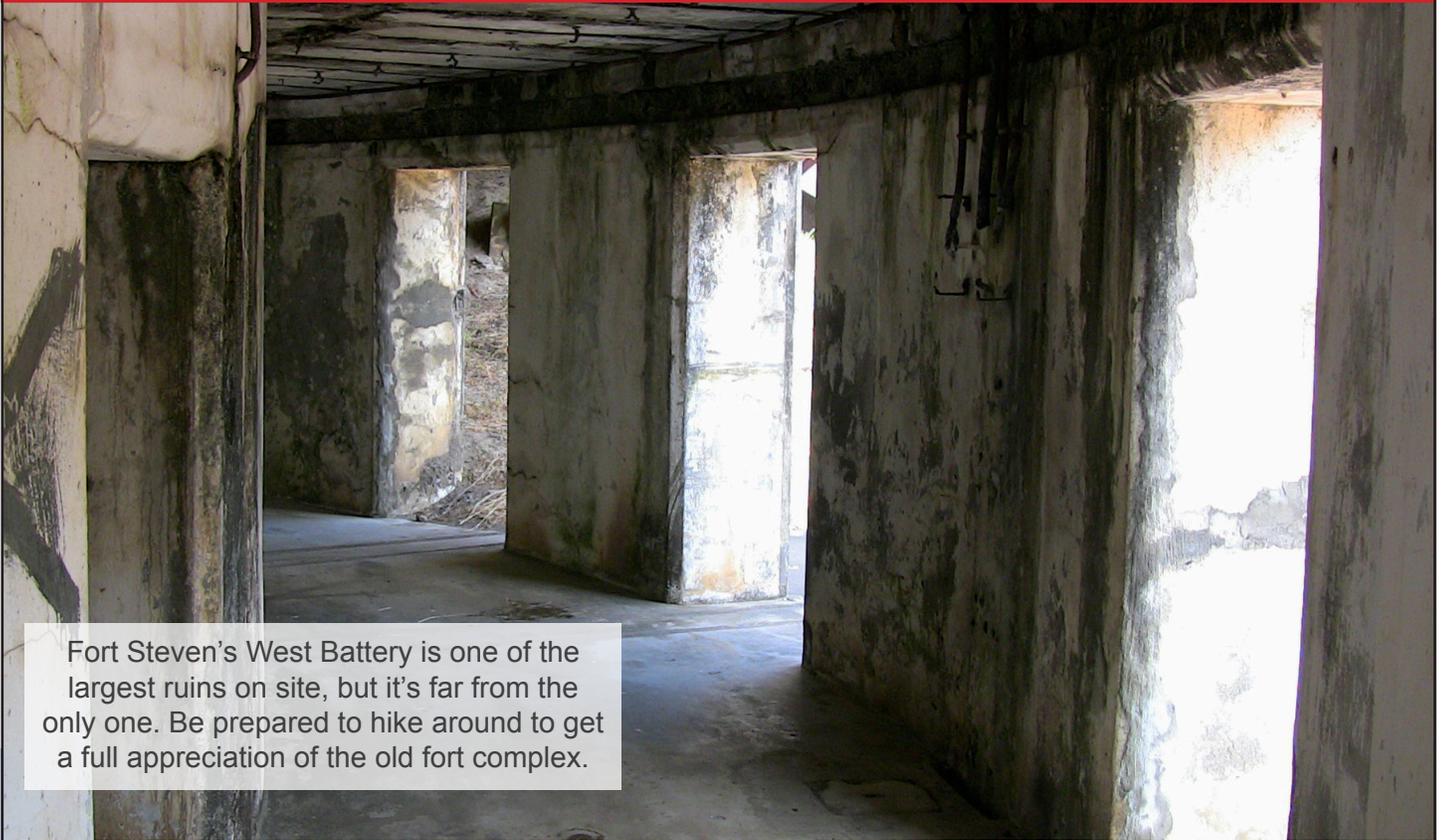
**GPS Coordinates:** 46.1731843, -123.9729163

**The History:** The sprawling military complex of [Fort Stevens](#) was built during the American Civil War and went into full operation just as the war was ending in 1865. It was one of three forts to make up the Three Fort Harbor Defense System which was designed to protect the mouth of the [Columbia River](#). In the mid-nineteenth century, just as it is today, the river was a very important route for transportation and commerce. An enemy gaining entrance to the Columbia River could wreak havoc on towns from [Astoria](#) to [Portland](#). During those first years, the facility was a series of earthen ramparts, defensive trenches and large cannons meant to fight off an attack from the sea. Over the next few decades, the primitive earthen works were replaced by thick concrete bunkers and numerous gun emplacements dug into the shoreline. Fort Stevens' guns watched over the mouth of the Columbia River through World War I and World War II before they were finally dismantled and the complex was decommissioned in 1947.

**What's There?** Because of its size and complexity, you could literally spend days exploring the ruins at Fort Stevens. We suggest you start with the West Battery, which is adjacent to the fort's military museum. You can obtain a map to all the park's features in the museum.

**How do I get there?** Fort Stevens is located 9 miles (14.5 km) west of [Astoria](#). Take Highway 101 south out of Astoria and turn west on Harbor Street toward the town of Warrenton. From there, follow the signs to the park entrance.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring, summer and fall.



Fort Steven's West Battery is one of the largest ruins on site, but it's far from the only one. Be prepared to hike around to get a full appreciation of the old fort complex.



**Suggested activities:**

**Determine how native species have taken over:** When the fort was abandoned, native plants and animals took over the areas humans left behind.

As you wander the ruins, use the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* to describe how the human structures are being reclaimed as habitat by native plants and animals.

For additional information, visit the Oceanscape Network's [Life in Ruins: The West Battery](#) feature.



**2** FORT  
CLATSOP



**GPS Coordinates:** 46.133611, -123.880278

**The history:** [Fort Clatsop](#) has the distinction of being one of the first Oregon sites established and abandoned by Euro Americans. The outpost was built by [Corps of Discovery Expedition](#), led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, after they spent over a year traveling from St. Louis, Missouri, to the Pacific Ocean. Throughout the entire journey, Lewis and Clark studied the continent's geography, wildlife and Native American tribes. (Many species and locations in the Pacific Northwest still bear their names.) Both kept detailed journals which were later published and helped pave the way for American expansion westward.

The explorers sighted the Pacific Ocean for the first time on November 7, 1805, and spent that brutally cold and stormy winter at Fort Clatsop.

**What's there?** The original encampment has long since disappeared — and historians still debate over its actual location and design — but a facsimile has been created by the National Park Service in the approximate area. The reconstruction is part of the larger Fort Clatsop National Monument, which also includes an expansive visitor's center and miles of hiking trails. Depending on the time of year, Park Service volunteers and employees may conduct reenactments of life at Fort Clatsop.

**How do I get there?** The Fort Clatsop Visitor's Center is located 6 miles (9.6 km) south of [Astoria](#). From Astoria, head south on the Highway 101 Business Loop and then turn onto Fort Clatsop Road.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring, summer and fall.



**Suggested activities:**

**Tour the fort:** Take the short walk from the visitor’s center to the reconstructed fort. Using the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet*, describe three modern amenities (a desirable or useful feature or facility of a building or place) that you enjoy today but would not have had access to at Fort Clatsop in 1805. How would you have adapted to these hardships?

**Locate your food:** Using the hiking trails, locate three plants you could potentially use as food if you were living at Fort Clatsop in 1805. The visitor’s center will have lists and identification guides to assist you with this activity.

**Spot Wildlife:** Take the famous “Fort to Sea Trail” to take in the same view of the Pacific Ocean Lewis and Clark had upon reaching the coast. Along the way, try and spot some of the common animals shown below. Log your sighting on the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet*.



*USFWS photo*

Common deer mouse  
*Peromyscus maniculatus*



Northern flicker  
*Colaptes auratus*



Rough-skinned newt  
*Taricha granulosa*



Raccoon  
*Procyon lotor*



Western pileated woodpecker  
*Dryocopus pileatus picinus*



Snowshoe hare  
*Lepus americanus*



Cougar  
*Puma concolor*

This is a dangerous animal which can sometimes be seen on the “Fort to Sea Trail.” Obey posted warnings about cougars and NEVER attempt to approach one.



**3**

## BAYOCEAN

*Bayocean as it appeared in the early 20th century. Photo: Tillamook County Pioneer Museum*



**GPS Coordinates:** 45.528059, -123.9519792

**The history:** Located on a spit near the entrance of the Tillamook Bay, [Bayocean](#) was intended to be a place for the privileged to live and play. The town's developers were impressed by the amazing beaches and ocean views but clearly didn't understand the natural forces that create (and destroy) spits.

Less than two decades after Bayocean was established, parts of it were already falling to the sea. Ironically, the residents of Bayocean may have hastened the town's end by building a single jetty at the mouth of the bay. This structure was meant to keep large waves away from the town, but actually funneled strong ocean currents right to the town's beaches, undercutting and eventually destroying them.

By the 1930s, most of the town's residents were leaving and the final building washed into the Pacific in 1971.

**What's there?** Today, the Bayocean town site is all but gone from the landscape although sharp-eyed visitors can still see the pilings for the old pier on the spit's east side. Recently, students, teachers and historians have been working to map and educate the public about the "town swallowed by the sea" and are in the process of cutting trails and erecting educational kiosks. More information on their efforts is available on the Oceanscape Network.

**How do I get there?** The townsite is located within the boundaries of the Bayocean Peninsula Park, approximately 8 miles (12.8 km) northwest of [Tillamook](#), Oregon. From Tillamook, take the Netarts Highway West to the Bayocean Road and then follow it to the park.



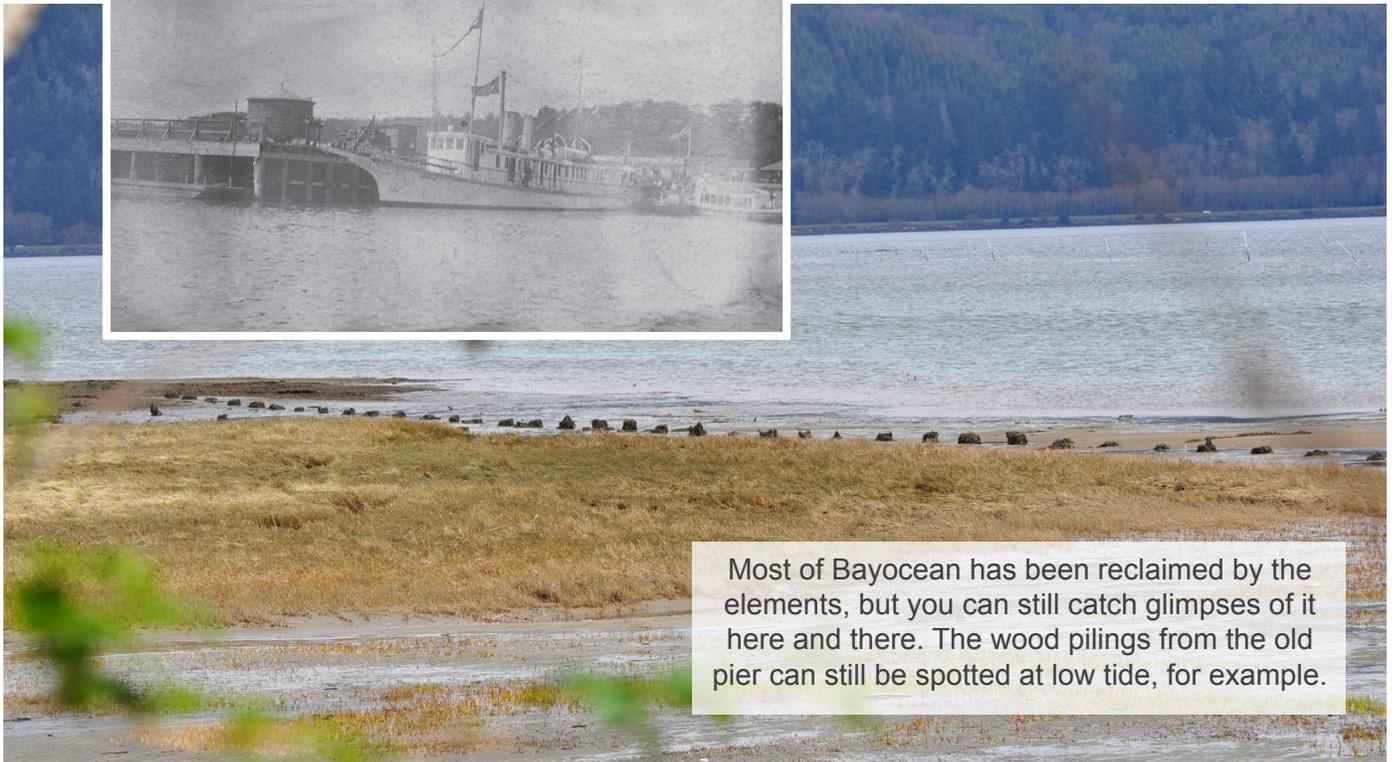
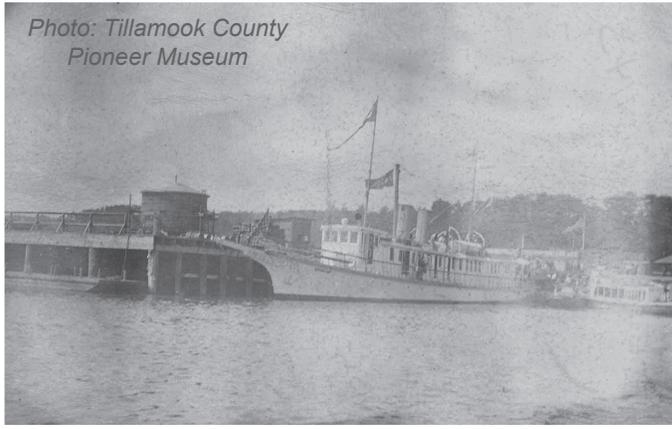
**When is the best time to visit?** Summer.

**Suggested activities:**

**Wildlife spotting:** Because of its unique location between the Tillamook Bay and the Pacific Ocean, the Bayocean Peninsula Park is a great place to spot both marine and terrestrial wildlife. Hike or bike the Bayocean Dike Road and use the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* at the back of this packet to list the species you find.

**Find the Bayocean Townsite Locations:** Take a hike through the dunes to see if you can find the locations where various Bayocean buildings once stood. Information kiosks and signage are now in place for some of them. Using [historical images on the Oceanscape Network](#), try to determine the exact location of a building and describe on the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* how the environments has or has not changed over the last century.

Photo: Tillamook County  
Pioneer Museum



Most of Bayocean has been reclaimed by the elements, but you can still catch glimpses of it here and there. The wood pilings from the old pier can still be spotted at low tide, for example.



**4**

**KERNVILLE**



*Kernville as it appeared in the early 20th century.  
Photo: Salem Public Library*

**GPS coordinates:** “New Kernville”: 44.89944, -124.00333 | “Old Kernville”: 44.887438, -123.990024

**The history:** Kernville has the distinction of being the first European settlement in this part of Oregon. Originally established in 1896 as a canning facility for salmon, the town went through numerous changes during its long history. Approximately a decade after it was established, the canning facility was abandoned and the town’s focus turned toward lumber. A saw-mill was established across the Siletz River from the old cannery and became informally known as “New Kernville.” During the Second World War, “New Kernville” was important in processing vast amounts of spruce wood to use in airplane production. At its height, the mill produced up to 30,000 feet of processed timber each day. But after the war’s economic boom, Kernville’s economy began to shrink. By the 1980s, changes to Highway 101 meant the town was no longer on a major thoroughfare and Kernville faded into history.

**What’s there?** You may have to look closely to find the remains of Kernville, which are sometimes lost among the forest or currently occupied by houses and other structures. Foundations and other rubble can still be seen; and the river is strewn with the remains of wood pilings, a remnant from the original Kernville salmon cannery.

**How do I get there?** Old Kernville is located near the intersection of Highway 101 and Oregon Route 229, north of [Newport](#), Oregon. The townsite sits on the banks of the Siletz River.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring, summer and fall. This area will be very muddy in the winter.



**Suggested activities:**

Locate and compare “old” and “new” Kernville: Using the Global Positioning System, find the old cannery site (“old Kernville”) and the lumber mill site (“new Kernville.”) Take photos and videos of each and then compare them to the historical photos of the area found on the Salem History website at <http://ow.ly/4f8m30klQt4>. Describe in your *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* how these areas have been reclaimed by nature over the past century.



Just down the road from the Kernville site is the spectacular Siletz Bay National Wildlife Refuge (shown above). This sprawling bay is a perfect location to spot marine mammals like harbor seals and a variety of sea birds. During low tide, visitors may take to the mud flats in search of clams and crabs. If photography is more to your liking, the bay contains these curious rock formations (called seastacks), which remind some visitors of full-sized Japanese bonsai gardens. Use the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* to record your impressions of the bay and its wildlife.



## Valley Ghost Towns

### 5 GOLDEN



**GPS Coordinates:** 42.68275, -123.330417

**The history:** The tiny town of [Golden](#) was established in 1892. This area had long served as a campsite for prospectors searching for gold along the nearby Coyote Creek. Even at its height, Golden was a rather sleepy place which contained no saloons and experienced little of the “wild west” chaos typical of mining camps from that era.

Below the townsite is Coyote Creek. The creek’s shoreline has changed dramatically since the 1850s when gold was first discovered here. Originally, a gentle slope led down through thick trees to the water’s edge. But years of gold mining using high-pressure water to separate the soil from the gold it contained ravaged the area. Similar techniques continued until the 1960s when growing concerns about the water quality downstream stopped development. By that time, decades of mining had cut apart and washed away acres of topsoil and the natural embankment. Today, there’s a steep cliff separating the townsite from the creek.

In the early 1990s, a nonprofit organization was founded to reclaim the creek – though the original landscape around it was forever lost. Volunteers reworked the landscape, constructing pools and wetlands to catch rainwater, slow erosion and provide a stable habitat for fish, amphibians, waterfowl and mammals such as the American beaver.

Today, the Golden National Historic District and the Coyote Wetlands are jointly administered by Oregon Parks and Recreation and Josephine County.



**What's there?** Today, if you plan to visit Golden, you'll have to keep a sharp eye on the edge of the road as only four buildings remain standing, including the mercantile and a very picturesque church. Next to the church is a graveyard some sources claim is not authentic and was actually created when a TV western filmed on the site in the 1960s.

**How do I get there?** Golden is approximately 24 miles (38.6 km) north of [Grants Pass](#), Oregon, to the east of Interstate 5.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer.

**Suggested activities:**

**Wildlife spotting on Coyote Creek:** Just below the ghost town is the Coyote Creek reclamation area. This restored habitat is a tranquil site for spotting American beaver, river otter, American bald eagle and all kinds of animals as shown below. Use the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* to log your observations.



American beaver  
*Castor canadensis*



Bald eagle  
*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*



Bigleaf maple  
*Acer macrophyllum*



Canada goose  
*Branta canadensis*



Red columbine  
*Aquilegia formosa*



River otter  
*Lontra canadensis*



Rough-skinned newt  
*Taricha granulosa*



Sword fern  
*Polystichum munitum*

**Visit the historical Wolf Creek Inn State Heritage Site:** Located on the west side of Interstate 5, about 4 miles (6.4 km) from Golden, is this beautiful historic lodge.



**6**

**JACKSONVILLE**



**GPS Coordinates:** 42.314444, -122.967222

**The history:** When gold was discovered in 1851, miners and settlers swarmed into the Rogue River Valley. Numerous camps, towns and trading posts were established as a result of the new prosperity. [Jacksonville](#) was chief among these. The settlement was originally called Table Rock City and was established in 1852 by James Cluggage and James Pool, the owners of the very successful Rich Gulch gold mine.

At its height, Jacksonville was the capital of Jackson County. Jacksonville continued to be a prosperous town even after the mines were exhausted, but by the mid-1880s, the railroads had bypassed it and Medford was made the new county seat.

**What's there?** In recent years, Jacksonville has enjoyed a renaissance as an artists' community and is now a popular destination with tourists. Despite its thriving modern economy, the town still has many fascinating relics from its gold rush days. After several fires destroyed large parts of the town in the 1800s, the residents built new structures out of stone or brick. As a result, many of the buildings dating from the end of Oregon's brief "gold rush" period are still standing and in excellent condition. Guided walking tours of these relics are offered in the summer and early fall. Additionally, the Jacksonville cemetery offers a unique glimpse into Oregon's early years, with graves dating back to 1859.

**How do I get there?** Jacksonville is located 30 miles (48.2 km) north of [Ashland](#), Oregon, to the west of Interstate 5.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring, summer and fall.



**Suggested activities:**

**Go gold panning:** Gold was discovered in Jackson Creek in 1851, starting a “gold rush fever” that continued for decades. Although gold mining operations ended a long time ago, and the creek has been returned to a more natural condition, you may still be able to pull gold from the waterway by panning. You can hike the banks of Jackson Creek from the downtown area and look for a place to try your hand at panning.



**Gold panning** involves scooping sediment out of a stream bottom and then using the water and a shaking action to separate the gold from the surrounding sediment. Because gold is so heavy, it will settle to the bottom of the pan where it can be picked out. To learn more about this activity: <http://www.goldgold.com/gold-prospectinggold-panning-instructions.html>

Recreational gold panning is generally allowed on Oregon public lands and no permit is needed, but if in doubt — DON'T PAN. Check the Outdoor Etiquette Rules at the beginning of this packet for reminders on how you should conduct yourself.



## Central Oregon Ghost Towns

### 7 DUFUR



**GPS Coordinates:** 44.910833, -120.722778

**The history:** The town was named in the 1880s for its founders, Andrew and Enoch Dufur, two brothers who ran a cattle ranch in the area. The cattle are mostly gone now and the area's economy is more reliant on wheat and fruits. Due to its warm, dry Mediterranean climate, the region is excellent for growing grapes.

**What's there?** The town's main street is lined with historic and picturesque buildings. A highlight is the stately Balch Hotel (established 1907), a three-story red brick building with an ornate facade. When it was first opened, the hotel offered amenities otherwise unknown in such a rural location — including hot and cold running water, electric lights and steam heat. Additionally, the 18-inch thick brick walls insulated guests from the region's summer heat.

A very short walk away is the Dufur Historical Society Living History Museum where you can get more information on the history of the town and surrounding area.

**How do I get there?** Dufur is located approximately 15 miles (24 km) south of The Dalles, Oregon, along US 197 South.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer. During the winter, snowfall may make traveling to this location challenging.



**Suggested activities:**

**The Hood River Fruit Loop:** This driving tour of the areas agricultural bounty is easily accessed from Dufur. Take the Dufur Valley Road west to Parkdale to access the southern end of the Fruit Loop. For more information, see the [Fruit Loop feature on the Oceanscape Network](#).

**Visit the White River Falls:** This [beautiful state park](#) with its amazing cascades is only 20 miles south of Dufur. The park is popular for picnicking, hiking and fishing.

**8 SHANIKO**



**GPS Coordinates:** 45.003056, -120.753056

**The history:** While many Oregon ghost towns owed their existence to gold, silver or beef, Shaniko was established to aid the wool industry. The high plateau on which the town was founded, with its low scrubby vegetation and sparse trees, was excellent for sheep ranching. An enormous wool barn with a bright red roof and the town's named emblazoned across it in white letters still dominates the scenery.

The town was originally settled in 1874 by a Civil War veteran named August Scherneckau. At that time it was called Cross Hollows, but by the turn of the century it was "Shaniko," a corruption of its founder's last name. Its heyday was during the first decade of the twentieth century, when townspeople boasted it was the "Wool Capital of the World." Certainly it was the "Wool Capital of Oregon," as no other place in the state rivaled its productivity. When the railroad arrived in Shaniko in May 1900, its agricultural goods (which also included wheat and cattle) were shipped all over Oregon, Idaho and Washington. Its glory days were



to be short lived however. By 1911, a faster, more direct railroad, which connected Portland to Bend. was siphoning off Shaniko's population and prosperity. By 1966 the railroad had stopped running through the town entirely. As of 2016, the population of Shaniko was 36 people.

**What's there?** Listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, Shaniko provides a glimpse back to the turn of the twentieth century. The city hall (which includes an authentic century-old jail) and the Shaniko Hotel are picturesque highlights lifted straight out of a Western movie. Nearby is a curious all wood, box-like water tower. Plenty of dilapidated farm houses and businesses are located on adjacent streets, some "dressed" for tourists with the addition of a coffin, a rusted truck or the remains of a horse-drawn wagon.

**How do I get there?** Shaniko is located approximately 64 miles (103 km) north of Redmond, Oregon, in Wasco County. It is easily accessible by road by taking The Dalles-California Highway 94 north out of Redmond.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer. During the winter, snowfall may make traveling to this location challenging.

**Suggested activities:**

**Lock yourself up:** The old city jail is open to the public and located on the ground floor of the historic City Hall, across the street from the Shaniko Hotel. Enter one of the cells and pull the heavy iron door closed behind you. Make a video describing what it must have been like to be locked up in this tiny space for possibly months at a time.



One of the most curious structures in Shaniko is this box-shaped water tower.



9

## ANTELOPE



**GPS Coordinates:** 44.910833, -120.722778

**The history:** Probably named for the abundance of pronghorn antelope who graze the scrubby hills nearby, Antelope is one of the smallest destinations on the ghost town tour. It was established in 1863 by Howard Maupin, an early Oregon pioneer for whom a town 50 miles to the northwest is named. Originally intended to be a stagecoach stop, Antelope wasn't a large place even in its prime.

With a 2016 population of only 48 people, the tiny town consists of only a few streets bisected by the Shaniko-Fossil Highway.

**What's there?** Today, the weathered wooden storefronts and abandoned houses along the main street can make for some interesting photos, but probably the most picturesque structure, partly because it feels so out of place, is the old school (shown above). Built in 1925, it was unique for such a rural location in that it was built of concrete rather than wood and contained both classrooms and a gymnasium. At its height, over 250 children of various ages attended the school. It shut down permanently in 1983 but residents still use it as a town hall. The building has been listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and as one of "Oregon's Most Endangered Places" by Restore Oregon, a statewide historic preservation organization. The school sits by itself in an open field on the north end of town and is painted bright green.

**How do I get there?** Antelope is located 14 miles south of Shaniko along Route 218.

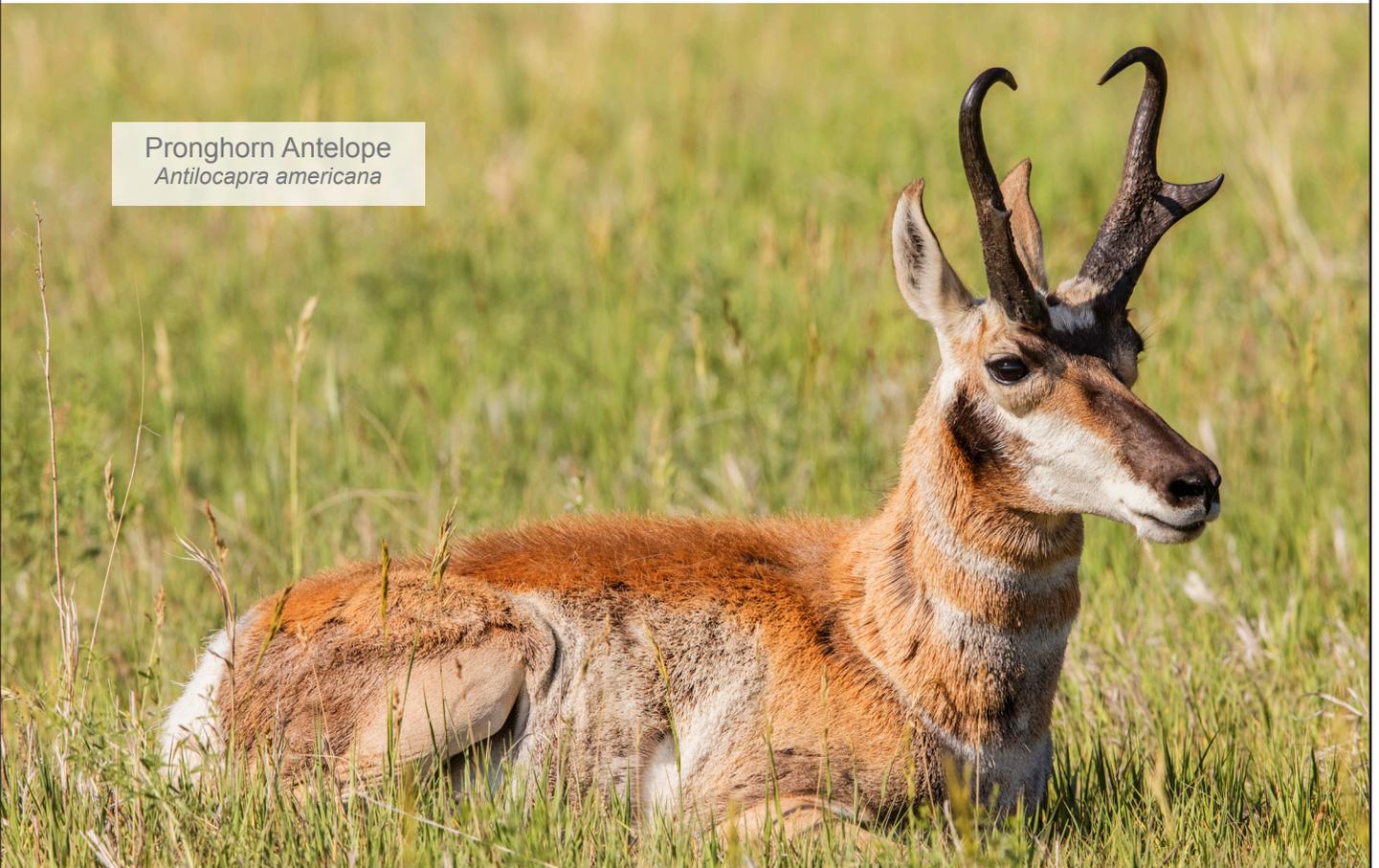
**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer. During the winter, snowfall may make traveling to this location challenging.



**Suggested activities:**

**Antelope Spotting:** Drive out into the surrounding countryside and see if you can spot and photograph some of the areas pronghorn antelope and other native wildlife. You can use the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* at the back of this packet to assist you.

Pronghorn Antelope  
*Antilocapra americana*





## Eastern Oregon Ghost Towns

### 10 HARDMAN



*Hardman, circa 1962.  
Photo: Salem Public Library*

**GPS Coordinates:** 45.1700716, -119.6878971

**The history:** Like many Oregon ghost towns, Hardman's decline began when the railroad that once serviced it was moved or eliminated. Hailed as a "thriving little trade center" in the 1800s due to its beautiful environment and rich agricultural lands, the town reached its height by the 1880s. During that decade, its population increased to 900 people and modern amenities were built, including a dance hall, mercantile, a newspaper, horse racetracks and — incredibly — an ice skating rink. In the 1920s however, the railroad changed course to run through Heppner, Oregon, 20 miles to the northeast. This immediately changed Hardman from a thriving freight center to a forgotten outpost on the map. The last business closed in 1968.

**What's there?** Hardman consists only of a few streets with a current population of about 20 people. Despite the small size, state funds have helped preserve parts of Hardman as a historic site so there are plenty of old structures to see and photograph, including abandoned homes, shops and barns. A walking tour may be the best way to see the area.

**How do I get there?** Hardman is one of the more difficult ghost towns to reach due to its extremely rural location. The only town of real size in the area is Fossil. From Fossil, take Route 19 (John Day Fossil Highway) north until it intersects with Route 206 (Wasco-Heppner Highway). Proceed east to the town of Ruggs and then south on Route 207 (Heppner-Spray Highway) to the ghost town.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer.

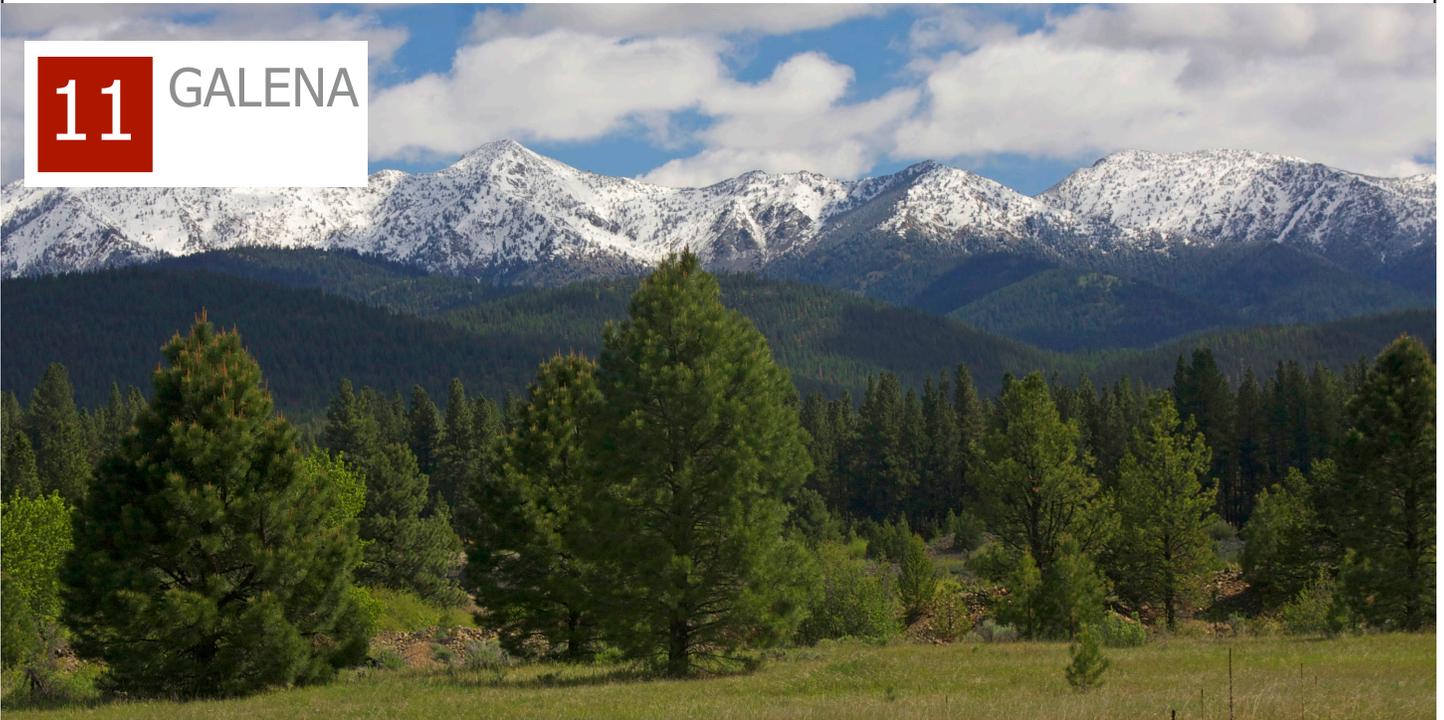


**Suggested activities:**

**Make a photo documentary:** As you make the long drive from Fossil to Hardman, take photos and notes to document the journey. Describe the landscape around you and imagine how early Oregonians would have survived in such an isolated place.

**11**

**GALENA**



**GPS Coordinates:** 44.7027878, -118.839866

**The history:** Nestled on the forested slopes above the Middle Fork of the [John Day River](#) is the tiny ghost town of Galena. Originally called “Susanville” after an early homesteader, this tiny community existed due entirely for gold mining. After mining operations were discontinued in the 1940s, the town slipped into history and anything left to see is along the highway.

**What’s there?** Since Galena was never a large place to begin with, there’s not much to see compared to some of the other ghost towns in this guide. Still, it’s in a beautiful part of the Blue Mountains and the scenery and wildlife certainly makes the trip worthwhile. Structures include dilapidated homes and other wooden buildings.

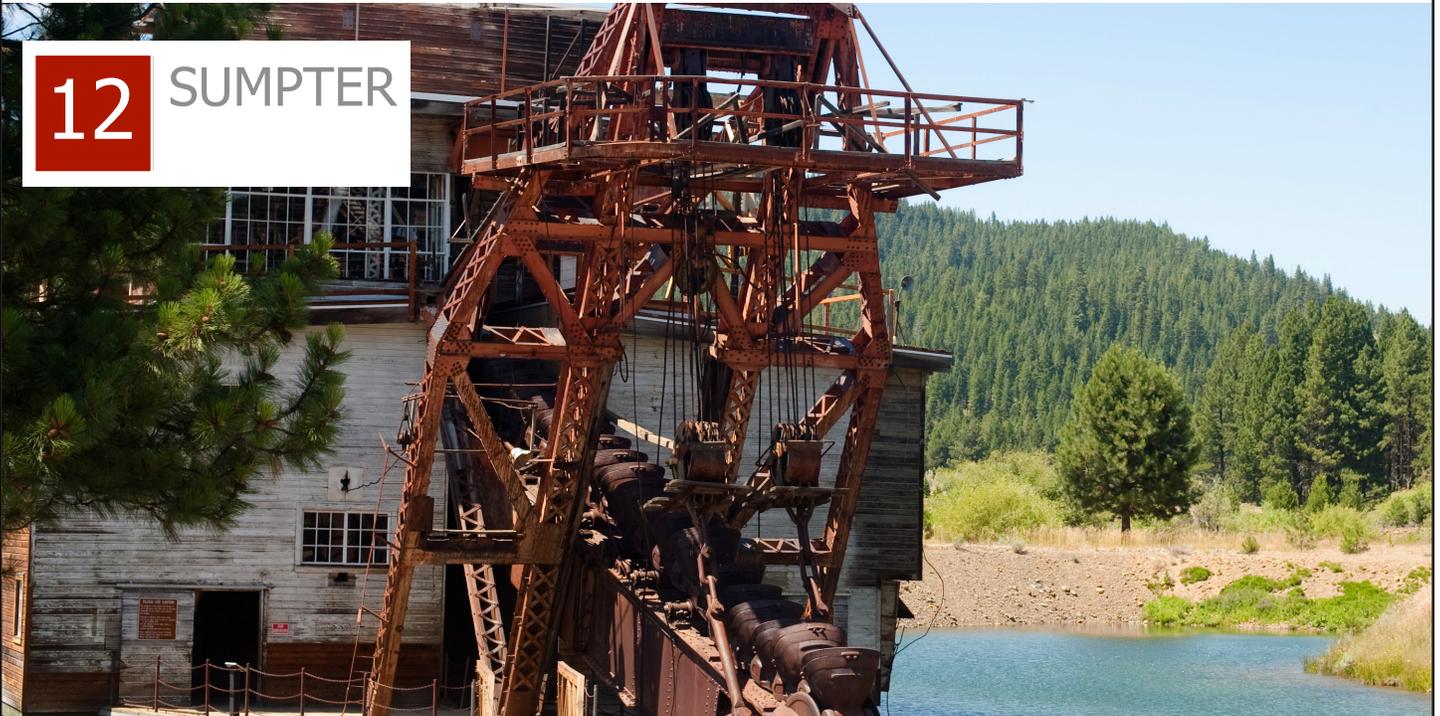
**How do I get there?** From Pendleton, Oregon, drive south on Highway 395 (Pendleton John Day Highway) until it intersects with Route 20 (Up Middle Fork Road 20). Continue on this road until you reach Galena. Overall distance is approximately 100 miles (161 km).

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer. Because Galena is located in the Blue Mountains (shown above), travel may be difficult during the fall and winter due to rain, mud and snow.



**Suggested activities:**

**Determine how nature has taken over:** As you wander the ruins of Galena, use the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet* to describe how the remaining human structures are being reclaimed by plants and animals as habitat and shelter. Identify at least three species that have taken over the human structures and are using them as habitat.



12

SUMPTER

**GPS Coordinates:** 44.746111, -118.199167

**The history:** Sumpter is not a true ghost town as it is far from abandoned. Still, it is a shadow of the booming gold rush town it was during the late nineteenth century. At its height, Sumpter had a population of 2,000 people, most of whom were involved with the dredging of gold from the nearby Silver Creek. Over the years, \$4.5 million of gold was extracted from the stream-bed, much of it thanks to an impressive piece of technology called the Sumpter Valley gold dredge. The dredge was essentially a self-propelling ship which created a pond for itself in which huge buckets would scoop up soil and water, process out the gold, and dump the expended tailings off the stern. The machine was able to process 9 cubic feet of material every minute and operated almost continuously from 1934 to 1954. Although efficient, the dredge's impact on the local ecosystem was enormous. The dredging process not only destroyed habitat and contaminated the water supply, it permanently scarred the landscape. Massive tailing piles can be seen all along the stream-bed to this day.

As the gold deposits were depleted, the town's population steadily declined. This was hastened by a devastating fire in 1917 which caused about \$1 million worth of damage to the town, and claimed two lives. Much of the town was never rebuilt following this fire. Today, about 200 people call Sumpter home.



**What's there?** Numerous historic buildings and the impressive Sumpter Valley gold dredge.

**How do I get there?** Sumpter is located 29 miles (46.6 km) to the west of Baker City along Route 410, the Sumpter Valley Highway.

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer. Because Sumpter is located in the Blue Mountains, travel may be difficult during the fall and winter due to rain, mud and snow.

**Suggested activities:**

**Visit the Sumpter County gold dredge:** The dredge is undoubtedly the biggest attraction for Sumpter. Left in its original state, it is a fascinating and unusual look at the gold mining industry in Oregon. Tour the dredge and its museum and then write down your thoughts on the dredge's impact on the local environment in the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet*.

**Ride the historic Sumpter Valley Railroad:** This narrow gauge railroad helped drive Sumpter's economic boom at the end of the nineteenth century. The railroad still runs for tourists May through September. Take a ride on the railroad and then journal your experience in the *Outdoor Observation Worksheet*.

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DOUBLE O  
RANCH



**GPS Coordinates:** 43.28041, -119.312043

**The History:** The Double-O was once the largest cattle ranching operation in Harney County, a very rural location in southeastern Oregon. At its height, the ranch covered over 17,000 square acres of land, and



represented an important component of Oregon's economy. In the 1940s, the remnants of the ranch were sold to the federal government and it was absorbed into the larger [Malheur National Wildlife Refuge](#), which encircles it. Today, the ranch is maintained as close to its original state as possible — a kind of living ghost town — which is used for special events including historical reenactments.

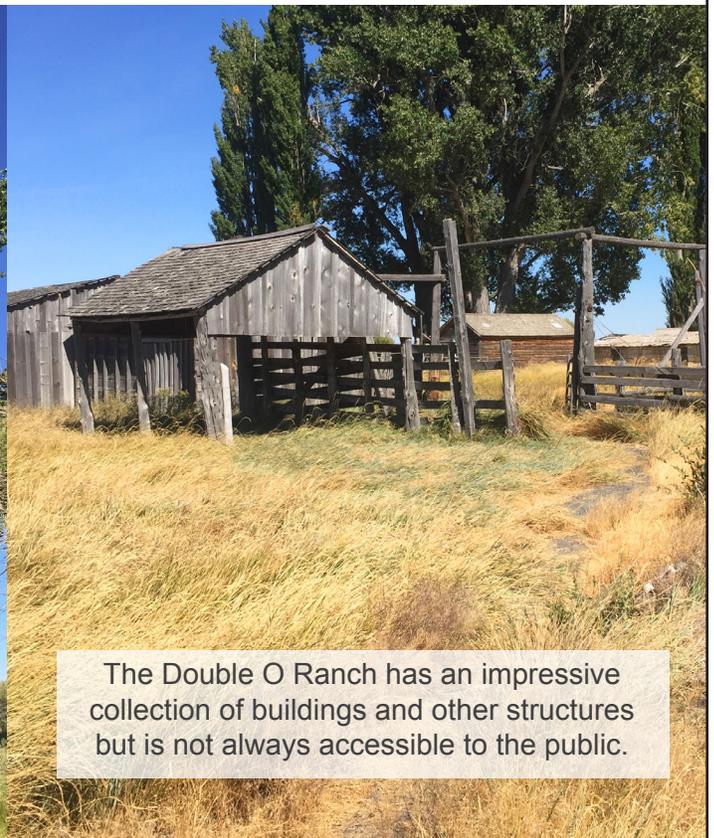
**What's there?** Lots of buildings, including a log cabin, ice house, corrals, barns and more. All of the structures are maintained in their current state of "arrested decay," meaning they are neither improved nor allowed to decay further. As a result, the Double-O provides a very authentic feel for how life must have been in eastern Oregon during the early twentieth century.

**How do I get there?** The Double-O is located within the boundaries of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. To get to the refuge, drive south out of Burns, Oregon, along Route 205, the Frenchglen Highway. Distance to the refuge and the Double-O is approximately 32 miles (51.5 km).

**When is the best time to visit?** Spring and summer. Be aware that this location is not always open to the public. The refuge uses it mostly for special events and educational purposes like historical reenactments.

**Suggested activities:**

**Attend an event at the ranch:** Because the ranch is not always open to the public, if your only intent is to see this ghost town we recommend you call the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge before driving out. If possible, schedule your trip during an event at the ranch for a richer visiting experience.



The Double O Ranch has an impressive collection of buildings and other structures but is not always accessible to the public.



## Roadside Ghost Towns



In addition to the towns listed in this guide, Oregon has many rural roads and highways, their edges often lined with crumbling remains of houses, farms and ranches. These relics can make for some excellent photos and videos, but be aware that many are on private property and you should never trespass. Also, dangerous wildlife like rattlesnakes may use these abandoned properties for habitat, so watch where you put your feet and hands!





# Outdoor Observation Worksheet

*Fill out both sides of this observation sheet to help document your work.*

<b>Your Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Time:</b>

**Weather Conditions:**

**Sounds:**

Natural: \_\_\_\_\_

Human-caused: \_\_\_\_\_

**Smells:**

Natural: \_\_\_\_\_

Human-caused: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sights:**

Natural: \_\_\_\_\_

Human-caused: \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the local ecosystem.** List the dominate plant and animal species you observe. Describe the weather / temperature /climate. Describe the geographical formations do you see around you.

**Draw a map of the area:** Note important landforms, waterways, roads, buildings, etc.

**List three ways human beings have impacted nature at this location:**

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**List three ways nature has impacted human beings (or their structures) at this location:**

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