

Scenic Oregon 2025: Bridges, Coastlines, and Camaraderie

A Look Back with Smiles

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY TOSH KANNO, HEINZ HOLZAPFEL,
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The inaugural Scenic Oregon Drives proved to be an unforgettable adventure. Over the course of several days, members of two tours shared miles of coastal roads, breathtaking scenery, historic bridges, and plenty of camaraderie. What began as a simple idea - to explore the bridges of Conde B. McCullough and enjoy Oregon's rugged coastline together - turned into an event filled with memories we'll all carry forward.

"It was great fun," one member remarked, "even the tsunami warning didn't stop us from having a good time."

FROM ASTORIA SOUTH

Our tour began in Astoria, with drivers gathering at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites. After a morning of introductions and route briefings, we crossed the first of McCullough's iconic bridges and wound our way along the coastal mountains.

"The scenery along the coastal mountains was breathtaking, and the stop at the Elk Refuge was unforgettable," another member shared. Wildlife sightings and sweeping vistas made for a perfect introduction to Oregon's north coast.

CHEESE, VIEWS, AND CAMARADERIE

After our first morning break, our tours brought a little indulgence: a stop at the Tillamook Creamery. "The Creamery tour and ice cream was a highlight for me,"



someone said with a grin that mirrored the delight of sampling fresh creations.

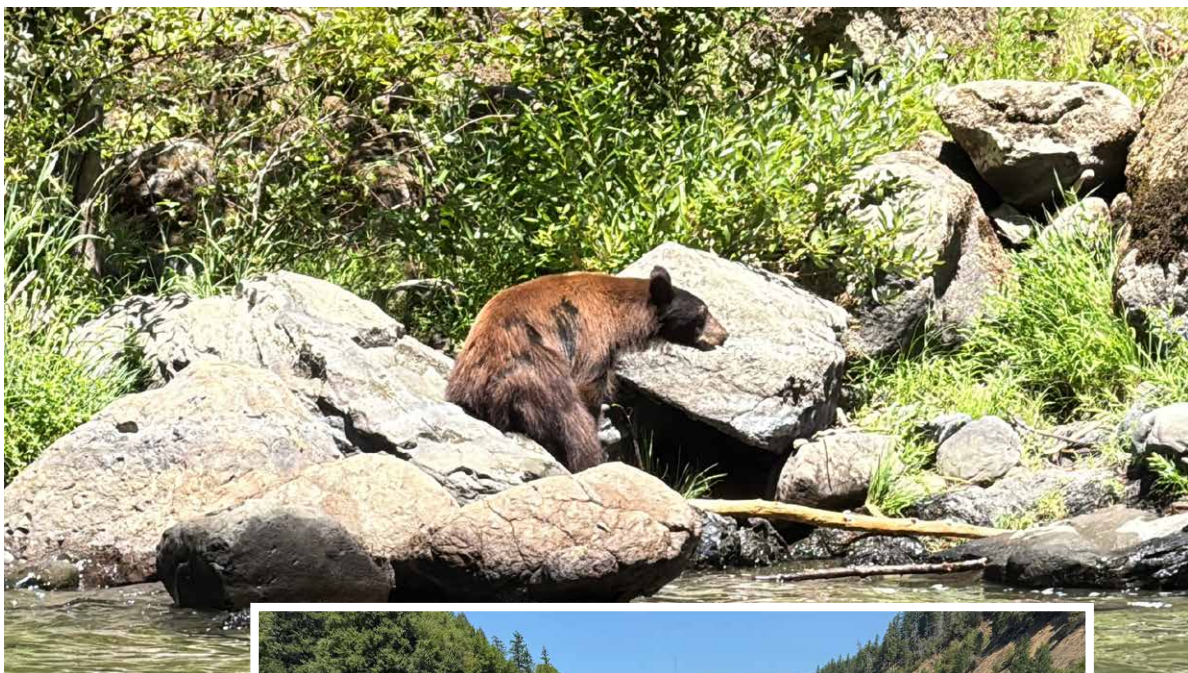
From there, we continued south to the Pelican Brewery. "Lunch at the Pelican Brewery with ocean views was perfect," one driver recalled, summing up the relaxed spirit of the day.

That evening, we stopped in Newport before gathering for dinner. "Walking the waterfront in Newport and dinner together made for a great evening," echoed another.

REFLECTION AND ADVENTURE

Day two offered a moment of quiet reflection at the Veterans Memorial. "It was moving and worth the stop," one participant noted.

From reflection to exhilaration, we then headed to the Rogue River for a jet boat adventure. "The jet boat ride was exciting—we even saw bears!" came one excited recollection. Another chimed in: "Getting splashed on the jet boat and laughing together is something I won't forget."



A PEACEFUL FINISH

Our final two nights concluded at the beautiful Tu Tu'Tun Lodge along the Rogue. Nestled between forest and water, it offered the perfect setting to relax and share stories. "The Tu Tu'Tun Lodge was beautiful and relaxing," a participant remarked.

As we said our goodbyes, one sentiment rang clear: "Those who didn't come really missed out on a great adventure."

A Tour to Remember BY HEINZ HOLZAPFEL, TOUR 1

There were five solid stories from this tour: the driving on twisty backroads and along a scenic coastline, the grandeur



of the Oregon landscape between the Columbia and Rogue River, the accommodations, the amazing food and the camaraderie. Tour 1 had 12 cars and 23 members attending, small enough to allow all of us to know more about each other. The all-inclusive concept felt like a cruise on land; whether breakfast, lunch, after drive cocktail or at dinner, you just ordered and had a fun time.

The Holiday Inn turned out to be very much OK, with a nice river view and a short walk along the river to the Bridgewater Bistro. Parking was good at the hotel and unlike the last time when we stayed at the Cannery Pier Hotel, I didn't have to clean the car from these big white bird droppings. The highlight of the drive from Astoria to Newport was Cape Meares with a wonderful view down the cliffs and crushing waves.

The Hallmark Resort is a classic ocean view place, and we had a chance to mingle with fellow tour members over a bottle of wine. Dinner at Newport's Clear Water was good and Dan had arranged for a shuttle to bring us to the restaurant and back to the hotel. Very, very convenient!

The drive from Newport to Gold Beach is a breathtaking scenic adventure, from the splashing waves at the rocks in Yachats to the glorious beach side drive between Port Orford and Gold Beach. And of course, crossing the magnificent bridges designed by Conde McCullough, the namesake of the inaugural Scenic Oregon Tour.

Then the wonders of Tu Tu'Tun Lodge, great location at the banks of the Rogue River. Comfy rooms, a pool with lounges for hanging out, a wood-fired sauna in a glass house down at the river, a small but very



cozy bar well sorted with scotches and bourbons, a Michelin Star level chef, a great wine list and excellent service. This lodge alone is worth a trip down to Gold Beach. The next day a jet boat picked us up at a pier down from the hotel. The first 20 miles upriver were calm and scenic, with a few well-behaved rapids. Then at Agnes we stopped and put our life vests on...and the real fun began. These boats can traverse in less than a foot of water and negotiate rapids like young mustangs. The pilot had fun twirling us repeatedly around with nice splashes from either side. Some rapids were big enough to

spray the whole boat. What fun! And it was warm enough to get dry quickly. The boat turned around at the furthest these boats can go, probably 50 miles upriver. On the journey up and down we saw eagles, deer, bears, and ospreys. After a stop at Agnes for a rustic lunch (and picking the first ripe blackberries



of the season), another boat brought us back to the hotel.

Several of us then hung out in the pool, with cocktails in plastic cups in hand. What a day, followed by an evening with more great food and wine. Lots of laughter and happy faces, great conversations. A very classy and fun experience!

Wow, What a Great Time!

BY TOSH KANNO, TOUR 2

Four days on the road that just got better and better. Of course, the drives on the coast are spectacular, but the lodging, meals - especially dinner events - became the highlight of our journey. Having a smaller group of 11 cars/18 participants who are engaging and amazingly social made it feel like a party every day. The final dinner was an event to remember. Amazing foods, special wines, and terrific company.

Also included was a guided jet boat ride on the Rogue River. We thumped over the rapids 50 miles upriver to our BBQ lunch. Then, 50-mile scoot back down, noticeably faster with much more bow sprays as everyone cheered on. No one got seasick but got really soaked on an almost hot, perfect sunny afternoon.



This format may be very hard to replicate for a larger group, with logistics and higher cost being the major hurdles, but it really works for a small meeting of very social drivers. Very special event, I want to be there next year!

Thanks to all participants for making this a great gathering! And thanks, Dan. Truly a great event!

A Little History and Background...

Dan Morris, our current Vice President, developed the idea for a new tour concept late last year. It was simple and genius: the tour would be named Scenic Oregon and would visit every one of the four corners of our beautiful state over time, each tour focusing on one corner per year, and the tour would be all inclusive and each tour would be limited to 12 cars.

For the inaugural tour, he selected the western-most part of Oregon: the coast between Astoria and Gold Beach. He formed a committee with Rosanne and John Woody and Heinz Holzapfel as volunteers.

The first estimation for the cost of entry was around \$3,500, after getting quotes from the hotels and restaurants. That's a pretty high price point compared to the Northwest Passage, and we weren't sure how

many members would be interested. So, we put a description of the tour and the cost into the weekly email and asked members to state their interest, and they would get first dibs on the ticket purchase. We got about 10 members raising their arms, giving us confidence to go forward.

The ticket sale started in early December, announced in the weekly email, the *Anzeiger* and our web page. The pre-registered members got one-day

advance purchase, by day two all tickets had been sold, and we had a waitlist of 10 additional members wanting to go. That was very surprising and positive, and Dan agreed to re-run the tour two weeks later for a second group. Those tickets went on sale in mid-December.

Now came the time to finalize the contracts with the hotels and restaurants, and trouble started right away. The anchor hotel with two nights stay at the end of the tour was the Tu Tu'Tun Lodge at the Rogue River, upriver from Gold Beach. Over the holidays the resort changed ownership and prices, bringing us into negative territory on the budget. That forced us to either raise the price or find other cost savings. The hotel on day two was the Hallmark Resort in Newport. It's a quality place and we decided not to make change there, nor at the Tu Tu'Tun Lodge. That left the hotel for the first night in Astoria. We had eyed the Cannery Pier Hotel, but they had also raised prices, so we decided with a bleeding heart to change over to the Holiday Inn, less glamorous but also right at the Columbia River. Some of our ticket holders were understandably disappointed.

Creating a new multiday tour without knowing the demand and working with quotes from hotels and restaurants for a budget and ticket price estimation is risky. Normally one would first make contracts and then create the budget, set the ticket price and sell tickets. A lesson learned for next year!

Looking Ahead

The Scenic Oregon 2025 drive wasn't just about the roads or the bridges, though both were spectacular. It was about the shared experiences—ice cream and ocean views, memorials and mountain roads, laughter and splashes—that made the trip uniquely ours. We look forward to many more Scenic Oregon adventures ahead.■

