
Peak winter storm season draws storm watchers to a singular stretch of the Oregon Coast

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It's the heart of winter on the Oregon Coast, which means gargantuan Pacific Ocean swells, roaring sea winds and exploding clouds of foam are on full display as part of peak winter storm season.

And nowhere is there a more dramatic winter storm display than on Oregon's Adventure Coast – Coos Bay, North Bend and Charleston – a unique geological area that creates the perfect conditions for monster storms – and unforgettable storm watching.

“Winter storms anywhere on the Oregon Coast can be pretty amazing, but on Oregon's Adventure Coast, they rise to a whole new level,” said Janice Langlinais, executive director of the Coos Bay-North Bend-Charleston Visitor and Convention Bureau, more commonly known as Oregon's Adventure Coast. “The unique jutting cliffs of the coastline, the powerful ocean swells and the big tide swings all combine to create truly memorable storms and storm watching.”

November through March is the best time to take in winter storms on Oregon's Adventure Coast. One of the best places to do it: Shore Acres State Park in Charleston. Perched atop an 80-foot cliff, Shore Acres sits above a jagged jumble of sandstone formations that jut out toward the ocean. When a storm gets brewing, giant waves smash against the rocks, rumbling the ground and bursting into misty plumes that sometimes soar more than 300 feet high. The park even features a designated viewing area and a storm watching hut that offers both shelter and a view.

Other ocean vistas for winter storm watching include the bluff overlooking Bastendorff Beach and Sunset Bay State Park along Cape Arago Highway.

The perfect storms

Though storms on the Oregon Coast are impacted by weather, ocean conditions have a greater impact on just how explosive the waves will be when they come crashing into the cliffs. When conditions in the ocean create large swells, they translate into incredible wave action. Swells of 20 to 30 feet can spew sprays of the Pacific hundreds of feet in the air when they collide with the sandstone cliffs at Shore Acres.

Storm watchers looking to experience the storied storms of Oregon's Adventure Coast can check the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Tides & Currents page for accurate tide predictions. It can also be helpful to check ocean conditions through NOAA's marine forecast service and the Oregon's Adventure Coast Facebook page for other storm watching tips. One to look for: high surf warnings, which are often a good sign that a phenomenal storm is brewing.

For more information, visit Oregon's Adventure Coast.