

Waterfall Cliffs by Day, a Concrete Stonehenge by Sunset — A 3-Day Columbia River Gorge Road Trip

A 3-Day Columbia River Gorge Itinerary · I-Journey

DURATION

3 Days

BEST TIME TO GO

April – June or Sept – Oct

spring wildflowers and full waterfalls, or fall color; avoids the late-May–early-Sept Multnomah Falls parking permit and summer crowds

FROM

\$520 USD / person

for 2 people sharing a rental car, inns & meals; excludes flights to Portland

Day 1

Portland to Hood River on the Historic Highway

Pick up a rental car in Portland and follow the 1916 Historic Columbia River Highway east, stopping at its waterfalls and viewpoints on the way to an overnight in Hood River.

Rental Car Pickup: Enterprise Rent-A-Car, PDX

from \$45 USD / day

Pick up a car at Portland International Airport before heading east on I-84 and then the old Historic Columbia River Highway, which parallels the interstate through the western gorge.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car — PDX · enterprise.com

Vista House at Crown Point

~30 minutes · free (donations welcome)

An octagonal 1918 rotunda perched 733 feet above the river, built as a rest stop for early highway travelers and still the gorge's signature photo overlook, with exhibits inside on the highway's construction.

Vista House · vistahouse.com

Multnomah Falls

~1 hour · free (timed parking permit required late May–early Sept)

Oregon's tallest waterfall drops 620 feet in two tiers beneath the arched Benson Bridge — the short paved trail to the bridge gets crowded by midmorning, so arrive early or check recreation.gov for the seasonal parking permit.

Day 2

The Fruit Loop, Maryhill's Stonehenge & Mount Hood

Rowena Crest Viewpoint

~30 minutes · free

A hairpin overlook on the old highway above the Tom McCall Preserve, where the gorge's green, waterfall-fed west gives way to the dry grasslands of the east — wildflowers cover the plateau below in April and May.

Check-In: Timberline Lodge

From \$290 USD / night, for 2 people

A WPA-built 1937 stone-and-timber lodge on Mount Hood's south flank, its lobby anchored by a hand-forged iron chandelier and a hexagonal fireplace — recognizable as the exterior of the Overlook Hotel in “The Shining.”

Timberline Lodge · (503) 272-3410 · timberlinelodge.com

Day 3

Mount Hood & the Drive Back to Portland

A morning around Timberline Lodge and a quiet alpine lake before the scenic drive back down to Portland.

Timberline Lodge Grounds & Silcox Hut Trail

~1 hour · free

Walk the lodge's hand-hewn timber halls (self-guided, or ask at the front desk about a docent tour) before a short stretch of the Timberline Trail toward Silcox Hut for a close-up view of the mountain's summit snowfields.

Trillium Lake

~30 minutes · free (day-use parking fee at the boat ramp)

A small reservoir a few minutes off Highway 26 with one of the most photographed views of Mount Hood in Oregon, its snowy summit mirrored in the water on a still morning.

Self-Drive: Mount Hood to Portland (PDX)

~1.5 hours, 60 miles via US-26 W

Return the rental car at Portland International Airport, or continue into downtown Portland — build in extra time on Sunday afternoons when ski traffic backs up on Highway 26.