

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

Fort Rock

Fort Rock is one of the more unique features of Oregon geology. Jutting several hundred out of the surrounding sage desert this ancient island was created between 50,000 and 100,000 years ago in a series of underwater eruptions in a shallow ice age lake.

Directions

From Bend travel south on US Highway 97 30 miles to the intersection of Highway 31, located $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of LaPine. Turn left on Highway 31 and follow it 29 miles to County Road 5-12C (Cabin Lake Road). Turn left onto Cabin Lake Road and follow it 6 miles to the town of Fort Rock. Just past the Homestead Village Museum follow the Ft. Rock State Park signs left for $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

The Trail

The trail begins at the collapsed portion of the wall. Fort Rock, geologically described as a tuft ring, was originally a full circle. Waves driven by the prevailing southeast winds gradually wore away the wall and created the horseshoe shape seen today.

From the end of the picnic area parking lot a short paved path begins this easy hike into one of Oregon's many volcanic wonders. The paved path quickly gives way to a dirt path which leads to the east cliff viewpoint. From this viewpoint you can see the smooth notch caved into the cliff walls by the waves of the large ice age lake that once filled 585 square miles of the valley. The waters of the lake, which reached a maximum depth of 250 feet, slowly receded approximately 13,000 years ago. The water is now 50 feet below the ground and provides water for the areas hay and alfalfa crops.

Turn right onto the abandoned road which follows the cliff walls inside the ancient crater. After $\frac{1}{2}$ mile the trail forks into three trails. The right fork leads to a notch in the cliff and the Fort Rock Cave Viewpoint $\frac{1}{4}$ mile away.

This cave is the source of some of the oldest human artifacts found in North America. In 1938 University of Oregon anthropologist Luther Cressman uncovered 75 sagebrush sandals along with various hunting artifacts. Radiocarbon dating of the sandals have determined the age at more than 10,000 years.

The center fork leads to the south end of the west cliff where evidence of the lake can again be seen in the cliff walls and the left fork leads back to the parking lot $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away.

The steep rock walls of Fort Rock offer protection and provide excellent habitat for raptors. Golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, and prairie falcon all inhabit the area. Cliff swallows and rock dove may also be seen. An early morning or late evening hike may yield a coyote hunting jack rabbit or

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

26400 NW St. Helens Road • Scappoose • Oregon 97056
Phone: (503) 543 7294 • Web: www.dlap photography.com

D. L. Anderson

P h o t o g r a p h y

prairie dog. In addition to the endless stretches of sage brush early summer brings splashes of red from Indian paintbrush and yellow from balsamroot.

Photographing the Natural Pacific Northwest

26400 NW St. Helens Road • Scappoose • Oregon 97056
Phone: (503) 543 7294 • Web: www.dlap photography.com