

The Salem Tour

Starting from Salem, we will take Highway 22 East towards Stayton.

Highway 22 is a well traveled 4 lane, divided road. Cresting the hill just after Joseph St. is a panoramic view to the east of Willamette Valley farmlands, the rolling foothills of the Cascade Mountains, and the entrance to the North Santiam River canyon.

To the southeast, Snow Peak thrusts nearly 4,400 feet skyward, dominating the skyline as it marks the transition from Cascade foothills to the mountain range itself.

On a clear day, snow capped Mount Jefferson is visible nearly 60 miles due east. At 10,497 feet, Jefferson is the second tallest peak in the Oregon Cascades, Mount Hood, at 11,239 feet, is Oregon's tallest peak, and may be spotted to the northeast on exceptionally clear days, as can Mount St. Helens and Mount Adams in Washington State.

Travel approximately 17 miles on Highway 22 and (DETOUR LATE 2008) take the Stayton/Sublimity exit, heading into downtown Stayton (south) on Cascade Highway, which turns into N. 1st Avenue.

Traveling through Stayton (approx. 1.2 mile), turn Left (east) on East Marion St.

Driving through Stayton, keep an open eye for nice examples of Victorian architecture, dating back to its heyday as a hub of agricultural production.

Marion St. skirts the northern end of the old Stayton downtown district. There are a number of interesting shops and architectural features for those wanting to spend some time wander the streets.

Marion St. ends at Pioneer Park, the location of Jordan Bridge .

In addition to Jordan Bridge, Pioneer park offers picnic facilities and hiking trails that wind themselves through woodlands and marshes all the way to the North Santiam river banks. The observant visitor may spot signs of beaver and other wildlife on the walking trail. Occasionally one can even spot a western pond turtle basking in the sun amongst the trees and marshes.

Return to N. 1st Ave. and turn Left (south).

Travel approximately 7/10's mile, crossing the Salem Power Canal and North Santiam River and turn Left (east) onto Kingston-Jordan Road.

Crossing the new bridge over the Santiam River, it is easy to imagine the old structure, which included a covered bridge spanning the overflow channel, and a steel arch span over the river itself (photo).

For the next 5+ miles we will follow the winding Kingston-Jordan Road through rolling hills and farmlands. In addition to beef, goat and sheep, we see large tracts of land dedicated to growing grass seed and Christmas trees, two staples of Oregon agriculture.

Old, and sometimes deteriorating farm houses, barns and other structures are mingled with the newer buildings that mark Oregon's love of rural living and agricultural pursuits.

After following Kingston-Jordan Road for approximately 5.3 miles, turn Right on Valley View Drive (south). Go straight up the hill for approximately 9/10's mile, where there is a 90 degree left turn.

This is perhaps the most panoramic view on the tour route.

The majesty of the Cascade Range stand before us, and the hilltop slopes away across farmland and forest to the beautiful Jordan Valley below.

To the southeast is a clear view of the cleft in the summit of Snow Peak, where it is not unusual to see traces of snow late into June.

The Jordan area has a fascinating history, including an early religious community, and a Trappist Monastery (see the 1947 photo of the old Trappist School).

Continue on Valley View Drive, descending approximately 1.6 miles into Jordan Valley, and at the stop sign turn Right (south) onto Kingston Jordan Road. Follow Kingston-Jordan Road until it intersects Highway 226.

Turning Right (west) on Highway 226, travel approximately 5/10's mile along the curves bordered by Thomas Creek, and turn Left onto Jordan Rd.

This is where the Jordan Bridge, seen in Stayton, originally spanned Thomas Creek, before it was dismantled and moved to make room for the new concrete and steel structure.

To the east are the remains of Broken Dam , and the site of the old, unincorporated community of Jordan. Jordan was once the home of a general store and several mills, and Broken Dam supplied electricity to the nearby town of Scio.

Continue approximately one mile up the hill to where Jordan Road intersects Camp Morrison Drive.

At the summit of the hill, the intersection of Jordan Road and Camp Morrison Drive is dominated by Our Lady of Lourdes Church .

The top of this plateau marks the spot where exiled French Trappist Monks established a 400 acre colony and monastery at the beginning of the 20th Century. (See photo of the old trappist school.)

Though ultimately unsuccessful, the remaining Church and parish remain as a testament to their efforts.

Sitting behind the old church is a cemetery, which some history buffs, might find interesting to explore.

Leaving the Church and its history behind. turn Right on Camp Morrison Road and Travel approximately 1.4 mile down the hill, where Hannah Bridge crosses Thomas Creek.

Hannah Bridge has been used in numerous advertisements. The photo shows a picture of the bridge taken in the early 1960's, along with "Thomas' Y Store" and service station.

Closed now, the store and service station's buildings can still be seen at the intersection of Camp Morrison Road and Highway 226.

Turn Left (west) onto Highway 226.

Travel approximately 1.9 miles to Gateway Farm, located on the left (south) side of the highway at 41390 Hwy. 226. (The entrance is just past the old red barn.)

This area of the valley was once a fair sized dairy farm. Some of the old outbuildings, including the large barn sitting next to the entrance, are still visible.

Gateway Farm is establishing a diversified operation utilizing sustainable agricultural practices. Alpacas, a relative newcomer to Oregon's agriculture, are the centerpiece of the operation, but visitors will also see heritage breed laying hens, and have the opportunity to purchase seasonal produce and fruits.

Gateway farm always welcomes visitors, but please call ahead (503-394-3790).

From Gateway Farm , turn Left onto Highway 226 and travel approximately 4/10's mile to Shimanek Bridge Road, which veers off to the Right.

(DETOUR SEPT/OCT 2008)

Travel approximately 2 miles west on Shimanek Bridge road until it intersects with Richardson Gap Road.

Turn Left (south) on Richardsons Gap Road and travel across Thomas Creek on Shimanek Bridge.

This is at least the fifth bridge spanning Thomas Creek at this location. The previous bridge (see photo) which was built in 1927 was unrepairably damaged in the great Columbus Day Storm of 1962 when trees were blown against the structure.

Perhaps the best place to park to examine the structure on foot is at the intersection of Shimanek Bridge Road and Richardson Gap Road. Be advised that locals can get a little grumpy with "flat landers" clogging up the local roads though.

Proceed south on Richardson Gap Road approximately 1.1 mile, crossing Highway 226, to Rodgers Mountain Loop.

The sight of Richardson Gap Road, and the perfectly flat valley floor bisecting the expanse between Franklin Butte on the right and Rodgers Mountain on the left is unique.

Turn Left on Rodgers Mountain Loop and travel approximately 1.8 miles up the winding road, staying left at the 'Y', to where Sylvan Skies Alpacas is on the right at 40980 Rodgers Mountain Loop.

Established upon principals guiding sustainable agriculture, the farm focuses on producing high quality alpaca breeding stock in an earth friendly manner. Visitors will have the opportunity to view hand made apparel and accessories made from alpaca fiber, as well as commercially produced alpaca products.

Visitors are always welcome, but please call ahead. (503-551-0069)

Leaving Sylvan Skies Alpacas , turn Left and return back down Rodgers Mountain Loop to Richardson Gap Road. Turn Right (north) and travel the 4/10's mile to Highway 226.

Turn Left (west) on Highway 226 and travel approximately 2.2 miles into the town of Scio.

At the stop sign turn Right (north) on Main St., cross Thomas Creek, and turn Left on NW 1st Ave. Travel approximately 910's mile (NW 1st Ave will become Robinson Dr) where Thomas Creek Alpacas is on the right at 38517 Robinson Dr.

The farm is committed to improving the alpaca breed. Visitors will have the opportunity to discuss alpacas with the owners and to learn about this magical breed and their role in establishing a small acreage agricultural enterprise.

Visitors are always welcome, but please call ahead. (503-690-2522)

From Thomas Creek Alpacas, turn Right (west) onto Robinson Dr. and travel approximately 1.8 miles.

Turn Left (south) on Goar Rd. Travel approximately 1 mile and cross Thomas Creek on Gilkey Bridge.

Although long ago dismantled, this spot once had two covered bridges - one for the highway and one for the railroad - as can be seen in the 1939 photograph here. (Look closely and see the steam locomotive entering the railway bridge.)

Approximatley 1/10th mile south of Gilkey Bridge there is a sign commemorating Gilkey Station. This was a flag stop on the railway - a shipping point for local farm produce.

Continue south (Goar Road will change into Gilkey Road) for approximately 4.2 miles as it snakes through the countryside and across Crabtree Creek until the intersection with Crabtree Road.

Turn Left (east) on Crabtree Road and travel 9/10's mile to turn Left (north) on Hungry Hill Rd.

Follow Hungry Hill Road for approximately 1.5 mile as it winds its way to where Hoffman Bridge crosses Crabtree Creek.

Continue East on Hungry Hill Road until it intersects with Highway 226.

At the intersection of Hungry Hill Road and Highway 226, turn Right (south) and travel approximately 2 miles to Fish Hatchery Road.

Turn Left (east) on Fish Hatchery Road and travel approximately 6.8 miles to cross Crabtree Creek on Larwood Bridge . The drive is kept interesting by the varied farmland, and the approach of the Cacade Range, with Snow Peak looming in the distance.

Turn Left (north) on Larwwod Dr. and pull into the wayside.

The Larwood Wayside offers picnic areas and provides the perfect conclusion to the Alpaca Tour.